

Chapter 5

Language

Key Issues

1. Where are English-language speakers distributed?
2. Why is English related to other languages?
3. Where are other language families distributed?
4. Why do people preserve local languages?

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Language is a system of communication through speech. Many languages also have a **literary tradition**, or a system of written communication. The lack of written records makes it difficult to document the distribution of many languages. Many countries designate at least one language as their **official language**. A country with more than one official language may require all public documents to be in all languages.

We start our study of the geographic elements of cultural values with language in part because it is the means through which other cultural values, such as religion and ethnicity, are communicated. The study of language follows logically from migration, because the contemporary distribution of languages around the world results largely from past migrations of peoples.

The final section of the chapter discusses contradictory trends of *scale* in language. On the one hand, English has achieved an unprecedented *globalization*. On the other hand, people are trying to preserve *local diversity* in language. The global distribution of languages results from a combination of two geographic processes — interaction and isolation. The interplay between interaction and isolation helps to explain the *regions* of individual languages and entire language families.

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Key Issue 1. Where Are English-Language Speakers Distributed?

- **Origin and diffusion of English**
- **Dialects of English**

A language originates at a particular place and diffuses to other locations through the migration of its speakers.

Origin and Diffusion of English

English is the first language of 328 million people and is spoken fluently by another one-half to one billion people. It is an official language in 57 countries, more than any other language, and is the predominant language in two more (Australia and the United States).

English Colonies

The contemporary distribution of English speakers around the world exists because the people of England migrated with their language when they established colonies during the past four centuries.

English first diffused west from England to North America in the seventeenth century. Similarly, the British took control of Ireland in the seventeenth century, South Asia in the mid-eighteenth century, the South Pacific in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, and southern Africa in the late nineteenth century. More recently, the United States has been responsible for diffusing English to several places, most notably the Philippines.

Origin of English in England

The British Isles had been inhabited for thousands of years, but we know nothing of their early languages, until tribes called the Celts arrived around 2000 B.C., speaking languages we call Celtic. Then, around A.D. 450, tribes from mainland Europe invaded, pushing the Celts into the remote northern and western parts of Britain.

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German Invasion. The invading tribes were the Angles, Jutes, and Saxons. All three were Germanic tribes — the Jutes from Northern Denmark, the Angles from Southern Denmark, and the Saxons from Northwestern Germany. Today, English people and others who trace their cultural heritage back to England are called Anglo-Saxons, after the two larger tribes. England comes from Angles' land. In Old English, Angles was spelled Engles. The Angles came from a corner, or angle, of Germany known as Schleswig-Holstein.

Other peoples subsequently invaded England and added to the basic English. Although defeated in their effort to conquer the islands, many Vikings remained in the country to enrich the language with new words.

Norman Invasion. English is different from German today primarily because England was conquered by the Normans in 1066. The Normans, who came from present-day Normandy in France, spoke French, which they established as England's official language for the next 300 years. The leaders of England spoke French, however the majority of the people continued to speak English.

England lost control of Normandy in 1204 and entered a long period of conflict with France. Parliament enacted the Statute of Pleading in 1362 to change the official language of court business from French to English. During the 300-year period that French was the official language of England, the Germanic language used by the common people and the French used by the leaders mingled to form a new language.

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Dialects of English

A **dialect** is a regional variation of a language distinguished by distinctive vocabulary, spelling, and pronunciation. The distribution of dialects is documented through the study of particular words. A word-usage boundary, known as an **isogloss**, can be constructed for each word. English has an especially large number of dialects. In a language with multiple dialects, one dialect may be recognized as the **standard language**, which is a dialect that is well established and widely recognized as the most acceptable for government, business, education, and mass communication. One particular dialect of English, the one associated with upper-class Britons living in the London area, is recognized in much of the English-speaking world as the standard form of British speech, known as **British Received Pronunciation (BRP)**.

Dialects in England

English originated with three invading groups who settled in different parts of Britain. The language each spoke was the basis of distinct regional dialects of Old English. Following the Norman invasion of 1066, by the time English again became the country's dominant language, five major regional dialects had emerged.

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From a collection of local dialects, the dialect used by upper-class residents in the capital city of London and the two important university cities of Cambridge and Oxford became the standard

language. The diffusion of this dialect was encouraged by the introduction of the printing press to England in 1476.

Grammar books and dictionaries printed in the eighteenth century established rules for spelling and grammar that were based on the London dialect. Strong regional differences persist in the United Kingdom, especially in rural areas. They can be grouped into three main ones: Northern, Midland, and Southern. The main dialects can be subdivided; distinctive southwestern and southeastern accents occur within the Southern dialect.

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Differences between British and American English

The earliest colonists were most responsible for the dominant language patterns that exist today in the English-speaking part of the Western Hemisphere. U.S. English differs from that of England in three significant ways:

- **Vocabulary.** The vocabulary is different because settlers in America encountered many new objects and experiences, which were given names borrowed from Native Americans. As new inventions appeared, they acquired different names on either side of the Atlantic.
- **Spelling.** Spelling diverged because of a strong national feeling in the United States for an independent identity. Noah Webster, the creator of the first comprehensive American dictionary and grammar books, was not just a documenter of usage, he had an agenda. Webster argued that spelling and grammar reforms would help establish a national language, reduce cultural dependence on England, and inspire national pride.
- **Pronunciation.** Interaction between British and U.S. speakers was largely confined to exchange of letters and other printed matter rather than direct speech. Surprisingly, pronunciation has changed more in England than in the United States. People in the United States do not speak “proper” English because when the colonists left England “proper” English was not what it is today.

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Dialects in the United States

Major differences in U.S. dialects originated because of differences in dialects among the original settlers.

Settlement in the East. The original American settlements can be grouped into three areas:

- **New England.** Two-thirds of the colonists were Puritans from East Anglia in southeastern England.
- **Southeastern.** About half of the settlers came from southeast England, although they represented a diversity of social-class backgrounds.
- **Middle Atlantic.** These immigrants were more diverse. Early settlers of Pennsylvania were Quakers from the north of England, and Scots and Irish settled there also, as well as New Jersey and Delaware. German, Dutch, and Swedish settlers also settled this area.

Current Dialect Differences in the East. Today, major dialect differences within the United States continue to exist, primarily on the East Coast. Two important isoglosses separate the eastern United States into three major dialect regions, known as Northern, Midland, and Southern. Some words are commonly used within one of the three major dialect areas but rarely in the other two. In most instances, these words relate to rural life, food, and objects from daily activities. Many words

that were once regionally distinctive are now national in distribution. Mass media, especially television and radio, influence the adoption of the same words throughout the country.

Pronunciation Differences. Regional pronunciation differences are more familiar to us than word differences, although it is harder to draw precise isoglosses for them. The *southern dialect* includes making such words as *half* and *mine* into two syllables and pronouncing *Tuesday* and *due* with a /y/ sound. The *New England accent* is well known for dropping the /r/ sound, shared with speakers from the south of England. Residents of Boston maintained especially close ties to the important ports of southern England. Compared to other colonists, New Englanders received more exposure to changes in pronunciation that occurred in Britain during the eighteenth century.

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The New England and southern accents sound unusual to the majority of Americans because the standard pronunciation throughout the American West comes from the Middle Atlantic states rather than the New England and Southern regions. This pattern occurred because most western settlers came from the Middle Atlantic states.

Key Issue 2. Why Is English Related to Other Languages?

- **Indo-European branches**
- **Origin and diffusion of Indo-European**

English is part of the Indo-European language family. A **language family** is a collection of languages related through a common ancestor that existed long before recorded history.

Indo-European Branches

Within a language family, a **language branch** is a collection of languages related through a common ancestor that existed several thousand years ago.

Indo-European is divided into eight branches. Four of the branches — Indo-Iranian, Romance, Germanic, and Balto-Slavic—are spoken by large numbers of people. The four less extensively used Indo-European language branches are Albanian, Armenian, Greek, and Celtic.

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Germanic Branch of Indo-European

A **language group** is a collection of languages within a branch that share a common origin in the relatively recent past. English and German are both languages in the West Germanic group. The Germanic language branch also includes North Germanic languages, spoken in Scandinavia. The four Scandinavian languages— Swedish, Danish, Norwegian, and Icelandic — all derive from Old Norse.

Indo-Iranian Branch of Indo-European

The branch of the Indo-European language family with the most speakers is Indo-Iranian, more than 100 individual languages are divided into an eastern group (Indic) and a western group (Iranian).

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Indic (Eastern) Group of Indo-Iranian Language Branch. The most widely used languages in India, as well as in the neighboring countries of Pakistan and Bangladesh, belong to the Indic group of the Indo-Iranian branch of Indo-European. *Ethnologue* identifies 438 languages spoken in India. The official language is Hindi, an Indo-European Language. Originally a variety of Hindustani spoken in the area of New Delhi, Hindi grew into a national language in the nineteenth century when the British encouraged its use in government. Hindi is spoken many different ways — and

therefore could be regarded as a collection of many individual languages — but there is only one official way to write the language, using a script called Devanagari.

Urdu is spoken very much like Hindi but Urdu is written with the Arabic alphabet, a legacy of the fact that most Pakistanis are Muslims, and their holiest book (the Quran) is written in Arabic.

Iranian (Western) Group of Indo-Iranian Language Branch. Indo-Iranian languages are also spoken in Iran and neighboring countries.

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These form a separate group from Indic. The major Iranian group languages include Persian (sometimes called Farsi) in Iran, Pathan in eastern Afghanistan and western Pakistan, and Kurdish, used by the Kurds of western Iran, northern Iraq, and eastern Turkey. These languages are written in the Arabic alphabet.

Balto-Slavic Branch of Indo-European

Slavic was once a single language, but differences developed in the seventh century A.D. when several groups of Slavs migrated from Asia to different areas of Eastern Europe.

East Slavic and Baltic Groups of Balto-Slavic Language Branch. The most widely used Slavic languages are the eastern ones, primarily Russian. With the demise of the Soviet Union, the newly independent republics adopted official languages other than Russian, although Russian remains the language for communications among officials in the countries that were formerly part of the Soviet Union. After Russian, Ukrainian and Belarusian are the two most important East Slavic languages.

West and South Slavic Groups of Balto-Slavic Language Branch. The most spoken West Slavic language is Polish, followed by Czech and Slovak. The latter two are quite similar, and speakers of one can understand the other. The most important South Slavic language is the one spoken in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Montenegro, and Serbia. Bosnians and Croats write in the Roman alphabet, whereas Montenegrins and Serbs use the Cyrillic alphabet.

When these countries were all part of Yugoslavia the language was called Serbo-Croatian. This name now offends Bosnians and Croatians. The names Bosnian, Croatian, and Serbian are preferred by people in these countries, to demonstrate that each language is unique, even though linguists consider them one.

In general, differences among all Slavic languages are relatively small. However, because language is a major element in a people's cultural identity, relatively small differences among Slavic as well as other languages are being preserved and even accentuated in recent independence movements.

Romance Branch of Indo-European

The Romance language branch evolved from the Latin language spoken by the Romans 2,000 years ago. The four most widely used contemporary Romance languages are Spanish, Portuguese, French, and Italian. Physical boundaries such as mountains are strong intervening obstacles, creating barriers to communication between people living on opposite sides. The fifth most important Romance language, Romanian, is the principal language of Romania and Moldova.

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Two other official Romance languages are Romansh and Catalán. Sardinian was once the official language of Sardinia. In addition to these official languages, several other Romance languages have individual literary traditions. In Italy, Ladin (not Latin) and Friulian are dialects of Rhaeto-Romantic. Ladino — a mixture of Spanish, Greek, Turkish, and Hebrew — is spoken by 100,000 Sephardic Jews, most of whom now live in Israel.

Origin and Diffusion of Romance Languages. As the conquering Roman armies occupied the provinces of this vast empire, they brought the Latin language with them.

The languages spoken by the natives of the provinces were either extinguished or suppressed. Latin used in each province was based on that spoken by the Roman army at the time of occupation. Each province also integrated words spoken in the area. The Latin that people in the provinces learned was not the standard literary form but a spoken form, known as **Vulgar Latin**, from the Latin word referring to “the masses” of the populace.

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By the eighth century, regions of the former empire had been isolated from each other long enough for distinct languages to evolve

Romance Language Dialects. Distinct Romance languages did not suddenly appear. They evolved over time. The creation of standard national languages, such as French and Spanish, was relatively recent. The dialect of the Île-de-France region, known as Francien, became the standard form of French because the region included Paris. The most important surviving dialect difference within France is between the north and the south. The northern dialect, *langue d'oïl* and the southern *langue d'oc* provide insight into how languages evolve. These terms derive from different ways in which the word for “yes” was said. Spain, like France, contained many dialects during the Middle Ages. In the fifteenth century, when the Kingdom of Castile and Léon merged with the Kingdom of Aragón, Castilian became the official language for the entire country. Spanish and Portuguese have achieved worldwide importance because of the colonial activities of their European speakers. Approximately 90 percent of the speakers of these two languages live outside Europe. Spanish is the official language of 18 Latin American states, while Portuguese is spoken in Brazil. The division of Central and South America into Portuguese- and Spanish-speaking regions is the result of a 1493 decision by Pope Alexander VI. The Portuguese and Spanish languages spoken in the Western Hemisphere differ somewhat from their European versions.

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Distinguishing Between Dialects and Languages. Difficulties arise in determining whether two languages are distinct or whether they are merely two dialects of the same language.

- Galician, spoken in Spain and Portugal, is classified as a dialect whereas Catalan is considered a language although it differs as much from Spanish as Galician does from Portuguese.
- Moldova, the official language of Moldova, is generally classified as a dialect of Romanian.
- Flemish, the official Language of Northern Belgium, is generally considered a dialect of Dutch.

Distinguishing individual languages from dialects is difficult, because many speakers choose to regard their languages as distinct. Romance languages spoken in some former colonies can be classified as different languages because they differ substantially from the original introduced by European colonizers. A **creole or creolized language** is defined as a language that results from the mixing of the colonizer’s language with the indigenous language. A creolized language forms when the colonized group makes some changes, such as simplifying the grammar. The word creole derives from a word in several Romance languages for a slave who is born in the master’s house.

existed thousands of years before the invention of writing or recorded history. The evidence that Proto-Indo-European once existed is “internal.” Individual Indo-European languages share common root words for winter and snow but not for ocean. Therefore, linguists conclude that original Proto-Indo-European speakers probably lived in a cold climate, or one that had a winter season, but did not come in contact with oceans.

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Not surprisingly, scholars disagree on where and when the first speakers of Proto-Indo-European lived.

Nomadic Warrior Thesis. One influential hypothesis, espoused by Marija Gimbutas, is that the first Proto-Indo-European speakers were the Kurgan people, whose homeland was in the steppes near the border between present-day Russia and Kazakhstan. Between 3500 and 2500 B.C., Kurgan warriors, using their domesticated horses as weapons, conquered much of Europe and South Asia.

Sedentary Farmer Thesis. Archaeologist Colin Renfrew argues that they lived 2,000 years before the Kurgans, in eastern Anatolia, part of present-day Turkey. Biologist Russell D. Gray supports the Renfrew position but dates the first speakers even earlier, at around 6700 B.C. The Indo-Iranian branch originated either directly through migration from Anatolia, or indirectly by way of Russia north of the Black and Caspian seas. Renfrew argues that Indo-European diffused with agricultural practices rather than by military conquest. After many generations of complete isolation, individual groups evolved increasingly distinct languages.

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Key Issue 3. Where Are Other Language Families Distributed?

- **Classification of languages**
- **Distribution of language families**

The several thousand spoken languages can be organized logically into a small number of language families. Larger language families can be further divided into language branches and language groups.

Classification of Languages

About 46 percent of all people speak a language in the Indo-European family. About 21 percent speak a language in the *Sino-Tibetan* family. An *Afro-Asiatic* language, such as Arabic, is spoken by 6 percent, mostly in the Middle East. In Southeast Asia, *Austronesian* languages are spoken by 6 percent. The *Niger-Congo* family languages are spoken by 6 percent, mostly in Africa. The language in the *Dravidian* family is spoken by 4 percent, mostly in India. *Altaic* family languages are spoken by 2 percent, mostly in Asia. *Japanese*, a separate language family, is spoken by 2 percent. The remaining 5 percent of the world’s people speak a language belonging to one of 100 smaller families.

Distribution of Language Families

Nearly half the people in the world speak an Indo-European language. The second-largest family is Sino-Tibetan, spoken by one-fifth of the world. Another half-dozen families account for the remainder.

Sino-Tibetan Family

The Sino-Tibetan family encompasses languages spoken in the People’s Republic of China as well as several smaller countries in Southeast Asia. There is no single Chinese language. Spoken by approximately three-fourths of the Chinese people, Mandarin is by a wide margin the most used language in the world.

Other Sinitic branch languages are spoken by tens of millions of people in China. The Chinese government is imposing Mandarin countrywide. The relatively small number of languages in China compared to India is a source of national unity. Unity is also fostered by a consistent written form for all Chinese languages. Although the words are pronounced differently in each language, they are written the same way. The structure of Chinese languages is quite different from Indo-European. They are based on 420 one-syllable words. This number far exceeds the possible one-syllable sounds that humans can make, so Chinese languages use each sound to denote more than one thing. The listener must infer the meaning from the context in the sentence and the tone of voice the speaker uses. In addition, two one-syllable words can be combined.

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The other distinctive characteristic of the Chinese languages is the method of writing with a collection of thousands of characters. Some represent sounds. Most are **ideograms**, which represent ideas or concepts, not specific pronunciations.

Other East and Southeast Asian Language Families

Austronesian. Speakers are mostly in Indonesia, which has an extremely large number of languages and dialects. 722 languages are actively used, the largest being Javanese. The people of Madagascar speak Malagasy, which belongs to this family, and is strong evidence of migration perhaps 2,000 years ago.

Austro-Asiatic. Based in Southeast Asia; Vietnamese, the most spoken tongue, is written with the Roman alphabet with diacritical marks, a system devised by Roman Catholic missionaries in the seventh century.

Tai Kadai. Once classified as a branch of Sino Tibetan, principal languages are spoken in Thailand and neighboring portions of China.

Japanese. Written in part with Chinese ideograms and two systems of phonetic symbols, one of which is used for foreign terms.

Korean. May be related to the Altaic languages of Central Asia or to Japanese, but usually classified as a separate language family. Written not in ideograms but in a system known as hankul. More than half the vocabulary derives from Chinese words.

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Languages of the Middle East and Central Asia

Major language families include Afro-Asiatic and Altaic. Uralic languages were one classified with Altaic.

Afro-Asiatic. Arabic is the major language, an official language in two-dozen countries of the Middle East and one of six official languages of the United Nations. The family also includes Hebrew.

Altaic. Present distribution covers an 8,000-kilometer (5,000-mile) band of Asia. Turkish, by far the most widely used, was once written with Arabic letters, but in 1928 the Turkish government, led by Kemal Ataturk, ordered that the language be written with the Roman alphabet instead in order to modernize the economy and culture of Turkey through increased communications with European countries. With the dissolution of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s, Altaic languages became official in several newly independent countries, including Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan.

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Uralic. Every European country is dominated by Indo-European speakers, except for three: Estonia, Finland, and Hungary. The Estonians, Finns, and Hungarians speak languages that belong to the Uralic family, first used 7,000 years ago by people living in the Ural Mountains north of the Kurgan homeland.

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African Language Families

No one knows the precise number of languages spoken in Africa, and scholars disagree on classifying the known ones into families. More than 1,000 distinct languages and several thousand named dialects have been documented. In northern Africa, Arabic dominates, although in a variety of dialects. In sub-Saharan Africa, languages grow far more complex.

Niger-Congo. More than 95 percent of the people in sub-Saharan Africa speak languages of the Niger-Congo family. One of these languages — Swahili — is the first language of only 800,000 people, and an official language of only one country (Tanzania), but it is spoken as a second language by approximately 30 million Africans. Its vocabulary has strong Arabic influences. Swahili is one of the few African languages with an extensive literature.

Nilo-Saharan. These languages are spoken by a few million people in north-central Africa, immediately north of the Niger-Congo language region. Despite fewer speakers, the Nilo-Saharan family is divided into six branches.

Khoisan. A distinctive characteristic of the Khoisan is the use of clicking sounds. Whites in southern Africa derisively and onomatopoeically named the most important Khoisan language Hottentot.

Key Issue 4. Why Do People Preserve Local Languages?

- **Preserving language diversity**
- **Global dominance of English**

The distribution of a language is a measure of the fate of an ethnic group. As in other cultural traits, language displays the two competing geographic trends of globalization and local diversity.

Preserving Language Diversity

Thousands of languages are **extinct languages**, once in use — even in the recent past — but no longer spoken or read in daily activities by anyone in the world. The eastern Amazon region of Peru in the sixteenth century had more than 500 languages. (157) Only 92 survive today and 14 of these face immediate extinction, because fewer than 100 speakers remain.

Gothic was widely spoken in Eastern and Northern Europe in the third century A.D. The last speakers of Gothic lived in the Crimea in Russia in the sixteenth century. Many Gothic people switched to speaking the Latin language after their conversion to Christianity.

Some endangered languages are being preserved. Nonetheless, linguists expect that only about 300 languages are clearly safe from extinction.

Hebrew: Reviving Extinct Languages

Hebrew is a rare case of an extinct language that has been revived. Hebrew diminished in use in the fourth century B.C. and was thereafter retained only for Jewish religious services. The effort was initiated by Eliezer Ben-Yehuda, credited with the invention of 4,000 new Hebrew words — related when possible to ancient ones — and the creation of the first modern Hebrew dictionary.

Celtic: Preserving Endangered Languages

Two thousand years ago Celtic languages were spoken in much of present-day Germany, France, and northern Italy, as well as in the British Isles. Today Celtic languages survive only in remoter parts of Scotland, Wales, and Ireland, and on the Brittany peninsula of France.

The Celtic language branch is divided into Goidelic (Gaelic) and Brythonic groups. Two Goidelic languages survive: Irish Gaelic and Scottish Gaelic.

Over time, speakers of Brythonic (also called Cymric or Britannic) fled westward to Wales, southwestward to Cornwall, or southward across the English Channel to the Brittany peninsula of France.

Irish Gaelic. Irish is spoken by 350,000 people on a daily basis and 1.5 million say they can speak it.

Scottish Gaelic. In Scotland 59,000, or 1 percent of the population, speak Scottish Gaelic. Gaelic was carried from Ireland back to Scotland about 1,500 years ago.

Brythonic (Welsh). Welsh remained dominant in Wales until the nineteenth century, when many English speakers migrated there. A 2004 survey found 22 percent of the population spoke Welsh, and in some isolated communities in the northwest two-thirds speak it.

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Cornish. Cornish became extinct in 1777, with the death of the language's last known native speaker, Dolly Pentreath. An English historian recorded as much of her speech as possible so that future generations could study the Cornish language.

Breton. In Brittany — like Cornwall, an isolated peninsula that juts out into the Atlantic Ocean — 250,000 people still speak Breton.

The Celtic languages declined because the Celts lost most of the territory they once controlled to speakers of other languages. In the 1300s, the Irish were forbidden to speak their own language in the presence of their English masters.

Recent efforts have prevented the disappearance of Celtic languages. Britain's 1988 Education Act made Welsh language training a compulsory subject in all schools in Wales. An Irish-language TV station began broadcasting in 1996. A few hundred people have now become fluent in the formerly extinct Cornish language, which was revived in the 1920s. Faced with the diffusion of alternatives used by people with greater political and economic strength, speakers of Celtic and other languages must work hard to preserve their linguistic cultural identity.

Multilingual States

Difficulties can arise at the boundary between two languages. The boundary between the Romance and Germanic branches runs through the middle of Belgium and Switzerland. Belgium has had more difficulty than Switzerland in reconciling the interests of the different language speakers.

Southern Belgians (known as Walloons) speak French, whereas northern Belgians (known as Flemings) speak a dialect of the Germanic language of Dutch, called Flemish.

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Historically, the Walloons dominated Belgium's economy and politics, so French was the official state language. In response to pressure from Flemish speakers, Belgium was divided into two independent regions, Flanders and Wallonia. For many in Flanders, regional autonomy is not

enough and they want to see Belgium divided into two countries, which would make Flanders one of Europe's richest, and Wallonia one of Europe's poorest.

In contrast, Switzerland peacefully exists with multiple languages. The key is a decentralized government. Switzerland has four official languages: German, French, Italian, and Romansh. The Swiss have institutionalized cultural diversity by creating a form of government that places considerable power in small communities.

Isolated Languages

An **isolated language** is a language unrelated to any other and therefore not attached to any language family. Isolated languages arise through lack of interaction with speakers of other languages.

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A Pre-Indo-European Survivor: Basque. The best example of an isolated language in Europe is Basque. It is now the first language of 666,000 people in the Pyrenees Mountains of northern Spain and southwestern France.

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An Unchanging Language: Icelandic. Unlike Basque, Icelandic is related to other languages. Icelandic's significance is that over the past thousand years it has changed less than any other in the Germanic branch.

Global Dominance of English

One of the most fundamental needs in a global society is a common language for communication. Increasingly in the modern world, the language of international communication is English.

English: An Example of a Lingua Franca

A language of international communication is known as a **lingua franca**.

A group that learns English or another lingua franca may learn a simplified form, called a **pidgin language**. Two groups construct a pidgin language by learning a few of the grammar rules and words of a lingua franca, while mixing in some elements of their own languages. Other than English, modern lingua franca languages include Swahili in East Africa, Hindustani in South Asia, and Russian in the former Soviet Union.

Expansion Diffusion of English

In the past, a lingua franca achieved widespread distribution through migration and conquest. In recent centuries, use of English spread around the world primarily through the British Empire. In contrast, the current growth in use of English is an example of expansion diffusion, rather than through the relocation of people. Unlike most examples of expansion diffusion, recent changes in English have percolated up from common usage and ethnic dialects rather than directed down to the masses by elite people. Examples include dialects spoken by African-Americans and residents of Appalachia. African-American slaves preserved a distinctive dialect in part to communicate in a code not understood by their white masters.

In the twentieth century, living in racially segregated neighborhoods within northern cities and attending segregated schools, many blacks preserved their distinctive dialect. That dialect has been termed Ebonics, a combination of ebony and phonics. The American Speech, Language, and Hearing Association has classified Ebonics as a distinct dialect, with a recognized vocabulary, grammar, and word meaning.

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Natives of Appalachian communities, such as in rural West Virginia, also have a distinctive dialect. Use of Ebonics is controversial within the African-American community. Similarly, speaking an Appalachian dialect produces both pride and problems.

Diffusion to Other Languages

English words have become increasingly integrated into other languages. Many French speakers regard the invasion of English words with alarm, but Spanish speakers may find the mixing of the two languages stimulating.

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Franglais. The French are particularly upset with the increasing worldwide domination of English, especially the invasion of their language by English words. French is an official language in 26 countries and for hundreds of years served as the lingua franca for international diplomats. The widespread use of English in the French language is called **franglais**, a combination of *français* and *anglais*, the French words for French and English. Protection of the French language is even more extreme in Quebec, which is completely surrounded by English-speaking provinces and U.S. states.

Spanglish. English is diffusing into the Spanish language spoken by 34 million Hispanics in the United States, creating **Spanglish**.

For example, shorts (pants) becomes chores, and vacuum cleaner becomes bacuncliner. In other cases, awkward Spanish words or phrases are dropped in favor of English words, such using *taipear* instead of *escribir a maquina* for *to type*. Spanglish is a richer integration of English with Spanish than the mere borrowing of English words. New words have been invented in Spanglish that do not exist in English but would be useful if they did. Spanglish has become especially widespread in popular culture, as evidenced in song lyrics, television, and magazines aimed at young Hispanic women, but it has also been adopted by writers of serious literature.

Denglish. The diffusion of English words into German is called **Denglish**. For many Germans, wishing someone "happy birthday" sounds more melodic than the German *Herzlichen Gluuuckwunsch zum Geburtstag*. English has diffused into other languages as well. The Japanese, for example, refer to *beisboru* (baseball), *naifu* (knife), and *sutoroberi keki* (strawberry cake).

Key Terms

British Received Pronunciation (BRP)
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Creole or creolized language (p.149)

Denglish (p. 164)

Dialect (p.139)

Ebonics (p.162)

Extinct language (p.156)

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Lingua franca (p.162)

Literary tradition (p.136)

Official language (p.136)

Pidgin language (p.162)

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Standard language (p.139)

Vulgar Latin (p.147)

Test Prep Questions

- 1) Which of the following groups did NOT significantly impact the development of English?
 - A) the Normans
 - B) the Celts
 - C) the Germanic invaders
 - D) the Vikings

- 2) What is NOT a city where the standard dialect of British English, BRP, originated?
 - A) Birmingham
 - B) Oxford
 - C) Cambridge
 - D) London

- 3) Which of the following is NOT one of the three major dialect regions of the U.S.?
 - A) Northern
 - B) Midwestern
 - C) Southern
 - D) Midlands

- 4) What is the language group that English belongs to?
 - A) Indo-European
 - B) Germanic
 - C) West Germanic
 - D) Low Germanic

- 5) Which branch of the Indo-European language family has the most speakers?
 - A) Germanic
 - B) Romance
 - C) Balto-Slavic
 - D) Indo-Iranian

- 6) Which of the following is NOT a Romance language?
 - A) Italian
 - B) German
 - C) French
 - D) Romanian

- 7) Which of the following European countries do NOT speak languages that belong to the Indo-European language family?
 - A) Estonia
 - B) Finland
 - C) Hungary
 - D) all of these

- 8) Which Celtic language went extinct in 1777 but has since been revived?
 - A) Breton
 - B) Cornish
 - C) Welsh
 - D) Irish Gaelic

9) Which of the following is a good example of an isolated language?

- A) Hebrew
- B) Denglish
- C) Icelandic
- D) Basque

10) Which of these languages is NOT a modern example of a lingua franca?

- A) Mandarin Chinese
- B) Swahili
- C) Russian
- D) Hindustani

Short Essay

1) Explain the ways in which American English and British English differ, citing examples.

2) Identify and explain the two competing hypotheses about the origin and diffusion of the Proto-Indo-European language.

3) Identify the two small European countries through which the boundary between the Germanic and Romance language branches runs and compare them in terms of their respective abilities to function effectively as multilingual states.
