

Remedial English Grammar For Foreign Students Study Guide

Remedial English Grammar for Foreign Students is a vital resource for non-native speakers striving to improve their command of the English language. Mastery of English grammar is foundational to effective communication, whether for academic, professional, or everyday interactions. For many foreign students, navigating the intricacies of English grammar can be challenging due to differences in language structures, syntax, and pronunciation. This comprehensive guide aims to provide practical strategies, essential concepts, and effective methods tailored specifically for foreign students seeking to strengthen their English grammar skills.

Understanding the Importance of Remedial English Grammar

Effective communication in English hinges on a solid grasp of grammatical rules. Without this foundation, students may face difficulties in writing clearly, speaking confidently, and understanding others. Remedial grammar courses or self-study initiatives help address common errors, clarify confusing rules, and build confidence.

Key benefits of focusing on remedial English grammar include:

- Improved writing skills for essays, reports, and correspondence
- Enhanced speaking fluency and pronunciation
- Better listening comprehension
- Increased confidence in academic and social settings
- Greater chances for academic success and career opportunities

Common Challenges Faced by Foreign Students in English Grammar

Foreign students often grapple with specific grammar issues, including:

- Tense and aspect confusion
- Subject-verb agreement errors
- Misuse of articles (a, an, the)
- Preposition mistakes
- Sentence structure and word order
- Pronoun usage

- Punctuation errors

Understanding these common pitfalls allows learners to target their efforts effectively.

Fundamental Components of English Grammar for Foreign Students

A solid grasp of the following core areas is essential:

1. Parts of Speech

Understanding nouns, pronouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, prepositions, conjunctions, and interjections helps in constructing correct sentences.

2. Sentence Structure

Familiarity with simple, compound, and complex sentences enables clearer expression.

3. Tenses and Aspects

Mastering the use of past, present, and future tenses, along with perfect and continuous aspects, is crucial.

4. Articles and Determiners

Correct use of 'a', 'an', 'the', and other determiners.

5. Prepositions

Using prepositions correctly in context (e.g., in, on, at, by, with).

6. Pronouns

Proper application of subject, object, possessive, and reflexive pronouns.

7. Punctuation

Using commas, periods, question marks, and other punctuation marks appropriately.

Effective Strategies for Remedial English Grammar Learning

To overcome grammatical challenges, foreign students can adopt various effective strategies:

1. Focused Grammar Exercises

Regular practice through worksheets, online quizzes, and interactive exercises helps reinforce rules.

2. Contextual Learning

Learning grammar in context through reading and listening improves understanding and retention.

3. Use of Grammar Books and Resources

Select comprehensive grammar guides tailored for ESL learners, such as:

- English Grammar in Use by Raymond Murphy
- Essential Grammar in Use by Raymond Murphy
- Online platforms like Grammarly, BBC Learning English, and Perfect English Grammar

4. Speaking and Writing Practice

Engage in conversation clubs, language exchange programs, and writing exercises to apply grammar rules practically.

5. Error Analysis

Identify common mistakes and analyze errors to understand underlying grammar issues.

6. Seek Feedback

Get feedback from teachers, tutors, or language partners to correct mistakes and improve.

7. Incorporate Technology

Use language learning apps and software that offer grammar correction and explanations.

Practical Tips for Improving English Grammar

- Start with Basics: Build a strong foundation before progressing to advanced topics.
- Practice Daily: Consistency is key for retention.
- Read Extensively: Read books, articles, and newspapers in English to see grammar in context.
- Listen Actively: Watch English movies, podcasts, and news to understand natural usage.

- Write Regularly: Keep a journal, write essays, or participate in online forums to practice sentence construction.
- Record and Review: Record spoken practice and listen to identify grammatical errors.
- Join Study Groups: Collaborate with peers for mutual learning and motivation.
- Be Patient: Language learning is gradual; celebrate small victories.

Special Considerations for Different Language Backgrounds

Different native languages influence how students acquire English grammar. For example:

- Speakers of languages with gendered nouns (e.g., Spanish, French) may struggle with gender pronouns.
- Students from languages without articles (e.g., Chinese, Russian) often find article usage tricky.
- Those whose native languages have different tense systems may need extra practice with English tense structures.

Tailoring remedial learning to address specific language backgrounds enhances effectiveness.

Resources and Tools for Remedial English Grammar

Resource Type	Examples	Features
Grammar Books	English Grammar in Use, Grammar for Dummies	Clear explanations, exercises
Online Platforms	Grammarly, Khan Academy, BBC Learning English	Interactive lessons, quizzes
Mobile Apps	Duolingo, Babbel, HelloEnglish	On-the-go practice, instant feedback
Language Exchange	Tandem, HelloTalk	Real-life conversation practice

Conclusion

Remedial English grammar for foreign students is a crucial step toward achieving language proficiency. By understanding common challenges, focusing on core grammar components, adopting consistent practice strategies, and utilizing effective resources, learners can significantly improve their grammatical skills. Remember, patience and persistence are key. With dedicated

effort, foreign students can master English grammar, opening doors to academic success, professional growth, and enriching cultural experiences.

Start today by identifying your weak areas, setting achievable goals, and engaging with quality learning materials. Your journey toward confident English communication begins now!

Remedial English Grammar for Foreign Students: A Comprehensive Guide to Building Confidence and Competence

Introduction

Remedial English grammar for foreign students is an essential component of language acquisition, bridging the gap between basic understanding and proficient communication. For many non-native speakers, mastering English grammar can be a daunting task due to differences in linguistic structures, pronunciation, and cultural nuances. Whether they aim to excel academically, secure employment, or communicate effectively in daily life, a solid grasp of English grammar is fundamental. This article explores the importance of remedial grammar education, identifies common challenges faced by foreign students, and offers practical strategies and resources to facilitate effective learning.

The Significance of Remedial English Grammar in Language Learning

English is renowned for its complex grammar rules, exceptions, and idiomatic expressions. For foreign students, especially those starting their language journey, these complexities often result in errors that hinder clarity and confidence. Remedial English grammar serves several vital purposes:

- **Foundation Building:** It reinforces fundamental concepts such as sentence structure, tense usage, and parts of speech, creating a sturdy platform for advanced learning.
- **Error Correction:** It helps identify and correct recurring mistakes, reducing misunderstandings and miscommunications.
- **Enhancing Fluency:** A solid grammatical foundation allows students to express ideas more accurately and fluently.
- **Academic Success:** Proper grammar usage is often critical for writing essays, reports, and participating in discussions.
- **Cultural Integration:** Understanding grammatical nuances can improve comprehension of native speakers' expressions and idioms.

Given these benefits, remedial grammar is not merely remedial but a vital step toward linguistic proficiency.

Common Challenges Faced by Foreign Students in English Grammar

Foreign students often encounter specific hurdles when learning English grammar. Recognizing these challenges helps educators tailor effective remedial programs.

- Confusion Between Similar Tenses

English has multiple tenses—present, past, future, and their perfect and continuous aspects—that can be confusing, especially when similar concepts exist in students' native languages but are expressed differently in English.

- Example: Difficulty distinguishing between simple past ("I walked") and present perfect ("I have walked").

- Impact: Incorrect tense usage can distort the timeline of events, leading to misunderstandings.

- Irregular Verbs and Exceptions

English contains numerous irregular verbs (e.g., "go" → "went" → "gone") that don't follow standard conjugation rules, often causing errors.

- Impact: Memorization challenges and frequent mistakes can weaken confidence.

- Prepositions and Articles

Prepositions ("in," "on," "at") and articles ("a," "an," "the") are notoriously tricky because their usage often doesn't align with rules in other languages.

- Impact: Misusing prepositions or omitting articles can make sentences awkward or ambiguous.

- Sentence Structure and Word Order

English typically follows a Subject-Verb-Object order, but students from languages with different syntax may struggle with sentence construction.

- Impact: Fragmented or run-on sentences, affecting clarity.

- Pronouns and Agreement

Correct use of pronouns and agreement in number and gender can be challenging, especially when native languages have different rules.

- Impact: Errors in pronoun references can cause confusion.

Strategies for Effective Remedial Grammar Instruction

Addressing these challenges requires a structured, engaging, and student-centered approach. Here are key strategies for educators and learners alike:

- Diagnostic Assessment

Begin with an assessment to identify specific areas of weakness. This step ensures that remedial instruction is targeted and efficient.

- Use quizzes, writing samples, or oral interviews.
- Tailor lessons based on common errors identified.

- Focused Grammar Workshops

Design workshops that concentrate on one or two grammar points at a time, allowing students to master each before progressing.

- Example modules: Tense usage, prepositions, sentence structure.
- Incorporate clear explanations, visuals, and examples.

- Contextual Learning

Teach grammar within meaningful contexts rather than isolated rules.

- Use real-life dialogues, stories, or current events.
- Encourage students to create sentences or short paragraphs using target grammar points.

- Interactive Exercises and Practice

Engage students with diverse activities:

- Fill-in-the-blank exercises
- Sentence rewriting tasks
- Error correction drills
- Role-playing scenarios

Regular practice consolidates learning and builds confidence.

- Use of Multimedia Resources

Leverage technology to make learning engaging:

- Grammar apps and online quizzes
- Educational videos explaining concepts visually
- Interactive games that reinforce rules

- Error Analysis and Feedback

Provide immediate, constructive feedback on exercises:

- Highlight errors without discouraging.
- Explain why a mistake is incorrect.
- Offer corrected versions and encourage self-correction.

- Peer Collaboration

Create opportunities for peer review and group activities:

- Students correct each other's writing.
- Collaborative storytelling exercises.
- Group discussions emphasizing correct grammar usage.

- Regular Review and Reinforcement

Revisit previously learned concepts periodically to ensure retention.

- Short quizzes at the start of classes.
- Cumulative exercises incorporating multiple grammar points.

Resources and Materials for Remedial Grammar Learning

A variety of resources can support remedial grammar teaching and self-study:

- Textbooks and Workbooks: Focused on beginner to intermediate levels, such as "English Grammar in Use" by Raymond Murphy.
- Online Platforms: Websites like Grammarly, Khan Academy, and BBC Learning English offer free lessons and exercises.
- Mobile Apps: Duolingo, Babbel, and Lingodeer provide gamified grammar practice.
- Flashcards: Create cards for irregular verbs, prepositions, and common mistakes.
- Language Exchange Partners: Practice real conversations emphasizing correct grammar.

Overcoming Psychological Barriers in Grammar Acquisition

Foreign students may experience frustration or embarrassment when making mistakes. It is crucial to foster a supportive environment:

- Celebrate progress, no matter how small.
- Emphasize that errors are part of learning.
- Encourage patience and persistence.
- Offer positive reinforcement and personalized feedback.

The Role of Language Teachers and Support Systems

Effective remedial grammar instruction depends heavily on dedicated educators who understand the unique needs of foreign students.

- Culturally Sensitive Teaching: Recognize linguistic backgrounds and adapt explanations accordingly.
- Continuous Professional Development: Stay updated on best practices in ESL teaching.
- Student Counseling: Address anxieties related to language learning.
- Parental and Community Involvement: Engage families and local communities to create immersive language environments.

Conclusion

Remedial English grammar for foreign students is a vital step in their journey toward linguistic competence and confidence. By understanding common challenges and employing targeted, engaging strategies, educators can significantly enhance students' mastery of English. The goal is not only to correct errors but to empower learners to communicate effectively, think critically about language, and embrace the learning process with patience and perseverance. As global interconnectedness continues to grow, ensuring that non-native speakers have access to quality remedial grammar education is essential for fostering inclusive, effective communication worldwide.

QuestionAnswer What are the most common grammatical mistakes made by foreign students in English? Common mistakes include incorrect verb tense usage, subject-verb agreement errors, misuse of articles ('a', 'an', 'the'), and incorrect word order. Focusing on these areas can significantly improve grammatical accuracy. How can foreign students improve their understanding of English tenses? Students can practice by creating timeline charts, using tense-specific exercises, and reading extensively to see tense usage in context. Regular practice and explaining tense rules aloud also help reinforce understanding. What are effective remedial methods for teaching English articles to non-native speakers? Using visual aids, such as pictures and real objects, practicing with fill-in-the-blank exercises, and explaining rules with examples help students grasp when to use 'a,' 'an,' and 'the' correctly. How important is sentence structure in remedial English grammar for foreign students? Sentence structure is crucial because proper word order affects meaning. Teaching basic sentence patterns and encouraging sentence diagramming can help students build correct and complex sentences. What resources are recommended for self-study in remedial English grammar? Resources like grammar workbooks, online platforms such as Khan Academy and Grammarly, and language learning apps like Duolingo are effective for self-paced practice and understanding key grammatical concepts. How can teachers assess the progress of foreign students in remedial English grammar? Regular quizzes, writing assignments, and oral exercises can help teachers evaluate understanding. Providing specific feedback and tracking improvement over time ensures targeted support. What role does pronunciation play in understanding and applying English grammar for foreign students? Pronunciation influences comprehension and correct usage of grammatical structures. Integrating pronunciation practice with grammar lessons helps students speak more confidently and reduces errors caused by mishearing or mispronouncing words.

Related keywords: English grammar, ESL students, grammar exercises, language learning, syntax

rules, vocabulary building, pronunciation practice, writing skills, language tutorials, beginner English

an introduction to english language

An Introduction to English Language

The English language is one of the most widely spoken and influential languages in the world today. From global business and international diplomacy to entertainment and technology, English serves as a vital communication tool across countless domains. Understanding the roots, development, and characteristics of the English language is essential for learners, educators, linguists, and anyone interested in global communication. This comprehensive guide aims to provide an insightful introduction to the English language, exploring its history, structure, global significance, and future trends.

Historical Background of the English Language

The Origins of English

English is a Germanic language that originated in early medieval England. Its roots can be traced back to the Anglo-Saxon tribes—Angles, Saxons, and Jutes—that migrated to the British Isles around the 5th century AD. The language spoken by these tribes formed the basis of Old English.

The Evolution Through Ages

The history of English is marked by several distinct periods:

- **Old English (c. 450–1150 AD):** Characterized by Germanic roots, Old English was heavily influenced by Norse invaders and Latin church influence.
- **Middle English (c. 1150–1500 AD):** Marked by Norman conquest in 1066, which introduced Norman French vocabulary and grammar influences.
- **Early Modern English (c. 1500–1700 AD):** The Renaissance brought a revival of classical learning, expanding vocabulary and standardizing spelling and grammar.
- **Modern English (1700 AD to present):** The language continued to evolve with colonial expansion, technological advances, and globalization, leading to the diverse forms of English spoken today.

The Role of Literary and Cultural Influences

English literature, from Geoffrey Chaucer's Canterbury Tales to William Shakespeare's plays and modern authors like J.K. Rowling, has significantly shaped the language's development. Cultural exchanges through colonization, trade, and diplomacy have also contributed to the vocabulary and idiomatic expressions in English.

The Structure and Features of the English Language

Phonology and Pronunciation

English phonology includes a wide range of vowel and consonant sounds. The pronunciation varies significantly across different regions and accents, which adds to the language's richness but also presents challenges for learners.

Vocabulary and Lexicon

English boasts one of the largest vocabularies among languages, with estimates ranging from 150,000 to over a million words, considering technical and scientific terms. This extensive lexicon is a result of:

- Borrowings from Latin, French, Greek, and other languages
- Coining of new terms during technological and scientific advancements
- Slang and colloquialisms evolving over time

Grammar and Syntax

English grammar is characterized by:

- Relatively simple verb conjugation compared to other languages
- Use of auxiliary verbs for tense and aspect (e.g., be, have, do)
- Flexible word order, with Subject-Verb-Object being standard
- Extensive use of prepositions and articles

Writing System

English uses the Latin alphabet, consisting of 26 letters. Its orthography (spelling system) can be complex due to historical spelling conventions, silent letters, and irregular pronunciation rules.

The Global Significance of the English Language

English as a Global Lingua Franca

Today, English is regarded as the world's primary lingua franca—an auxiliary language used for international communication. It is the official or working language in over 50 countries and widely used in international organizations like the United Nations and the International Olympic Committee.

English in Business and Commerce

English dominates international business, finance, and trade. Many multinational corporations operate primarily in English, and proficiency is often a prerequisite for global career opportunities.

English in Science, Technology, and Education

A significant portion of scientific research, technological development, and academic publications are in English. Universities worldwide offer courses in English to attract international students.

English in Media and Entertainment

English-language media, including movies, music, television, and literature, have a global reach. Hollywood films, English pop music, and online streaming platforms have popularized the language worldwide.

English on the Internet and Social Media

English is the dominant language on the internet, accounting for a large percentage of online content. Social media platforms facilitate global interaction primarily in English, further fostering its universal status.

Learning and Teaching the English Language

Why Learn English?

Learning English offers numerous benefits:

- Access to a vast amount of information and educational resources
- Enhanced employability and career prospects
- Ability to communicate with people worldwide
- Participation in global culture and entertainment

Methods of Learning English

Effective approaches include:

- Classroom instruction with trained teachers
- Online courses and language learning apps
- Immersive experiences through travel and cultural exchange
- Practice with native speakers or language exchange partners

Challenges in Learning English

Some common difficulties faced by learners are:

- Complex spelling and pronunciation rules
- Irregular verb forms
- Idiomatic expressions and phrasal verbs
- Regional accents and dialects

The Future of the English Language

Emerging Trends

English continues to evolve with technological innovations:

- Increased influence of digital communication and social media
- Emergence of new slang and internet vernacular
- Globalization leading to more diverse accents and dialects
- Integration of loanwords from other languages due to cultural exchange

Potential Challenges

As the language grows, there are concerns about:

- Language homogenization potentially overshadowing regional dialects
- Loss of linguistic diversity
- Difficulty in maintaining standardization across different regions

Conclusion

The English language remains a dynamic and influential means of communication. Its rich history, extensive vocabulary, and widespread use make it an invaluable global asset. Whether for personal growth, academic pursuits, or professional development, learning English opens doors to countless opportunities. As the world continues to embrace globalization and technological innovation, the role of English is poised to expand further, shaping the future of international communication.

Keywords for SEO Optimization:

- Introduction to English language
- History of English
- English language structure
- Global importance of English
- Learn English online
- English language development
- English as a lingua franca
- Benefits of learning English
- Future of the English language
- English language learning tips

Introduction to the English Language: A Comprehensive Overview

The English language, often regarded as the global lingua franca, has a rich history, complex structure, and widespread influence that permeates nearly every corner of the world. As one of the most widely spoken and studied languages today, understanding its fundamentals offers invaluable insights into its role in communication, culture, and international relations. This detailed exploration delves into the origins, evolution, grammatical features, vocabulary, phonetics, and the significance of English in contemporary society.

Historical Background of the English Language

Origins and Early Development

The roots of English trace back over 1,400 years to the Germanic tribes—namely the Angles, Saxons, and Jutes—who migrated to the British Isles around the 5th century AD. These tribes brought with them their languages, which gradually coalesced into what we now call Old English.

Key points about early English:

- Old English (circa 450–1150 AD): Characterized by a complex system of inflections, a

vocabulary heavily influenced by Latin and Norse, and a rich oral tradition including epic poetry like Beowulf.

- Influence of Latin and Norse: Latin arrived through Christian missionaries, while Norse influence increased due to Viking invasions, shaping vocabulary and syntax.

Middle English and the Norman Conquest

The Norman Conquest of 1066 marked a pivotal turning point:

- Norman French influence: The ruling class spoke Norman French, which heavily influenced the vocabulary, especially in law, governance, art, and cuisine.
- Language features: Middle English (circa 1150-1500) saw simplification of inflectional endings and an expansion of vocabulary.

Early Modern English and the Renaissance

From the late 15th to the early 17th century:

- The Renaissance: Brought a revival of classical learning and an influx of Latin and Greek words.
- The printing press: Invented by Johannes Gutenberg, it standardized spelling and grammar, making literature more accessible.
- Notable figures: William Shakespeare and the King James Bible significantly shaped the language.

Modern English and Global Spread

Since the 17th century:

- Colonial expansion: British colonization spread English worldwide.
- Industrial Revolution: Facilitated international trade and communication.
- Contemporary English: Continues to evolve with influences from numerous languages and cultures, especially in the digital age.

Structural Aspects of the English Language

Phonetics and Pronunciation

English phonetics is known for its complexity and variability:

- Consonant and vowel sounds: The language features approximately 24 consonant sounds and around 20 vowel sounds, with many variations.
- Spelling and pronunciation discrepancies: Due to historical influences, English spelling often does not align directly with pronunciation (e.g., though vs. through).

Grammar and Syntax

English grammar, while relatively straightforward compared to some languages, has distinctive features:

- Parts of speech: Nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, pronouns, prepositions, conjunctions, and interjections.
- Sentence structure: Typically follows a Subject-Verb-Object (SVO) order.
- Tenses: Present, past, future, along with perfect and progressive aspects.
- Agreement: Subject-verb agreement in number and person.
- Modifiers: Use of adjectives and adverbs to add detail.

Vocabulary and Lexicon

English boasts an extensive vocabulary, estimated at over a million words:

- Loanwords: Borrowed extensively from Latin, French, Greek, German, and many other languages.
- Synonyms and antonyms: Rich variety of words with nuanced differences, offering precision and expressiveness.
- Neologisms: Continual creation of new words, especially in technology and popular culture.

Unique Features of the English Language

Orthography and Spelling

English spelling can be irregular due to its diverse origins:

- Historical influences: Words retain spellings from older forms or borrowed languages.
- Examples: Knight, psychology, colonel.
- Spelling reforms: There have been proposals but no widespread standardization.

Idioms and Phrasal Verbs

Idiomatic expressions and phrasal verbs are integral:

- Idioms: Phrases whose meanings are not deducible from individual words (e.g., kick the bucket).
- Phrasal verbs: Verb + particle combinations with idiomatic meanings (e.g., look up, give in).

Varieties and Dialects

English manifests in numerous dialects:

- British English: Variations like Cockney, Received Pronunciation.
- American English: Distinct vocabulary and pronunciation.
- Other varieties: Australian, Canadian, Indian English, each with unique features.

The Role of English in the Modern World

Global Lingua Franca

English is the primary language of:

- International diplomacy
- Business and commerce
- Science and technology
- Entertainment and media

English in Education and Research

- Most scientific journals publish in English.
- Universities worldwide offer courses in English.
- English proficiency is often a requirement for international careers.

The Digital Age and English

- Dominance in internet content, social media, and digital communication.
- Emergence of digital slang, memes, and abbreviations, influencing language evolution.

Cultural Impact

- English-language music, films, and literature shape global pop culture.
- Cultural exchange and understanding facilitated through shared language.

Learning and Teaching English

Methods and Approaches

- Traditional grammar-translation
- Communicative language teaching
- Immersive and bilingual approaches
- Use of technology and online platforms

Challenges for Learners

- Irregular spelling and pronunciation
- Idiomatic expressions
- Extensive vocabulary
- Variations in dialects and accents

Resources and Tools

- Language apps (Duolingo, Babbel)
- Online courses and tutorials
- Media and literature in English
- Language exchange programs

Conclusion

The English language remains a dynamic, influential, and complex means of communication. Its history reflects centuries of cultural exchange and adaptation, shaping a language that is both diverse and adaptable. For learners, educators, and global citizens alike, understanding English's structure, history, and role in society unlocks numerous opportunities for connection, learning, and cultural appreciation. As it continues to evolve in the digital age, English's significance is poised to grow, cementing its status as a cornerstone of international communication.

In summary, mastering the English language provides access to a vast repository of knowledge, culture, and opportunities. Its rich history and widespread use make it a fascinating subject of study and an essential skill in today's interconnected world. Whether for academic pursuits, professional advancement, or cultural engagement, an introduction to English opens the door to endless possibilities.

Question What are the key features that define the English language? English is a West Germanic language characterized by a rich vocabulary, extensive use of loanwords, and a flexible grammar system. It is known for its adaptability, widespread global use, and its role as a lingua franca in international communication. **Answer** How did the English language develop over time? English evolved from the Anglo-Saxon languages brought to Britain by Germanic tribes around the 5th century. It was later influenced by Norman French, Latin, and other languages, leading to the Modern English we use today. This development spans Old English, Middle English, and Modern English periods. Why is English considered a global language? English is considered a global language because it is the primary or secondary language in many countries, used extensively in international business, science, technology, entertainment, and diplomacy, making it a key tool for global communication. What are the main components of learning the English language? Learning English involves mastering four main components: reading, writing, listening, and speaking. Additionally, understanding grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and cultural context are essential for effective communication. How has the internet influenced the spread and evolution of the English language? The internet has accelerated the global spread of English, introduced new slang, abbreviations, and digital communication styles, and facilitated intercultural exchange, thereby continuously shaping and evolving the language in real-time.

Related keywords: English language, language learning, linguistics, grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, syntax, phonetics, language skills, language history

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