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Summary Article: **Armenian language** from *The Columbia Encyclopedia*

member of the Thraco-Phrygian subfamily of the Indo-European family of languages (see Indo-European). There is evidence that in ancient times a distinct subfamily of Indo-European languages existed that is now called Thraco-Phrygian. To it belonged Phrygian (an ancient and now extinct Indo-European language of Anatolia) and Thracian (a now dead Indo-European tongue of the Balkans in antiquity). Modern Armenian may well be a direct descendant of Phrygian. Today Armenian is the mother tongue of more than 5 million people, of whom over 3 million live in Armenia; 1 million live elsewhere in the republics of the former Soviet Union; and the rest are in the Middle East, the Balkans, and the United States. Armenian is an old, rich, and vital language. Although spoken in antiquity, it was not recorded in writing until the early 5th cent. A.D. At that time an alphabet of 36 letters was specially designed for Armenian by St. Mesrop, who used Greek and Iranian letters as a basis. Later, two more letters were added to the alphabet. In its early, or classical, form, Armenian is called *Grabar* or *Krapar.* This was the literary language until the 19th cent. and is still the liturgical language of the Armenian Church (see Armenian literature). It differed greatly from the spoken language. Grammatically, it has six cases for the noun and nine tenses for the verb, but it has lost gender. The modern form of Armenian, now used for literature as well as for speaking, dates from the 16th cent. and is known as *Ashksarhik* or *Ashksarhabar.* Its grammar is simpler than that of Classical Armenian. The history of the Armenian people is reflected in the sources of the words borrowed by their language. For example, Armenian has absorbed words from Persian, owing to Parthian domination in the centuries immediately before and after Jesus, from Greek and Syriac as a result of Christian influence, from French during the Crusades, and from Turkish in the course of several centuries of Turkish rule. For grammars see S. L. Kogian (1949) and K. H. Gulian (1954); John A. Greppin and A. A. Khachaturian, *Handbook of Armenian Dialectology* (1986).

👑 *The Columbia Encyclopedia,* © Columbia University Press 2017

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family of languages having more speakers than any other language family. It is estimated that approximately half the world's population speaks an

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also called Great Russian, member of the East Slavic group of the Slavic subfamily of the Indo-European family of languages (see Slavic languages).

Kurds

Member of a people living mostly in the Taurus and Sagros mountains of eastern Turkey, western Iran, and northern Iraq in the region called Kurdistan

Greek language

member of the Indo-European family of languages (see Indo-European). It is the language of one of the major civilizations of the world and of one of

Aramaic language

(ârƏmā'ĭk), language belonging to the West Semitic subdivision of the Semitic subfamily of the Afroasiatic family of languages (see Afroasiatic

Turks

term applied in its wider meaning to the Turkic-speaking peoples of Turkey, Russia, Central Asia, Xinjiang in China (Chinese Turkistan), Azerbaijan

Tatar

Member of a Turkic people, the descendants of the mixed Mongol and Turkic followers of Genghis Khan . The Tatars now live mainly in the Russian

Arabic language

Major Semitic language of the Hamito-Semitic family of West Asia and North Africa, originating among the Arabs of the Arabian peninsula. It is spoken

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(ăn˝Ətō'lēƏn), subfamily of the Indo-European family of languages (see The Indo-European Family of Languages , table) the term "Anatolian

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member of the Romance group of the Italic subfamily of the Indo-European family of languages (see Romance languages). It is spoken as a first

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