LANGUAGE & CULTURE
Like the Sotho and Tswana, the Pedi in pre-conquest times lived in large villages divided into groups centered on family clusters favoring paternal line. Each consisted of a group of households built around a central area which combined meeting place, cattle byre, graveyard and ancestral shrine. Homes were ranked in order of seniority. Each wife had her own round thatched homestead, joined to the others by a series of open-air enclosures (lapa) encircled by mud walls.

In the centre was the ngwako wa molo (the hut of the fire), for cooking on rainy days. It could be distinguished from other dwellings by the mathudi (covered veranda) surrounding it.

Pedi practice ancestral worship (phasa) which involves animal sacrifice and the offering of beer to the ‘shades’ on both the mother’s and father’s side.

The kgadi (father’s older sister) is an important person in the Pedi culture. The position of ngaka (diviner) was traditionally inherited via patrilineal lines, but this position is now inherited by a woman from her paternal grandfather or great-grandfather.

**COMMON PHRASES IN SEPEDI**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Common Phrase</th>
<th>Sepedi (Sg) Sepedi (Pl)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hello (General greeting)</td>
<td>Lumela; Dumela (sg) Dumelang (pl) Helele</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Welcome</td>
<td>Kena ka kgotso! (sg) Ke-nang ka kgotso! (pl)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How are you?</td>
<td>O kae? (Where are you?) O phela joang? (How are you living?)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What’s your name?</td>
<td>Lebitso la hao ke mang?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My name is ...</td>
<td>Lebitso laka ke ...</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**STUDYING SEPEDI IN THE UNITED STATES.**

Please contact the National African Language Resource Center, or check the NALRC web site at [http://www.nalrc.indiana.edu/](http://www.nalrc.indiana.edu/)

**NATIONAL AFRICAN LANGUAGE RESOURCE CENTER (NALRC)**

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WHO SPEAKS SEPEDI?

Sepedi is a southern African language spoken in South Africa. It is, since 1994, one of nine indigenous languages to enjoy official recognition in South Africa’s first post-apartheid constitution.

Pedi also known as Bapedi, Bamaroteng, Marota, Basotho or Northern Sotho are group of related people in South Africa who share cultural and linguistic similarities known as Northern Sotho.

The term Pedi was previously used to describe the entire set of people speaking various dialects of the Sotho language who live in the northern Transvaal of South Africa, More recently, the term “Northern Sotho” has replaced “Pedi” to characterise this loose collectivity of groups.

Sepedi forms part of the “Southern Bantu” group of African languages, which in turn forms part of the larger Niger-Congo language family. The Central subgroup is further subdivided into geographical regions, each designated by a letter.

Sepedi forms part of the Sotho-Tswana language group and is therefore closely related to the other major languages in this group: Setswana and Sesotho.

WHY STUDY SEPEDI?

Northern Sotho (Sesotho sa Leboa, also known by the name of its major variety Sepedi) is a Bantu language spoken primarily in South Africa. The 2001 South African census estimates the number of Sepedi speakers to be four million.

At 9% of the population, Sepedi speakers make up the fourth largest language group in South Africa. Most of the speakers of this language are situated in the Northern Province. There are also significant numbers of speakers in the Gauteng and Mpumalanga.

There are recent attempts to standardize the language in South Africa. Studying the language will help the on-going efforts preserve a language whose future lingers in doubt. The Pedi speakers are dwindling since most of them are moving to the urban areas in search of good jobs. They end up learning other languages like Xhosa and Zulu instead.