

Languages and Alphabets

In the United States people speak English. In Poland people speak Polish. The Polish language is a Slavic language and it has many words which are similar to words in other Slavic languages. That is because, a very long time ago, much before history began to be recorded and writing was invented, all the Slavs spoke the same language. But then, as groups of Slavs separated from each other and became isolated, the language spoken by the different groups began to change, until they became different languages.

Much later, when the Poles started writing, they adopted the Latin alphabet, the same one that is used in English. That alphabet is called the Latin alphabet, because Latin, the language of the ancient Romans, was the first language to use it. When other Slav groups began to write, some adopted a different alphabet, the Cyrillic alphabet. Cyrillic letters have equivalents in the Latin alphabet and can therefore be trans-literated. In the table, the trans-literated words are written in *italics* and the ones in Cyrillic are shown below them. This makes it possible for us to tell how these words are pronounced even if we do not know the Cyrillic alphabet.

In many, but not all of the columns in the table below, the words in the Slavic languages are similar. How could the exceptions be the result of America being discovered in 1492? Next, find on the map of Central Europe the countries in which a Slavic language is spoken and color them yellow. Then, identify those which use the Cyrillic alphabet and outline their borders in red.

English	house	father	potato	honey	family
Polish	dom	ojciec	ziemniak	miód	rodzina
Slovak	dom	otec	ziemiak	med	rodina
Czech	dum	otec	branbor	med	rodina
Ukrainian	<i>dim</i> дім	<i>batko</i> батько	<i>kartoplya</i> картопля	<i>med</i> мед	<i>rodina</i> родина
Russian	<i>dom</i> дом	<i>otec</i> отец	<i>kartofelina</i> картофелина	<i>mod</i> мод	<i>rod</i> род
Belarusian	<i>dom</i> дом	<i>aciec</i> аціец	<i>bulba</i> булба	<i>mied</i> міед	<i>rodzima</i> родіма