

look at it, ours remains a divided world whose obstacles and barriers constrain countless would-be mobals who, as poverty-stricken and powerless locals, have no chance of escape and who cannot influence those who determine their fate. Others, seemingly less constrained, better educated, and more capable, find contentment in containment, or perhaps resignation, weighing the risks and uncertainties of relocation against the certitudes of tradition and custom. Whatever the circumstances, the great majority of our planet's human passengers live their lives in the natural and cultural environs into which they were born, many eager but unable to join the modest stream of intercultural mobals and still remote from the corridors of globalization.

This partitioning—global, regional, national, local—slows the leveling of the social platform of the planet, the “flattening” implied by globalization. From mother tongue to medical access, from pervasive religion to political ideology, from endemic conflict to environmental peril, from lifestyles to lifeways, place and destiny are inextricably linked. Such is this variable geography of opportunity and constraint that globe-trotting globals and localized locals live in very different and very unequal worlds.

2

THE IMPERIAL LEGACY OF LANGUAGE

Language is the essence of culture, and culture is the epoxy of society. Individually and collectively, people tend to feel passionately about their mother tongue, especially when they have reason to believe that it is threatened in some way. Ever since the use of language evolved in early human communities, some confined in isolated abodes and others on the march into Eurasia, Australia, and the Americas, languages have arisen, flourished, and failed with the fortunes of their speakers. Linguists estimate that tens of thousands of such languages may have been born and lost, leaving no trace. Some major ones, including Sumerian and Etruscan, survive fragmentarily in their written record. A few, such as Sanskrit and Latin, live on in their modern successors. But the historical geography of language is the story of a loss of linguistic diversity that continues unabated. At present, about 7,000 languages remain, half of them classified by linguists as endangered. In the year from the day you read this, about 25 more languages will go extinct. By the end of this century, the Earth may be left with just a few hundred languages, so billions of its inhabitants will no longer be speaking their ancestral mother tongues (Diamond, 2001).

If this projection turns out to be accurate, the language loss will not be confined to those spoken by comparatively few people in remote locales. One dimension of the “flattening” of the world in the age of globalization is the cultural convergence of which linguistic homogenization is a key component. Some of my colleagues view this as an inevitable and not altogether undesirable process of integration, but if I may be candid, most of those colleagues speak one language only: English. Having spoken six languages during my lifetime (I can still manage in four), I tend to share the linguists’ concern over the trend. English has the great merit of comparative simplicity and adaptable modernity, but as it reflects historic natural and social environments it is sparse indeed and no match for the riches of French or even

Dutch. If such contrasts can arise and persist among closely related languages in Europe, imagine the legacies of major languages such as Yoruba, Urdu, Thai, and others potentially endangered as language convergence proceeds.

Linguists today are much concerned over the loss of indigenous languages, as endangered tongues pass quietly from the scene when the few village elders still speaking them die. Already, youngsters in the community will be using a tongue with wider circulation, and no passionate campaign to save the fading language is mounted by locals. If such an effort is made, it is likely to come from outsiders aware of the particular significance or value of the syntax, grammar, or vocabulary as these relate to the ecological setting of a language, or the way the language reflects the "world" views of its speakers. The great majority of the languages being lost have never been written or recorded, but among them some are likely to contain crucial pieces of evidence concerning such matters as environmental change, early migration, ecology, and belief systems. A growing movement is underway to document as many such languages as research funds will allow, but the accelerating rate of loss will render it inevitably incomplete.

This salvage effort is all the more difficult because of one particular aspect of the geography of language. In a very general way, the biological principle of the species-richness gradient seems to hold true for the distribution of discrete languages as well. In biological context, it has long been clear that the number of animal and plant species per unit area decreases with latitude; the higher the latitude, the fewer the species. Thus a single square kilometer of tropical rainforest contains thousands of plant and animal species; a square kilometer of tundra may contain only a few dozen. Associated with this gradient is the tenet of species dominance. In tropical rainforest environments, where the number and diversity of species are very large, it is often the case that no single, or group of, species is clearly dominant. But in higher latitude environments, a few species, such as an evergreen tree or a large herbivore, tend to predominate.

So it is, in an interesting way, with languages. Warm, moist, low-latitude environs harbor numerous languages often spoken by small groups of people; on the island of New Guinea, for example, more than 900 languages remain in use, none with regional dominance. In Sub-Saharan Africa, more than 2,000. But higher latitude Europe is home to only about 200 languages—and among these, a few are strongly

dominant. This means that the great majority of the threatened languages are embedded deeply in remote, densely forested, tropical areas, where recording them is especially difficult. In 2008, about 400 of these languages were identified as immediately endangered.

Such dwindling of cultural variegation might be seen not only as a consequence, but also as a benefit of globalization. With fewer mutually unintelligible tongues, wouldn't the world's peoples understand each other better? The evidence for this proposition is weak. Conflicts certainly break out between peoples speaking different languages, but speaking the same (or a mutually comprehensible) language does not seem to avert or even ameliorate hostilities. Protestants and Catholics in Northern Ireland have spoken the same language for centuries, as did communists and nationalists in post-Qing China, and Sunni and Shia in post-Saddam Iraq. Humans have a way of finding reasons to engage in violent conflict, and a universal language probably would not alter that predisposition. A linguistically "flat" world would not be likely to be a more peaceable or a fairer one.

On the other hand, converging language use would undoubtedly have a positive effect on economic interaction. In the arena of economic globalization, contractual and other legal misunderstandings often arise from linguistic confusion, placing a high price on bilingual (and multilingual) skills. Some observers argue that enhanced economic interaction will serve to mitigate tensions that could lead to conflict, putting a positive twist on the loss of linguistic diversity.

On the inhabitants of the global core as well as the periphery, language confers advantage and imposes liability. Being born into a family whose mother tongue is regionally dominant and globally dispersed (English, Spanish, French) endows a child with a lifetime of opportunity that begins in preschool and continues beyond retirement, a cultural legacy of imperial times. Being born into a family whose home language is that of a minority, or in a society whose linguistic mosaic is variegated, confronts a youngster with far greater challenges. The former is the good fortune of hundreds of millions of globals. The latter is the fate of billions of locals. Take a look at the commercial literature of globalization, and you see that advertisements for professionals at all levels tend to stipulate language ability in English and at least one other world language, and that business schools from Sweden to Singapore conduct all or most of their courses in English. If the power of place is substantially defined by language,

a key to leveling the playing field lies in competence in the current *lingua franca*.

EARLY DIFFUSION, LATER DISPUTES

The world today is a Babel of languages; a patchwork of tongues so intricate that it would seem to defy orderly interpretation. Some properties of languages are obvious enough; it is not difficult, for example, to identify languages that are different but distinctly related to each other. Such are the similarities between these related languages that their common origin and comparatively recent divergence are beyond doubt. As noted earlier, the Latin of Roman times lives on in the Romance languages of today. In just a few centuries, the language of the architects of the Roman Empire, imposed from Britain to the Bosphorus, was superseded by a quintet of derivatives (Italian, French, Spanish, Portuguese, Romanian) combining the implanted with the local. The Romans were the globes of their time, but they could not prevent the regionalization and differentiation of their language. Might English go the same way?

How languages evolved and devolved are questions that have challenged linguists for centuries, and geographic factors are key to solving the puzzle. It is likely that discrete languages emerged (and died) quickly and in large numbers while humans moved into open frontiers and lived in small communities subsisting on hunting and gathering. But when plant and animal domestication enabled larger groups to settle more or less permanently, the number of languages began to decline and the number of speakers of surviving languages grew. When modern states emerged and "national" languages became part of the identity of nations, minority languages not only withered but became targets for suppression. More recently, some endangered languages have been rescued through the concerted action of speaker-activists and their nonindigenous supporters. Welsh is enjoying a revival, and the decline of Maori and Hawaiian has also been reversed. Still, the overall trend is toward fewer languages.

This makes reconstructing the evolutionary tree of language ever more difficult. If it is true that our species originated from the "Real Eve," as Stephen Oppenheimer calls the African woman who

hypothetically gave birth to the first humans (Oppenheimer, 2003), might there have been a language ancestral to all others? As languages multiplied and diversified, which among them retain affinities and which do not? This detective work is so interesting and challenging that it and its prickly personalities are becoming a riveting saga of science and strife. The grant name in this arena is that of Joseph Greenberg of Stanford University, whose lifetime of research yielded much of the framework that continues to form the basis for this ongoing debate. He gave spatial expression to the concept of language families, clusters of languages with close relationships, proposing that most of the world's 7,000 languages can be grouped into about 17 such families, including, prominently, the so-called Indo-European language family that incorporates nearly 150 languages ranging from Hindi and Urdu in the east to Iranian and Kurdish in the center and German and English in the west (figure 2.1). He grouped the approximately 2,000 African languages into four families, and the numerous indigenous languages of the Americas into three (Greenberg, 1963, 1987). As time went on, and especially after his death in 2001, Greenberg's work engendered much criticism, and his map was revised almost continuously. Some linguists now argue that there are as many as 150 language families in the Americas alone, and that his vaunted African scheme is similarly a gross oversimplification. But in other areas his conclusions remain unchallenged, and the map is a useful first impression of the layout of the legacy of language.

LANGUAGES GLOBAL AND LOCAL

Mention "loss of linguistic diversity," and what comes to mind is not only the extinction of endangered tongues but also the triumph of the "world languages," the Indo-European languages, led by English, the Latin of the latter day. True, versions of Chinese are spoken as the mother tongue (or first language) by about 1.2 billion people, about three times as many as English, but it is English, not Chinese, that is spoken around the world, a lasting legacy of the waves of globalization propelled by the British Empire and sustained by America's global impact. There was, as the saying goes, a time when the Sun never set on the British Empire. Today the Sun never sets on the English-speaking world.

WORLD LANGUAGE FAMILIES

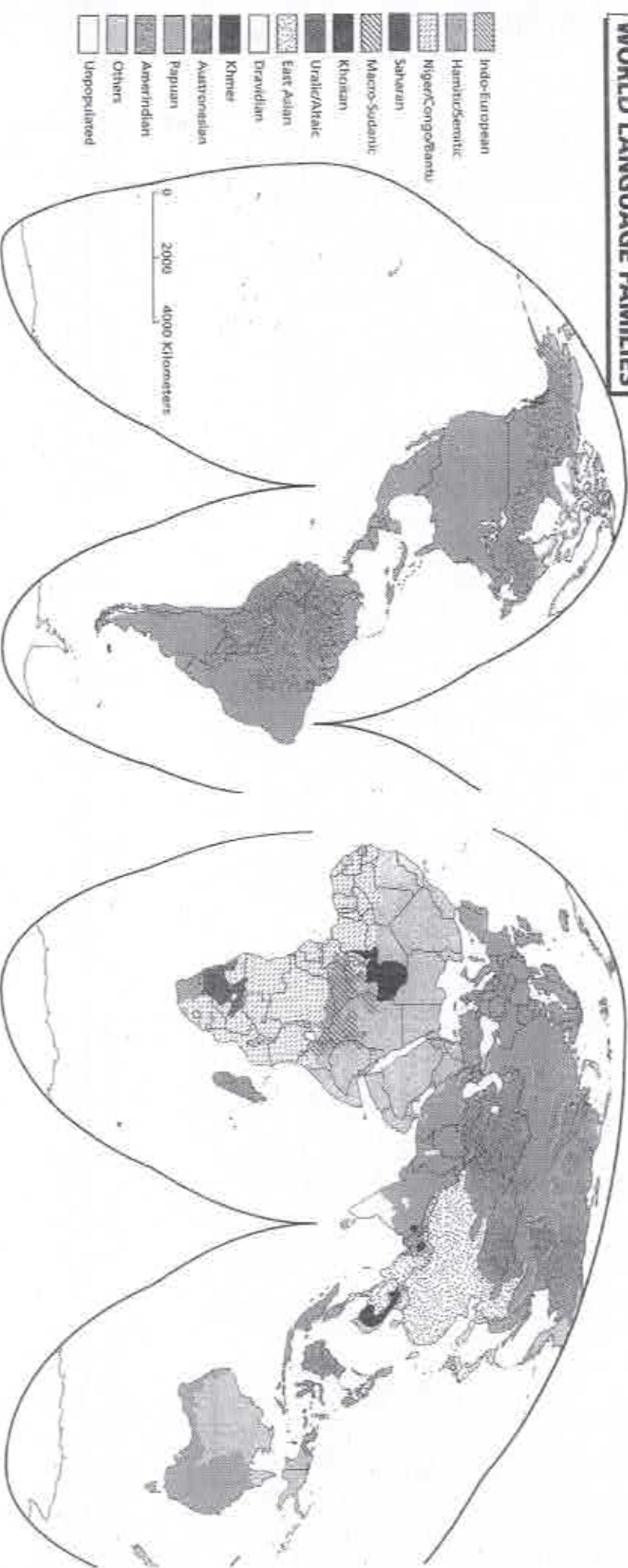


Figure 2.1. On the question of world language families, no scholarly agreement exists. This map shows the most uncomplicated version, with 15 language families among which the Indo-European family (which includes English) is most widely dispersed. Modified from M. Ruhlen, *A Guide to the World's Languages* (Stanford University Press, 1987) and J. Greenberg (1963 and 1987).

In any case, the listing of Chinese as the world's leading language, as is routine in gazetteers and textbooks, is misleading. Chinese characters can be read by hundreds of millions of Chinese citizens rather than the spoken word has the greater claim to universality. Although no reliable data exist, *Putonghua*, as the locals call Mandarin Chinese, may be spoken by no more than half of all citizens, and those fluent in it are heavily concentrated in China's historic northern core area and in the economically burgeoning east. Chinese call

themselves the "people of Han," but their ethnic unity is countered by a linguistic map revealing more than 1400 dialects, most of them mutually incomprehensible. The number of dialects is far greater in the south than in the north, but official maps delimiting a "Northern Mandarin" and a "Southern Mandarin" do not begin to reflect reality. Chinese cultural geographers describe the linguistic mosaic in China as more complex than that of Europe, suggesting that official maps showing "dialects" of a national language have more to do with politics than with reality. Not just China's ethnic minorities, therefore, find themselves at a linguistic disadvantage when they migrate to the workplaces of China's Pacific Rim; China's own Han locals, more often than not, cannot converse in Mandarin, China's language of the powerful.

How can a language not be universal and yet be readable by almost all? Warch Chinese television in local areas, and you will see news reports subtitled by Chinese characters, part of the government effort to promote Mandarin nationwide. Indo-European languages also use characters, but only for numbers. Take the number 5, understood by all Europeans when printed. But consider its various pronunciations: five, cinq (French), fünf (German), vijf (Dutch), cinque (Italian). It quickly gets more complicated when characters are strung together—as in 571. Still, Europeans who absolutely do not understand each other instantly share the meaning of 571. So the virtue of characters is that they overcome a mutual unintelligibility of spoken language, giving some veracity to those maps claiming Mandarin as China's "national" tongue.

Even if only half of China's Han can speak and understand Mandarin, this represents some 600 million speakers. Thus Chinese, the dominant member of the Sino-Tibetan language family, still is in the numerical lead, but Chinese is hardly on track to become a world language to compete with English: it remains geographically confined and would require an unlikely conversion of communication technologies. While no single Indo-European language outranks Chinese in terms of users, the major languages of the Indo-European language family in combination far outnumber Chinese. English (400 million), Spanish (310), Hindi (305), Portuguese (165), Russian (150), Bengali (130), German (100), French (80), and Italian (60) are among Indo-European languages of global consequence, several of them national languages diffused widely beyond state borders during the colonial era.

As such, these national languages formed the vehicles of cultural dominance in the colonial periphery. French colonial policy could be (and was) encapsulated by one word: *assimilation*. Bringing the virtues of French and the values of France to the colonial empire was the ultimate goal in a Francophone world whose elite—and later the masses—would embrace this, the supreme European culture. Always, the French were (and are) fiercely, even aggressively protective of their language; to this day the French government assemblies representatives of present and former Francophone dependencies and territories, from Martinique to Vietnam and from Senegal to Quebec, at an annual international conference convened to sustain and promote it. A former French President, Georges Pompidou, liked to say that "it

is through our language that we exist in the world other than as just another country."

ASCENT OF ENGLISH

But it was English, not French, that became the language of globalization. In its colonial, postcolonial, and neocolonial and globalizing forms, English became the language of nations from the United States to New Zealand and the language of social elites from Nigeria to Malaysia. In plural societies thrown together by imperial boundaries, English became the *lingua franca*, the medium of administration, civil service, commerce, and higher education. By the beginning of the Second World War, before the population explosion in the global periphery changed the picture, English was the home language for nearly 10 percent of the world's population. Following the Allied victory, it appeared that English would accelerate its ascent and become the first truly global tongue. Then the population explosion altered the picture.

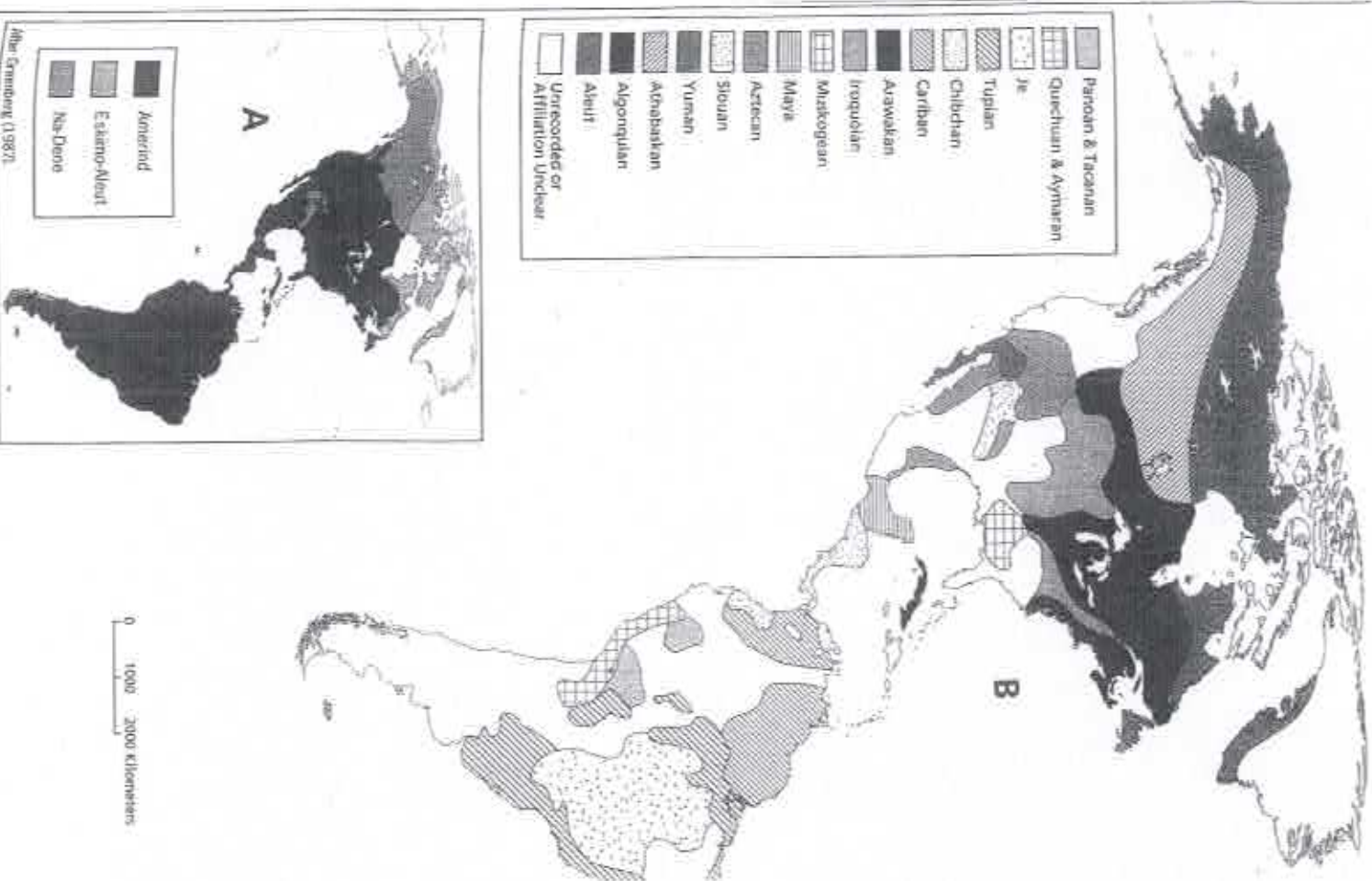
In the traditional cultures of the former colonial periphery, multilingualism was (and remains) nothing new. In Sub-Saharan Africa and New Guinea, locals often speak more than one language, because markets attract sellers from villages where other tongues prevail. In some areas, languages of regional commerce, such as Kiswahili in East Africa and Hausa in West Africa, have accrued tens of millions of speakers. Hausa is spoken across interior West Africa by as many as 45 million people in several countries; Swahili is now the national language of Tanzania and, with English, has the same status in Kenya. But the colonial conquest changed the situation for billions of locals and mobs. In traditional society, multilingualism of the indigenous kind conferred certain small but important advantages on those more skilled than others. The colonists' language, however, was the language of power, and achieving literacy and fluency in it opened new windows of opportunity. Multilingualism took on a totally novel cast. In Francophone Africa and Asia, those who were most accomplished were rewarded with status and influence at home and often with further "assimilation" through funded study in France. In the British Empire, colonial subjects whose English was good rose in political as well as administrative ranks, serving their rulers as representatives of

the Crown as they kept control over indigenous domains. From tax collectors to school principals, money lenders to post office clerks, the advantage was with the Anglophones. A new and crucial layer had been added to the linguistic hierarchy.

While linguists struggled to recreate the theoretical map of indigenous language families, the harsh reality of the real world showed a different pattern. English, French, and Spanish had compressed the native languages of North America into small remnant reserves; only in Andean and Amazonian South America and in smaller domains of Middle America did substantial Native American ethnolinguistic areas survive (figure 2.2). In Australia and New Zealand, Aboriginal and Maori languages had been overwhelmed by English speakers. South Africa had become a "bilingual" country, the "bi-" standing not for the languages spoken by the largest numbers in the country, but for the two languages of power: Afrikaans and English. When decolonization gathered momentum, first in Asia and then in Africa, newly independent states proclaimed English, French, Spanish, or Portuguese as their "official" language, sometimes in conjunction with a local one. India, for example, recognizes English and Hindi; Brunei, English and Malay; Djibouti, French and Arabic; the Central African Republic, French and Sango. But Angola to this day recognizes only Portuguese; Senegal, French; Nigeria, English; and Equatorial Guinea, Spanish.

Where does this leave the locals, the people who are born into an ethnolinguistic area untouched by a connective regional language and remote from the official one? In countries where the official language is ex-colonial, capability in that language is the *sine qua non* for membership in the governing, administrative, or commercial elite. Starting life in a remote village and being taught in a local, indigenous language without early exposure to the language of this political and social elite puts locals at an immediate and usually lasting disadvantage. In countries where modernization has brought job opportunities requiring facility in English, for example, the high-tech

Figure 2.2. Two views of the indigenous language pattern of the Americas. Joseph Greenberg identified three overarching families (A); others discern six, seven or more (B). Obviously the matter is not settled. The larger map is modified from several sources, including J. Diamond and P. Bellwood, "Farmers and Their Languages: The First Expansions," *Science* 300 (2003), p. 600.



and outsourced industries of India, mobsals who find employment are those who have the “language advantage” and are thus able to climb the first rung on the globalizing ladder. Most of those who have that advantage grew up in urban learning environments where bilingualism was the norm rather than the exception. Even in multilingual India, however, they remain a small minority. Their world may be flatter than that confronting the locals, but in 2008 they numbered just over one million workers in a labor force of 400 million. India, like much of the global periphery, remains a society whose locals find their world anything but flat.

THE CHANGING TEMPLATE

If hundreds of millions of locals find themselves disadvantaged because they do not speak the Indo-European languages of globalization, might they forge their own Esperantos, creating alternatives to “standard” languages, and in effect, usher in a new era of language formation even as old indigenous languages continue to die? Such innovation has occurred before, of course, in the rise of informal languages of commerce like *Ves Kos* along the shores of West Africa and various forms of Creole in the islands of the Caribbean. But today the prospects are different. As noted in chapter 1, the great majority of the approximately three billion still-to-come additions to the global population will reside in the global periphery. And the accelerating rate of urbanization implies that a fast-growing segment of this population will cluster in the enormous megacities of the future, where they will speak the language of their parents—and invent ways to interact with their peers. In so doing, they will hybridize the vocabularies of television, entertainment, advertising, shopping, employment, and other sources to devise composite derivatives that become the idioms of their urban habitat.

This global development, which is in the process of spawning hundreds of new forms of English in urban environs around the world, is thus generating new languages even as old ones die out, a by-product of globalization whose ultimate consequences are not yet clear (Crystal, 2003). It stands in sharp contrast to long-term efforts of nation-states to preserve and codify their national or “standard” languages and to distinguish among those who spoke the language of

the social elite and those who revealed themselves as being of lower status by opening their mouths. The standard language was more than a matter of personal identity: it was a way of protecting the privileges of the upper classes. The “King’s English” was the English spoken by well-educated people in and around London, and no BBC news anchor would speak anything less. Watch the BBC News today, and it is clear that things have changed.

But the notion that there is merit (and advantage) in preserving and sustaining the standard language is not defunct. In Britain, English for several centuries has been protected by the National Language Project, and the British Received Pronunciation (BRP) remains the standard to which speakers aspire. It is not surprising that “standard” English is the English of the capital; so it is in France, where the French spoken in and around Paris was made the standard and official language in the sixteenth century. Four centuries later, the French found themselves compelled to mount a major campaign, complete with civil penalties, to combat the use of “foreign” (mostly English) terms in commerce, advertising, and other public displays. As figure 2.1 indicates, Chinese is spoken across China from northeast to southwest, but, as noted earlier, Chinese has numerous dialects, many of them mutually unintelligible. Until the great transformation brought about by the Pacific Rim economic boom of the past three decades, which has produced an unprecedented cultural mix in China as millions of mobsals moved eastward, most Chinese citizens could be readily identified locationally by their dialect, the baggage of place. When China’s communist rulers decided to proclaim a “standard” spoken Chinese, they opted for the version heard in the capital, Beijing. Only a minority of Chinese speak this purest Northern Mandarin (its Chinese name means “civil servant language”), and doing so identifies the speaker as a resident of the country’s heartland. But the *Putonghua* that will eventually emerge from the maelstrom of China’s economic and social transformation is likely to differ significantly from the Mandarin promoted by the communist leaders in Beijing.

Until the late twentieth century, the Chinese language remained essentially confined within the borders of the state. Chinese speakers in Taiwan and in the diaspora communities of Southeast Asia were among numerically small exceptions; Chinese was the language of a billion, but a world language it was not. Today, that is changing. China’s economic transformation at home entails massive

involvement abroad ranging from commodity procurement to infrastructure investment and from cultural diplomacy to educational exchanges. China's leaders encourage important trading partners to enhance or initiate Chinese studies at schools and universities, fund-ing classroom teaching as well as university education wherever such offers find acceptance (one enthusiastic recipient in recent years has been Zimbabwe, where schools are teaching Chinese and the University of Harare has a Beijing-supported Chinese Studies Center), China's ascent to superpower status will undoubtedly propel Chinese into the global linguistic mix.

It is nevertheless unlikely that Chinese in its Northern Mandarin form will challenge European languages in the world abroad. Chinese will become a part of a linguistic reformation some aspects of which can already be observed in cities where Chinese and English have long coexisted. It may come as a surprise to first-time visitors to long-British-ruled Hong Kong that Standard English is not more widely known to cab drivers or shop owners, but Hong Kong's more than seven million people use many more tongues than just English and Chinese. They are in the process of devising their own hybrid language some call Chinglish, creating a medium for local interaction the basics of which can be quickly grasped. In Chinese-dominated but also multilingual Singapore, where English, Chinese, Malay, and Tamil have official status, you can hear a similar urban Esperanto referred to as "Singlish." It is a process going on (with components varying according to the regional geography) from Amsterdam to Auckland.

Even as entire languages are lost at the local bottom of the pyramid and standard languages are eroded by hybridization at the global top, historic attributes of the culture of language are also endangered. Perhaps the most consequential among these is a property of many Asian and most African languages: tone. Chinese, for example, is not just spoken: it is also intoned. The same word may have several different meanings according to the way it is "sung," a refinement also found in Yoruba but not in English, in Bemba but not in German. In the case of Chinese, Mandarin uses four tones: level, rising, falling, and high-and-rising. These tones distinguish words that have the same series of consonants and vowels but mean different things (in African "terrace-tone" languages, this gets even more complicated). Take, for instance, the Mandarin word "mi." In various intonations,

this can mean the noun rice or the verbs to squint or to befuddle. This obviously makes standard Chinese a difficult language to learn for people brought up in a non-variable-tone language environment, but when tonal and nontonal languages meet and hybridize, tone is soon a casualty.

That is a greater loss than might be imagined. Research has shown that people in the Western world who have musical training (and are thus familiar with changes in pitch) have an easier time learning Chinese and other tone languages than those who do not. The neuroscientist Patrick C. M. Wong, in a study carried out at Northwestern University, suggests that this might work both ways: native speakers of tonal languages may do better at learning to play instruments (Nagourney, 2007). Even before we know what evolutionary asset we may be losing, the homogenization of language may end a significant chapter in our cultural history.

Meanwhile, the internationalization of language through new technologies (the Internet principally), lack of quality control (the Wikipedia phenomenon, for example), urbanization (much of it internal to large countries such as China and Brazil), and changing public attitudes toward linguistic correctness (such as the quick incorporation of slang and newly minted terms in media and dictionaries) reflect a new era in the history and geography of language. For mobs, this new era may signal new opportunities, but it also requires new forms of multilingualism: it will not be enough to achieve fluency in one "standard" language when norms are rapidly changing. For globals, the changing cultural geography of language will pose unanticipated challenges as "world" languages start taking on local characteristics, losing their international status. David Graddol cites the example of Swedish, "now positioned more as a local language of solidarity than one for science, university education, or European communication" (Graddol, 2004). In this perspective, even the long-term supremacy of Standard English in the wider world is by no means secure.

Nevertheless, English currently is still ascending, especially in the global core (figure 2.3). The expansion of the European Union is accelerating this process, in part because of recent political history. German still has the disadvantage of being linked to the war in the West, and Russian remains associated with the repressive communist era in the East. Although the European Union recognizes 20 official languages, creating a costly muddle of translations, EU committees

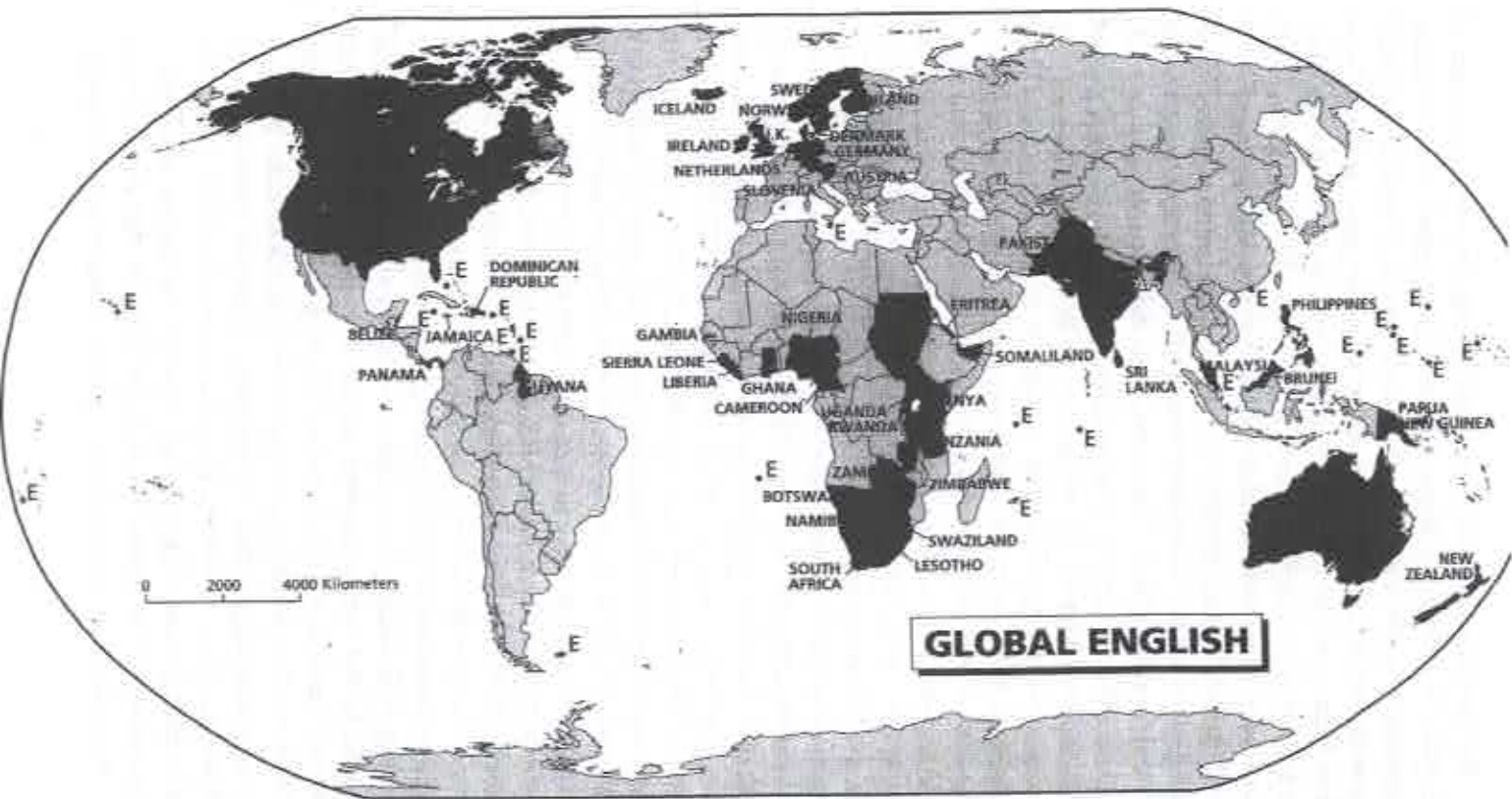


Figure 2.3. Places where English has one or more of the following roles: as the national or as an official language, as a language in which more than 50 percent of the general population has fluency, as the *lingua franca* of government, higher education, and commerce in plural societies, and as an outpost dating from colonial times. Data from several sources, including R. G. Gordon, Jr. (ed.), *Ethnologue: Languages of the World* (Dallas: SIL International, 2007), *Book of the Year 2007* (Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica 2007), and Graddol (2004).

and civil servants work in three: English, German, and French. Among these, English is increasingly dominant, and English is the *lingua franca* during EU discussions in Brussels, although familiarity with English still varies widely in the realm (figure 2.4). English is also spreading through the school systems of Eastern Europe in the wake of the momentous 2004 expansion of the European Union. "In Central Europe... knowledge of English has become a basic skill of modern life comparable with the ability to drive a car or use a personal computer" (*Economist*, 2004).

In the global periphery, English is spreading in the nodes and along the corridors of globalization, but like Latin before it, English is also diverging into various forms that are likely to prestage the language map of the future. English is now taught to hundreds of millions of schoolchildren throughout the periphery, but even as they learn the standard version, they are blending what they learn in class with what they see and hear in the media, mixing and adapting "their" English in ways that reflect local environs. Chinglish, Singlish, Yin-glish, and other such versions will evolve locally, but they will have enough in common to form the basis for mutual comprehension in the globalizing age.

THE FUTURE PLAYING FIELD

The standard version of English (or something close to it) may be on the way to becoming the *lingua franca* of Europe, but even the global core has corners in which globalization proceeds essentially without the global language. Take the train from Narita International Airport to the heart of Tokyo, and you are greeted by what seems to be a familiar, somehow American scene, except that the traffic keeps left and the crowds are more formally dressed and, in general, more orderly. The people on the Ginza's wide sidewalks are also more homogeneous ethnically than, perhaps, in any other major city in the world. Even at the height of the tourist season, Japanese overwhelmingly outnumber visitors. Glass-and-chrome high-rises flank Tokyo's major avenues, international hotel chains stake their claims to prime locations, and the big names of international commerce, from Sony to Chanel, crowd the city center. Have lunch in one of Tokyo's many top-floor restaurants, and you overlook one of the world's signature landscapes of globalization.

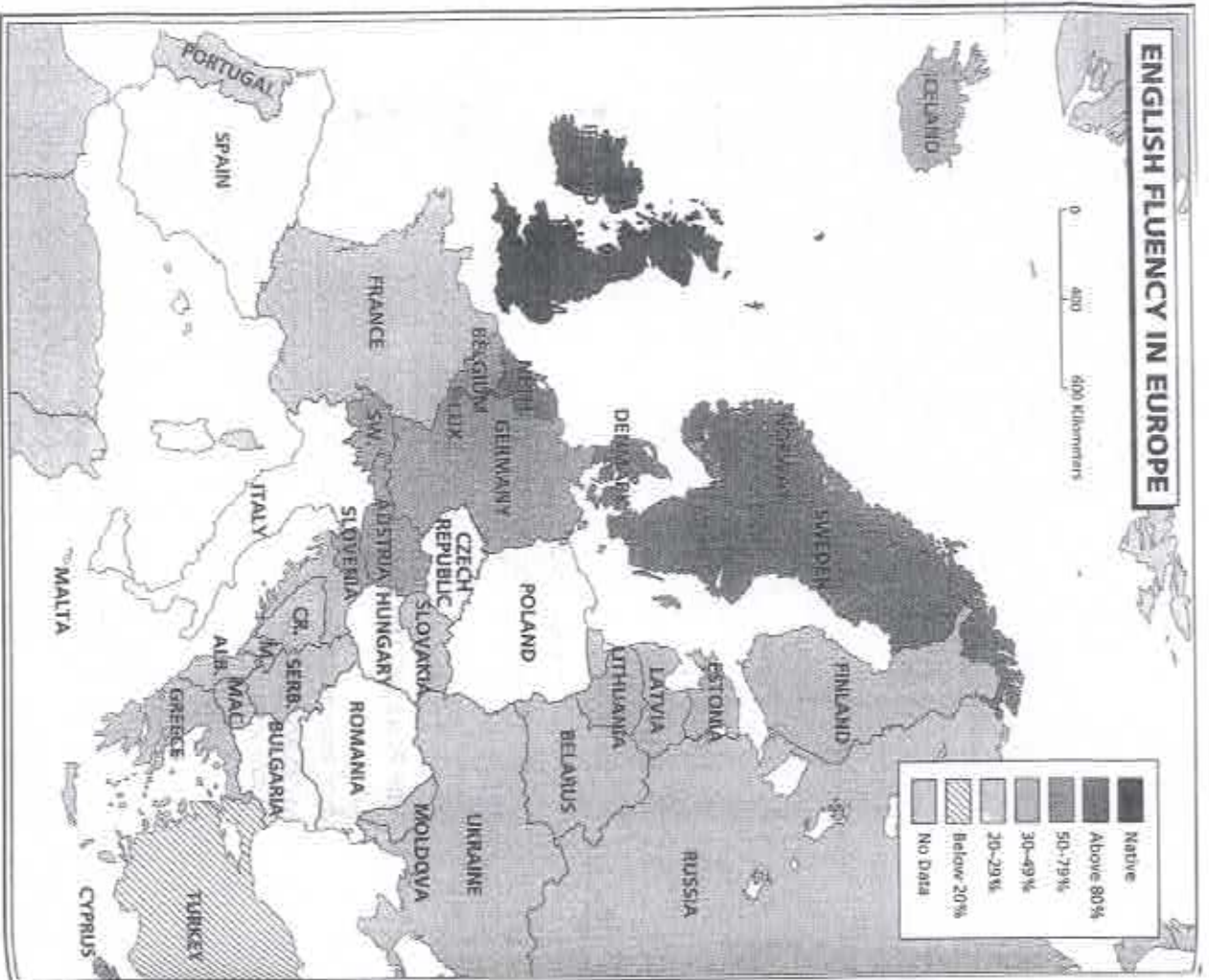


Figure 2.4. English proficiency in countries of Europe. English is spoken by large majorities of the population in the Netherlands, Denmark, and Sweden, and by more than half the people in several other countries. Data from the European Commission's *Special Eurobarometer 243: "Europeans and Their Languages"* (Brussels, 2006) and Wikipedia; information for Switzerland, Norway, and Iceland are estimates. Data for several Eastern European countries are unavailable.

But the linguistic landscape displays only the thinnest veneer of English. To globalists, the Tokyo skyline might suggest that the leading language of globalization is ubiquitous here, but locals and locals know better: Japan guards and nurtures its language as carefully as does France, perhaps even more so. Written Japanese is not nearly as susceptible to Anglicization as is French, and unlike France, Japan has strongly resisted the influx of intercultural migrants despite its declining and aging population. Again unlike French, Japanese did not become a world language; Japan's imperial conquests came late, remained geographically restricted, and did not last long enough. During modern periods of adaptation and invention, the Japanese borrowed and adopted knowledge and skills from the British and the Americans (driving on the left is a legacy of the former), but English usage made only the slightest inroads: Japanese remained the language of technology and modernization, even after the American military conquest and Japan's subsequent resurrection. What the Japanese proved is that you can have globalization without Anglicization. Although Japan's governing and technological elites are bilingual, and English is a school subject, Japan's universities, research institutions, and global corporations conduct their discourse mainly in Japanese. Currently, less than one percent of Japanese claim fluency in English (according to an estimate in *Ethnologue*, 2007), far fewer than in any of the original EU countries (figure 2.3). If this is the case, not many more than 100,000 Japanese, in a population of 127 million, are bilingual in English. Yet Japan is one of the most powerful forces of globalization; its economy among the largest in the world.

If this is possible in Japan, what does it say about the primacy of English in the globalizing world of the future? One of the implications of the planet's demographic prospect discussed in chapter 1 is that the percentage of people speaking Standard English as their first language will decline throughout the twenty-first century, because the bulk of the coming growth will be in countries where English does not have a strong presence. Three generations ago, nearly 10 percent of the planet's population spoke English at home, but various estimates suggest that this number is now down to 6 percent and will decline to 5 percent by mid-century (Graddol, 1997). The notion that Standard English will become the universal language in the wake of the current wave of globalization still has currency, but the evidence points in other directions. A combination of factors,

ranging from the protectionism of Japan and France to nationalism as displayed by Arabic-speaking countries and expansionism now carrying Spanish into new frontiers, will affect its prospects. And English itself, like Latin 2000 years ago, is undergoing modifications that suggest that it will become the common base for numerous new versions (McArthur, 1998). Thus, the role of English appears to be changing from its heavily protected standard version to an adaptable undercarriage for communication ranging from the flexibly informal to the necessarily rigidly precise (for example, in scientific contexts). In this latter form, it may indeed continue to provide the dominant medium for international communication, perhaps for generations to come, but even so it will by no means constitute the only one. As a result, there will not only be various "Englishes" horizontally, but also vertically. Just as Hong Kong "Chinglish" has limited similarity to Lagos "Yorlish" (Yoruba-English), so scientific English will differ strongly from business English, one of the powerful catalysts of the still-continuing ascent of English in such regions as the European Union and the Pacific Rim (Economist, 2007a). And while some societies will resist English penetration as a matter of national policy, this only serves to enhance the value of fluency in more than one major language of which English is one.

To locals and prospective mobals, this means that bilingualism and multilingualism are the key to a better future. It is well established that people speaking English as their first language are among the world's least multilingually capable, whether in Britain, America, or Australia. The imperial legacy of English has left a residue of indifference as well as incompetence, revealed most recently in the Iraq War by the statistic that out of approximately 1000 employees in the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad, only six were completely fluent in Arabic. While many Americans loudly proclaim that immigrant Hispanics should be subject to "English only" regulations, comparatively few English-speaking Americans have responded to the latest immigration by becoming bilingual themselves. But in an increasingly multilingual world, English-only speakers may find themselves at a growing disadvantage, and locals able to achieve bilingual competence are more likely to succeed when they become mobals. Even as growing numbers of children are learning English as a second language in Indonesia and China, some national governments, including Chile and Mongolia, have set the goal of bilingual competence for all

students as a matter of educational policy. David Graddol is quoted as predicting that "within a decade nearly a third of the world's population will all be trying to learn English" (Economist, 2006). As a result, bilingualism and multilingualism, with various versions of English in the mix, are likely to be the norm of the future, with English-only notions (and speakers) relegated to the dustbin of history.

To millions of villagers born this decade in the global periphery, local language still pervades personal identity, its constraints impeding the road uphill. But the pattern of language is undergoing revolutionary change even as the demographic map heralds a new era. Urban locals will increasingly outnumber their rural contemporaries, and in the ethnic neighborhoods of future multicultural megacities their social identities will be less leavened by language. They will learn other tongues and they will forge their own. For them, multilingualism will be key to surmounting the power of place.