aboriginal languages spoken on the continent of Australia. The Australian languages do not appear to be related to any other linguistic family. The exact number of these languages and their dialects is not known, but has been estimated at about 200; of that number about 20 are not endangered to some degree, and about 80 are already extinct. Probably less than 100,000 persons still speak them. Many of the Australian languages have already died out. The Australian languages fall into two groups: the large Pama-Nyungan group, and the much smaller non-Pama-Nyungan group. Although their respective grammars exhibit a great degree of variation, the Australian languages still show many similarities. All of them inflect the noun, some having as many as nine cases. The verb lacks a passive voice. Postpositions are used instead of the prepositions typical of Indo-European languages. Most of the Australian languages have three markings for number: singular, dual, and plural. Word order tends to follow a similar pattern in the different tongues. They also show considerable similarity phonetically and have a small common vocabulary. Because of so many shared phonetic and grammatical characteristics some scholars believe that the Australian languages have all evolved from a single ancestor language and therefore belong to the same linguistic family, and a study published in 2018 found consistent similarities in the basic vocabularies of Australian languages. Others, however, feel that the term “Australian languages” constitutes a geographical rather than a linguistic classification.

See Wurm, S. A., Languages of Australia and Tasmania (1972):

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