

MODERN: 13 OCCULT LANGUAGES

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INTRODUCTION

In the *D20 Modern Roleplaying Game*, the skills Read/Write Language and Speak Language are treated differently than other skills. For one, they have no key abilities associated with them. Other important differences include:

Each language costs 1 rank. When a character adds another rank to Read/Write Language (or Speak Language), he chooses a new language that the character can read and write (or speak).

A character never makes Read/Write Language or Speak Language checks. A character either knows how to read/write or speak a specific language or does not.

While this approach works perfectly well for most modern campaigns, it may not suit all of them, particularly those where obscure languages and the ability to understand them play an important role, as in many occult or supernatural campaigns. The following is a brief set of alternate rules for Game Masters who wish to introduce more linguistic detail into their *D20 Modern Roleplaying Game* campaigns. Also included is a list of thirteen occult languages for use in any campaign in which secret societies clash in the shadows, battling one another for control of ancient knowledge hidden for millennia and intelligible only to those who have mastered the esoteric tongues in which they were written.

EXPANDED LANGUAGE RULES

As indicated in the *D20 Modern Roleplaying Game* rules, Read/Write Language and Speak Language cannot be used untrained (except in certain circumstances – see below). Only by purchasing at least one rank in one of these skills can a character attempt to use them. Unlike the rules in the *D20 Modern Roleplaying Game*, however, the rules presented here treat these skills like any other. Both now use Intelligence as their key ability and ranks beyond 1 indicate increasing levels of proficiency in the skill. Furthermore, using either skill now requires a skill check against a variable Difficulty Class like any other skill. As with other skills, the GM should only request

skill checks when dramatically appropriate. Two characters speaking their common native tongue to one another should not warrant skill checks, even if one character has many more skill ranks than the other. Likewise, reading a daily newspaper written in a character's native tongue should not warrant a skill check unless the article he's reading is especially complex and his understanding of its contents is important to the plot of the adventure.

READ/WRITE AND SPEAK SYNERGY

If a character has 5 or more ranks in either Read/Write Language or Speak Language in the same languages, he gains a +2 synergy bonus on all checks using the other skill. If the character possesses only one of those skills for a particular language, he may attempt to use the skill he does not have untrained. This attempt follows the normal rules for untrained skill checks. Only by already possessing either Read/Write Language or Speak Language can a character attempt this—and only for the language in which he has the other skill. A character with Read/Write Latin cannot attempt to speak Greek untrained, but he could attempt to speak Latin.

ASSIGNING DIFFICULTY CLASSES

Much like Knowledge skills, assigning a difficulty class to a Read/Write Language or Speak Language check isn't an exact science. The GM has great leeway in choosing a DC appropriate to the task. As a general guideline, though, everyday conversation or texts have a DC 10, complex conversations or texts have a DC 15, while obscure and jargon-filled conversations and texts have a DC between 20 and 30 (or more). Most occult books (such as those described in *101 Occult Books* from Ronin Arts) have DCs in the 15-25 ranges, depending on whether they contain genuine magical spells or simply arcane knowledge.

Attempting to Read/Write or Speak a dead language adds +1 to the DC, due to the fact that such languages are more difficult to learn and use prop-

erly than living languages. Likewise, attempting to use these skills with a non-human language adds +3 to the DC for similar, if more extreme, reasons.

LANGUAGE GROUP BENEFITS

Once a character has acquired 4 ranks in either Read/Write Language or Speak Language, he may attempt to use his skill with languages in the same language group, as described in the *D20 Modern Roleplaying Game*. Such a check adds +3 to the DC, however. Once a character has 12 ranks in either skill, the DC penalty drops to +2 for languages with the same language group.

THE OCCULT LANGUAGES

The languages that follow come from a variety of sources, but none, with the possible exceptions of Enochian and Ouranian Barbaric, is a real language ever spoken on Earth. That said, all have a pedigree in occult legendry and literature and make good additions to occult-based campaigns. The GM need not use all of them in his campaign, of course, and would probably be well-advised not to do so, since several have origins that conflict with one another or at least present problems for Game Masters looking for a “unified field theory” of secret history.

Adamic

This is the first language of Man, spoken by all humanity until the fall of the Tower of Babel, when God punished his creatures for their hubris by confusing their speech and creating myriad tongues. Only the oldest creatures and texts will use Adamic, but it is a source of powerful magic.

Enochian

This is the language of the angels, first learned by the Biblical prophet Enoch, after whom it is named. John Dee later rediscovered the language and used it to effect great works of magic.

Green Language

Also called the Language of the Birds, this secret speech is heavily laden with metaphors and symbolism derived from Rosicrucian teachings (see *Thirteen Conspiracies* from Ronin Arts).

Hyperborean

The language of the North Winds, this tongue was spoken in a far northern paradise that later generations would call Thule. Hyperborean texts are rare but much sought after by the Thule-Gesellschaft (see *Thirteen Conspiracies* from Ronin Arts).

Lemurian

This is the language spoken on the lost continent of Lemuria that once existed in the Indian Ocean before the tectonic plates shifted and sent it beneath the waves.

Naacal

This is the language of the lost continent of Mu that once existed in the Pacific Ocean. Many magical texts rediscovered in the 19th century are written in Naacal.

Ouranian Barbaric

Although a tongue invented in the 20th century, it has become an important part of the rituals of chaos magicians, who believe it distracts the conscious mind and opens it up to new possibilities.

Senzar

The language of lost Atlantis is called Senzar. By far the greatest of the lost continents of Earth, Atlantis produced many great works of technology and magic, making Senzar a vital tongue to learn for any who wish to learn these secrets.

Simian

The language of the as yet undiscovered Great Apes of central Africa, whose civilization is hinted at in ancient legends. The Great Apes may be related to the sasquatch, but if so, there is no linguistic evidence of this. Being an alien tongue it incurs a +3 penalty to DC.

Stygian

This is the tongue of the mighty magical empire that existed eons ago where Egypt is now located. The Stygians were potent black magicians and their language remains important to those who follow in their diabolical footsteps.

Valusian

A debased form of Kinori (see *Alien Heroes* from Ronin Arts), Valusian was once spoken by human allies of these reptilian aliens. Although alien in origin, Valusian was intended for human vocal apparatus and thus does not incur the +3 penalty to DC.

Vra'hal

The written language of the alien Grays can be spoken but no Gray has done so in millennia, preferring to use telepathy instead. Being alien in origin, it incurs a +3 penalty to DC.

Weren

This is the language of the sasquatch and is used extensively in their religious rituals. It is very hard for humans to speak and thus incurs a +3 penalty to DC.