

Favourite words and how to say “to kill two birds with one stone” in different languages

Here are my friends', family's, colleagues' and former students' favourite words in any language. Interesting to note that the words for 'squirrel', 'bat' and 'butterfly' in different languages are particularly popular. Do you have a favourite word?

Favourite word	Language	Meaning	Why is it your favourite word?
Apricity	English	The warmth of the sun on a winter's day	I love the experience of it when it happens while I'm out walking
Effervescent	English	Fizzy	It sounds onomatopoeic
Gobbledygook	English	Language that may sound important and official but is difficult to understand	A very precise meaning and useful word
Conviviality	English	The quality of being friendly and making people feel happy and welcome	It fosters lively relationships (perhaps)
Onomatopoeia	English	When a word sounds similar to its meaning	This is a word which is not at all onomatopoeic!
Queue	English	To stand in line	The first letter – Q – says it all, then there are four more letters silently waiting behind it in a line. A really long queue could be a 'queueeueue'!
Discombobulated	English	Utterly confused	The pronunciation
Higgledy piggeldy	English	Mixed up and in no particular order; untidy	It sounds great, almost onomatopoeic
Rhubarb	English	A fruit	It's an interesting word. Not many words start with Rh, just rhododendron, Rhodesia. Rhubarb rhubarb rhubarb – it's just a great word!
Petrichor	English	The (usually pleasant) smell produced when rain falls on dry ground	
Psithurism	English	The sound of the wind through the trees	Such a relaxing and beautiful sound

Perfunctory	English	An action carried out without real interest, feeling or effort	
Powfagged	Lancashire Dialect	Exhausted	Almost onomatopoeic
Cacklefart	19 th century English	Egg	A combined 'before and after' description of eggs
úht-cearu	Old English	The worries that gather as one lies sleepless before dawn	
Hiraeth	Cymraeg (Welsh)	Something like 'longing for a homeland or a people' but with deeper cultural connotations	It encapsulates the flavour, beauty and resilience of a language still fighting to survive against the odds
Krankenhaus	German	Hospital	From the sound of it, it sounds like just the sort of place that ill people should be treated
doppelt gemoppelt	German	Word used when you say the same thing twice unnecessarily	Onomatopoeic and unusual sound. A common Spanish example is when people say 'subir arriba' where 'subir' means 'go up' and 'arriba' means 'up'. In English people sometimes say, for example, 'in addition' and 'also' in the same sentence e.g. 'In addition to doing this, I also did that'. The 'arriba' and the 'also' are both superfluous
Luftkissenfahrzeug	German	Hovercraft	The literal translation is air cushion vehicle
knochentrocken	German	Bone dry	The sound/pronunciation of it
Hamsterkäufe	German	Panic buying / stockpiling	Literally it means 'hamster buying', which conjures up a vivid image. A very relevant word during the early stages of the Covid19 pandemic. A great verb too

			– hamstern (to panic buy/stockpile) – literally “to hamster”!
Eineiige Zwillinge	German	Identical twins	It literally means ‘twins from one egg’. I still remember learning the phrase when my German friend pointed out identical twins who had just entered the café we were in. It’s so precise and succinct
unglaublich	German	Unbelievable	The sound/pronunciation of it
Promenadenmischung	German	Mongrel	As my origins lie over most of Europe, as a joke I called myself a mongrel
Schadenfreude	German	To make fun of others’ misfortune	It’s a good way of describing many situations
Eichhörnchen	German	Squirrel	I like the sound of it and it’s one of the first words I learnt in German
Gesundheit	German	Bless you! (after sneezing)	Because it sounds funky. It literally means ‘health’
Kummerspeck	German	Excessive weight gained through eating as a means of relieving stress or strong emotion	
Seneschal	(old) French	Keeper of a medieval manor house	
Amour	French	Love	I think the French accent is very romantic. Love is a very important word and has a very deep importance in our world. From a romantic notion, ‘amour’ can roll around your mouth and is less harsh than the short clipped word of ‘love’ in English
Oiseaux	French	Birds	The sound and spelling are surprising
Coquelicot	French	Poppy	It’s a lovely word to say – you have to

			move your mouth around! It gives me the impression of a poppy dancing in the breeze
Mamihlapinatapai	Fuegian	It is a verb to describe the situation of two people looking at each other, hoping that the other person will offer to do a task both knows has to be done eventually by <i>someone</i> but neither wants to do it	The sheer parsimony of it
Sobremesa	Spanish	Spending time after a meal (often lunch) in conversation with friends/family. Time to degest and savour both the food and friendship	It's such a fabulous, relaxing way to spend time with friends and family. Much better than eating then jumping straight back up from the table and getting on with whatever you are wanting to do next
Desafortunadamente	Spanish	Unfortunately	
Embotellamiento	Spanish	Bottle-neck, traffic hold up	It runs nicely off the tongue
Sonrisa	Spanish	Smile	In addition to the sound, I think it reflects the similar character of Spaniards and Thais – we are fun-loving people.
Puente	Spanish	Bridge	The Spanish don't make their bank holidays fall on a Monday as we do, so when one falls on a Tuesday or Thursday, they build a 'bridge' over the weekend which includes the Monday or the Friday, thus making a three-day weekend
Murciélago	Spanish	Bat (the animal)	It contains all the Spanish vowels

Šišmiš (pronounced 'sheeshmeesh')	Bosnian (and Serbo-Croatian)	Bat (the animal)	On a summer evening in Sarajevo, the little creatures are flying around and someone tells you this delightful word. It was the beginning of a long adventure in the language
Pipistrello	Italian	Bat (the animal)	I like the sound of it
Lo scoiattolo	Italian	Squirrel	I think it's onomatopoeic and to me it conjures up squirrels scurrying about in autumnal forests in central Italy
Kuchisabishii	Japanese	When you are not hungry but eat because your mouth is lonely	Such a common feeling but there's no word for it in English
Betsubara	Japanese	Feeling full but still having room for dessert	I describe that situation as having a 'cake stomach'. It doesn't matter how full I feel, I can always fit a cake in!
Tsundoku	Japanese	Letting books pile up unread	
Ki-bo-u	Japanese	Hope	I like not only the characters themselves but also the meaning
Kaizen	Japanese	Making small, gradual changes which lead to overall improvement	I'm a great believer in kaizen, as its underlying aim is for continual improvement, but gradually, not all at once. The cumulative effect can be significant
Zanshi	Japanese	To be killed in a horrible way	Is there any nice way to be killed?!
Komorebi	Japanese	Sunlight streaming through the trees	
Yao Kai Xin Ao	Chinese (Mandarin)	Be happy, oh!	I would like everyone to be happy every day
Ni hao ma	Chinese (Mandarin)	How are you?	Easy to say but with an important meaning
Yuèguāng (月光)	Chinese (Mandarin)	Moonlight	The moon is very special in Chinese

			culture, which has some influences on Sino-Thai culture. My dad's Chinese name is guāng. My sister's and mine also have similar meaning with guāng. (Although guāng could mean light of the sun or the moon, we prefer the moon!)
Shuǐ (水)	Chinese (Mandarin)	Water	I like the strokes and how it symbolizes river/water.
Zhōngguó (中国)	Chinese (Mandarin)	China	This reflects how Chinese view the world. I also like how they transcribe abstract concepts into written forms (logograms)
Jin Ya	Cantonese	Strong and powerful	To encourage myself and others
Jai	Thai	Heart	I think Thai people naturally think and act based on 'jai' rather than 'reason/head'. On the one hand, we do care about people's feelings and wish to keep things ok for everyone (to compromise perhaps). On the other, we can be too emotional and sensitive. We have more than 900 words with “jai”
Kin	Thai	Eat	We have an eating culture and eat all the time. I love eating!
Sati	Thai	Mindfulness	I have a short attention span and get panicked easily, so I have to keep telling myself this word to avoid mistakes or to calm myself down.
Lod ra kha	Thai	Sale	I love shopping and cannot resist the

			'sale' sign!
Ohana	Hawaiian	'Family'	It's a bond relationship that goes beyond blood relatives. It is a great honor to be considered Hawaiians' ohana'
Hale Kuahine (kū'-ā-hī'-ne)	Hawaiian		It's the name of the East-West Center's female dormitory where I stayed for 2 years. I love the name and also the place.
Skål	Norwegian	Cheers!	I always have a beer in my hand when using this word!
Al-Hamdu li-Llah	Arabic	Thanks be to God (Allah)	This phrase keeps me grounded in everything I do and towards everything I get in life. I owe Him my life and everything
Bula!! (pronounced 'boolar')	Fijian	Hello, welcome, pleased to meet you etc.	It's such a positive word which the Fijians say with volume and enthusiasm, regardless of the person they're speaking to or the situation. Say it with a smile or not at all
Serce	Polish	Heart	A mother's heart goes beyond any boundaries
Ma	Gujarati	Mother	Because I love my mother and now I really miss her
Мир (Mir)	Russian	Peace, world	I only know a few Russian words, but this one is so simple and yet denotes such a large concept. And how wonderful that it should also mean world! If only these two concepts could become one reality

Minipi Inda	Indonesian	Sweet dreams	It reminds me of my time travelling through Indonesia as it was commonly used there. And it rolls off the tongue
Ga-jok	Korean	Family	The most important part of my life.
As-salaam alaykum	Arabic	Hello (literally peace be upon you)	Because that is how we greet each other
Wallah	Hindi	A person involved in doing a specific thing	I like it because it can be added to almost anything e.g. chai-wallah (tea person) which is heard repeatedly on every train journey in India
Hoppípolla	Icelandic	Jumping into puddles	So many children (and adults?) enjoy doing this, yet most languages have no single word for it
Mariposa Farfalla Schmetterling Papillon Butterfly	Spanish Italian German French English	A beautiful insect	My favourite insect ... in any language

I apologise for having to use a transcript rather than the original script in some languages.

To kill two birds with one stone

Language	The saying in that language	Literal translation to English
German	zwei Fliegen mit einer Klappe schlagen	To kill two flies with one swat
Italian	prendere due piccioni con una fava	To kill two pigeons with one (broad) bean
Japanese	Isseki Nicho	One stone, two birds
French	faire d'une pierre deux coups	To make two blows/shots with one stone
Spanish	matar dos pájaros de un tiro	To kill two birds with one shot
Portuguese	matar dois coelhos com uma só cajadada	To kill two hares with one shot

Polish	upiec dwie pieczenie na jednym ogniu	To roast two pieces of meat in one fire
Dutch	Twee Vliegen in een Klap	To kill two flies with one swat
Thai	ying peūn nat dīo dāi nok sɔng dtua (ยิงปืนนัดเดียวได้นกสองตัว)	To kill two birds with one stone