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Bhojpuri

By [Irene Thompson](#) | Updated June 7, 2013 by [Irene Thompson](#)



Bhojpuri, also known as Bajpuri, Bhojapuri, Bhozpuri, Bihari, Deswali, Khotla, and Piscimas, is a member of the Bihari group of the [Indo-Aryan](#)

Swagat ba (स्वागत बा)

[branch](#) of the [Indo-European language family](#). Its closest relatives are [Magahi](#) and [Maithili](#). Bhojpuri is a direct descendant of [Sanskrit](#) but there is very little information about its early history due to the absence of written records. Although Bhojpuri is not one of the established literary languages of India, it has a strong tradition of oral literature.

Status

Due to a long history of emigration from the region, Bhojpuri has spread over all continents of the world.

- **India**

Bhojpuri is spoken by 37.8 million people in India, primarily in the western part of the state of [Bihar](#) and eastern part of the state of [Uttar Pradesh](#) and some adjoining areas of [Madhya Pradesh](#) ([Ethnologue](#)). Currently it is not an official language, but the government of India is considering changing its status to that of a [national scheduled language](#). Despite its unofficial status, Bhojpuri is used in government and mass media.

- **Nepal**

In Nepal, Bhojpuri is spoken by 1.7 million as a first language plus by another 74,000 as a second-language.

- **Mauritius**

Bhojpuri is spoken by 336,000 people in Mauritius but Hindi is used in schools and in the media.

- **Elsewhere**

Variants of Bhojpuri are spoken by descendants of Bhojpuri-speaking plantation workers in [Guyana](#), [Suriname](#), [Fiji](#), [Trinidad and Tobago](#).



Dialects

Top

[Ethnologue](#) identifies four major dialects of Bhojpuri which are mutually intelligible. Although the full range of variation is not firmly established, the differences among the dialects appear to be primarily lexical and phonological.

- Northern Standard considered to be the most prestigious dialect of the language
- Western Standard
- Southern Standard
- Nagpuria

Structure

Top

Sound system

Bhojpuri syllables can begin and end in consonants. Consonant clusters occur in final positions only. It is also possible to have two vowels in a row.

Vowels

Bhojpuri has six vowel phonemes, i.e., sounds that differentiate word meaning.

[Front](#)

[Central](#)

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<u>Close</u>	i		u
<u>Mid</u>	e	ə	o
<u>Open</u>		a, ā	

- /ə/ = a in *about*
- The only length contrast is between /a/ and /ā/.
- There are two diphthongs: /ai/ and /au/.

Consonants

The Bhojpuri sound system contains 34 consonant phonemes, depending on the variety analyzed. Most consonants can be geminated (doubled). There is a contrast between aspirated vs. unaspirated consonants. Aspirated consonants are produced with a strong puff of air. In the table above, aspirated consonants are marked by a raised [ʰ]. There is a contrast between apical vs. retroflex consonants, e.g., /t/ – /ʈ/, /d/ – /ɖ/. Apical consonants are produced with the tip of the tongue touching the roof of the mouth, whereas retroflex consonants are produced with the tongue curled, so that its underside comes in contact with the roof of the mouth.

		<u>Bilabial</u>	<u>Dental</u>	<u>Retroflex</u>	<u>Palatal</u>	<u>Velar</u>	<u>Glottal</u>
<u>Stops</u>	voiceless unaspirated	p	t	ʈ	c	k	
	<u>voiceless aspirated</u>	p ^h	t ^h	ʈ ^h	c ^h	k ^h	
	voiced unaspirated	b	d	ɖ	j	g	
	<u>voiced aspirated</u>	b ^h	d ^h	ɖ ^h	j ^h	g ^h	
<u>Fricatives</u>	voiceless		s				h
<u>Affricates</u>	voiceless unaspirated				tʃ		
	voiceless aspirated				tʃ ^h		
	voiced unaspirated				dʒ		
	voiced aspirated				dʒ ^h		
<u>Nasals</u>	unaspirated	m	n			ŋ	
	aspirated	m ^h	n ^h			ŋ ^h	
<u>Laterals</u>	unaspirated		l			..	
	aspirated		l ^h				
<u>Flaps</u>	unaspirated..		r	ɽ			
	aspirated		r ^h	ɽ ^h			
<u>Approximants</u>	.	w			j		

- /ʈ, t^h, ɖ, ɖ^h, tʃ^h/ have no equivalents in English
- /c/ has no equivalent in English
- /tʃ/ = *ch* in *chop*
- /dʒ/ = *j* in *job*
- /ŋ/ = *ng* in *song*
- /ɽ/ = *r* in *hurt*
- /j/ = *y* in *yet*

Stress

Stress in Bhojpuri does not distinguish word meaning. Primary stress usually falls on the penultimate (one before last) syllable in two-syllable words and antepenultimate syllable in longer words.

Grammar

The grammar of Bhojpuri is similar to that of other [Indo-Aryan](#) languages. Grammatical relations are marked by inflectional suffixes. Bhojpuri morphology is [fusional](#) with a single ending representing several categories, which is typical of Indo-European languages.

Nouns, adjectives, and pronouns

Nouns in Bhojpuri are inflected for the following categories:

- number: singular and plural
- gender: masculine and feminine (for animate nouns only)
- case: [direct](#), [oblique](#), and [vocative](#); the direct case is used to mark subjects of sentences; the oblique case is used in pronouns with [postpositions](#);
- Adjectives are not marked for agreement with nouns.
- 2nd and 3rd person pronouns are marked for several [degrees of politeness](#).
- 3rd person and demonstrative pronouns are distinguished by degrees of proximity.

Verbs

Verbs agree with their subjects in person, number and gender. Verbal categories include the following:

- The typical structure of Bhojpuri verbs is Stem + Aspect/Tense + Personal ending which represents a combination of person and [degree of politeness](#).
- Subject pronouns are frequently dropped.
- There are three persons: 1st, 2nd, 3rd.
- There are three tenses: present, past, future.
- There are two aspects: [imperfective](#) and [perfective](#).
- There are three moods: [indicative](#), [imperative](#), [optative](#).
- Bhojpuri verbs mark 1st, 2nd and 3rd person in imperatives.
- There are two [voices](#): active and passive.
- Negation is marked by a negative particle placed before the verb.

Word order

The normal word order in Bhojpuri is Subject – Object – Verb. Indirect objects precede direct objects. Determiners and modifiers precede the nouns they modify.

Vocabulary

The basic vocabulary of Bhojpuri is [Sanskrit](#) in origin. It uses prefixes and suffixes to derive words from basic elements, as well as reduplication and compounding. Over the years Bhojpuri has borrowed words from [Hindi](#), [Bengali](#), and other neighboring [Indo-Aryan](#) languages, as well as from English.

Below are a few basic words and phrases in Bhojpuri.

Hello	prannam, प्रणाम
Excuse me.	maf kara, माफ करा
Thank you.	dhanyavad, धन्यवाद
Father	babuji, बाबुजी
Mother	माई (mayee), महतारी
Boy	laika, लइका
Girl	laiki, लइकी

Brother	bhai, भाई
Sister	bahin, बहिन

Below are Bhojpuri numerals 1-10 in Latin transcription.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
ek	dui	tīn	cāri	pā:c	c ^h æ	sāt	āt ^h	nao	das

Writing

Top

Bhojpuri is written in the Kaithi script which is widely used throughout [North India](#), primarily in [Uttar Pradesh](#) and [Bihar](#). Like other Indic scripts, Kaithi is a descendant of the [Brahmi](#) script. Kaithi script derives its name from the word [Kayastha](#), one of the [social groups](#) of North India. The script can be traced back to the 16th century. It was widely used during the [Mughal Empire](#). Today, the Kaithi script is being replaced by [Devanagari](#).

Kaithi has 35 consonant letters, each letter representing a consonant with an inherent vowel /a/. Other vowels are represented by a variety of diacritics around the consonant. There are also 10 letters representing separate vowels. Geminated consonants and long vowels are represented by different letters than their single counterparts..

Take a look at Article 2 of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* in Bhojpuri. Note that the letters are suspended from a continuous top line.

अनुच्छेद 1

सबहि लोकानि आजादे जम्मेला आओर ओखिनियो के बराबर सम्मान आओर अघकारि प्राप्त हवे। ओखिनियो के पास समझ-बुझ आओर अंतःकरण के आवाज होयवता आओर हुनको के दोसरा के साथ भाईचारा के बेवहार करे के होयवला।

Article 1

All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.

Difficulty

Top

Language Difficulty

question



How difficult is it to learn Bhojpuri?

There is no data on the difficulty level of Bhojpuri for speakers of English.

Top

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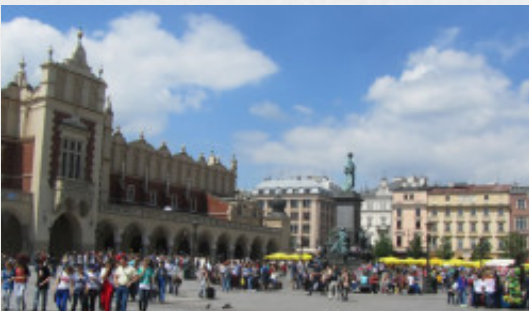
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It ...



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