

Language



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FIGURE 6.1 Dora Observatory, South Korea. The border between North Korea and South Korea is divided by the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ), a borderland that is 160 miles (250 km) long and an average of 4 miles (2.5 km) wide. The DMZ is filled with landmines, fences, and open fields. This is the view looking from South Korea to the North Korean town of Kijong-dong.

Standing on a platform, I peered through a telescope and looked across the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) into North Korea at the town of Kijong-dong (Fig. 6.1). It translates to “peace village,” but South Koreans call it “propaganda village.” The buildings look nice from a distance, but many appear to be shells. At night, taller buildings have lights shining out of the top windows, but no lights lower in the building, suggesting that the North Koreans mounted lights on the ceiling, but did not build any floors or walls inside the shells. The “windows” on several buildings appear to be painted facades designed to look like windows (Wharton 2018).

Maps of languages in East Asia show the Korean language being spoken across the Korean Peninsula. Both North Korea, the “hermit kingdom” that attempts to function separately from the world, and South Korea, which is deeply integrated into the global economy as the world’s 11th largest economy, speak the same language. But the lack of interaction between North Koreans and South Koreans since the

Korean War ended in 1953 is changing that. One linguist who studies the two Koreas reported that language divergence is already happening.

In this chapter, we question what languages are and examine the roles they play in cultures. We study the spatial distribution of the world’s languages and learn how they diffuse, change, rise to dominance, and even become extinct. Finally, we examine how language contributes to making places unique.

CHAPTER OUTLINE

6.1 Define language and describe the role of language in culture.

- Language and Culture
- What Is a Language?
- Standardized Language
- Dialects

6.2 Explain how languages are related and distributed.

- Definition and Debate
- Language Formation
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- Languages of sub-Saharan Africa

6.3 Explain how language can be used as a unifying or dividing force.

- Lingua Franca
- Creole Languages
- Multilingualism
- The Prospect of a Global Language

6.4 Determine the role language plays in making places.

- Toponyms and History
- Changing Toponyms

6.1 Define Language and Describe the Role of Language in Culture.

In an effort to prevent the creep of English words like *hashtag* and *email* into French vocabulary, the French government has created the word *#motdièse* to replace *#hashtag*. As a result, French Twitter has enjoyed poking fun at the government (Fig. 6.2). While some of the alternative French terms have stuck, many English terms are easier to say, are too entrenched, or are too widespread to replace.

Language is a fundamental element of local and national culture. The French government works diligently, even aggressively, to protect the French language. In 1635, it created the Académie Française, an institution charged with standardizing and protecting the French language. Since the 1970s, the diffusion of globalized terms into French, which linguists call loanwords or borrowed words, has posed an enormous challenge for the Académie Française.

With the support of many French people, the French government passed a law in 1975 banning the use of foreign words in advertisements, television, and radio broadcasts, as well as official documents, unless no French equivalent could be found. In 1992, France amended its constitution to make French the official language. In 1994, the French government passed another law to stop the use of foreign, mainly English, words in France, with a hefty fine imposed for violators. The law mandates French translations for globalized words in official communications rather than *le hashtag*, *le meeting*, *le weekend*, *le drugstore*, or *le hamburger*.

The Internet, where 45 percent of users browse in English or Chinese (Fig. 6.3), creates more challenges for the Académie Française. Some Académie translations are cumbersome. For example, the official translation of *email* was *courrier électronique*, but the Académie shortened it to *courriel*. Either way, *courriel* has not caught on in everyday French,



FIGURE 6.2 French Twitter enjoyed poking fun at the Académie Française, who designated the French word *#motdièse* (translating to “sharp word”) to replace the English word *#hashtag*. A French blogger who goes by @TilltheCat asked “With the story of *#motdièse*, I wonder if I will have to rename myself Gilles the Cat,” referencing the common French name Gilles.

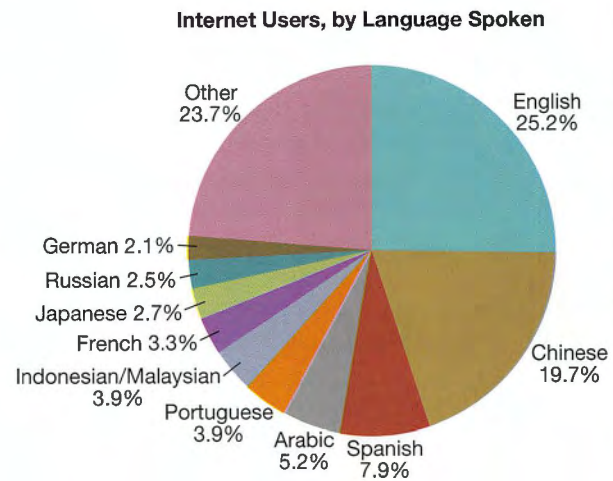
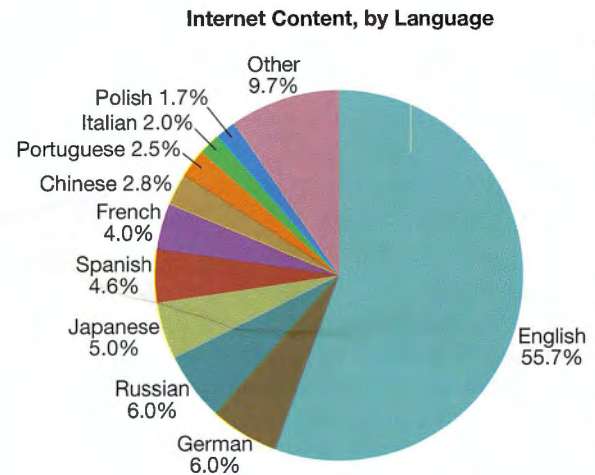


FIGURE 6.3 Internet Content and Users. The majority of the content on the Internet is in English, but only about 25 percent of Internet users are English-speakers.

and *email* has crept into French vocabulary. The Internet has expanded the use of English as a globalized language. English is the third most spoken language globally, after Chinese and Spanish, but the majority of content on the Internet is in English (see Fig. 6.3).

A **language** is a set of sounds and symbols that is used for communication. But in addition to demonstrating the conflicting forces of globalized language and local or national language, the example of *#motdièse* in France reveals that language is much more than a way of communicating. Language also reflects and shapes people and places, and so it is an integral part of culture, identity, and place making. Globalization of language challenges the preservation of national languages like French. Can we have globalized social networks, food, music, and culture while preserving national and local languages?

Language and Culture

Language is one of the cornerstones of culture. It shapes our very thoughts. We can choose the perfect word from a vast vocabulary to describe new experiences, ideas, and feelings, or we can create a new word. Who we are as a culture, as a people, is reinforced and redefined through shared language. Language reflects where a culture has been, what a culture values, and even how people in a culture think, describe, and experience events.

Perhaps the easiest way to appreciate the role of language in culture is to examine people who have experienced the loss of language under pressure from others. During the colonial period, both abroad and within countries, colonizers commonly forced subjugated peoples to speak the language of the colonizer. Forced language policies continued in many places until recently and were enforced primarily through public (government) and church (mission) schools.

American, Canadian, Australian, Russian, and New Zealand governments each had policies of forced assimilation during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, including not allowing indigenous peoples to speak Native languages. For example, the United States forced Native Americans and Alaska Natives to learn and speak English. Both mission schools and government schools enforced English-only policies to forcibly assimilate Natives into the dominant culture. Teachers punished students who spoke their native languages in schools, often with corporal (physical) punishments.

In an interview with the producers of an educational video, Clare Swan, an elder in the Kenaitze band of the

Dena'ina Indians in Alaska, described the impact of language assimilation policies on identity and culture:

No one was allowed to speak the language—the Dena'ina language. They [the American government] didn't allow it in schools, and a lot of the women had married non-native men, and the men said, "You're American now so you can't speak the language." *So, we became invisible in the community. Invisible to each other.* And, then, because we couldn't speak the language—*what happens when you can't speak your own language is you have to think with someone else's words, and that's a dreadful kind of isolation* [emphases added].

Language is quite personal. Our thoughts, expressions, and dreams are articulated in our language. The assimilation policy in the United States officially ended in 1934, but teachers in federal and private boarding schools continued for decades to punish students who spoke their native languages.

Native Americans and Alaska Natives have worked to teach language and rebuild culture through schools, community centers, ceremonies, and celebrations. Shared language makes people in a culture visible to each other and to the rest of the world. Language helps cement cultural **identity**, how we make sense of ourselves (**Fig. 6.4**).

Language not only creates a shared identity; it can also reveal much about the way people and cultures view reality. For example, Irish is a Celtic language spoken mainly in western Ireland. Irish has no words for "yes" and "no." Even when speaking English, Irish people often respond to questions with phrases like, "Wouldn't that be grand?" in place of "yes," or "You think so, now?" in place of "no." Irish see "yes" and "no" as closing the door to conversation, and conversation and storytelling are arts among Irish.

Some Southeast Asian languages have no verb tenses, reflecting a less-sharp cultural distinction between then and now. Given the American culture's preoccupation with dating and timing, it is difficult for many in the United States to understand how speakers of Southeast Asian languages perceive the world.

What Is a Language?

Many geography textbooks differentiate languages based on a criterion of mutual intelligibility. **Mutual intelligibility** means that two people can understand each other when speaking. The argument goes that if two of us are speaking two different languages, say Spanish and Portuguese, we will not be able to understand each other: The languages will be mutually unintelligible. If we are speaking two dialects of one language, however, we will understand each other because the dialects are mutually intelligible. Yet linguists have rejected the criterion of mutual intelligibility as strongly



FIGURE 6.4 Kenai, Alaska. The Kenaitze Indian tribe built a beautiful Wellness Center that includes an integrated health center, a gym, and a wellness kitchen. The Dena'ina language and culture are embedded in the design of the building.

as geographers have rejected environmental determinism (see discussion in Chapter 1).

First, mutual intelligibility is almost impossible to measure. Even if we used it as a criterion, many languages would fail the test. Famous linguist Max Weinreich once said that “a language is a dialect with an army.” Think about it. How could we possibly see Mandarin Chinese and Cantonese Chinese as dialects of the same language, when two people speaking the language to each other cannot understand what the other is saying? Both can read the standard Chinese characters that have been developed by a strongly centralized Chinese government. Television in China has subtitles in Chinese characters so that speakers of many different dialects can read and understand the programming. The written characters have the same meaning, but the spoken dialects (Mandarin and Cantonese are two of more than 1400 dialects of Chinese) are not mutually intelligible (**Fig. 6.5**). Less than half of China’s people use Mandarin Chinese as their daily language. We see Chinese as one language because of the weight of political and social institutions that lies behind it.

A further complication with the mutual intelligibility test is revealed in Scandinavia, where, for example, a Danish speaker and a Norwegian speaker (at least one from Oslo) will be able to understand what the other is saying. Yet we think of Danish and Norwegian as distinct languages. Having a Norwegian language helps Norwegians identify themselves as Norwegians

rather than as Danes or Scandinavians. Other languages that are recognized as separate but are mutually intelligible in many (or nearly all) aspects are Serbian and Croatian, Hindi and Urdu, and Navajo and Apache.

Given the complexities of distinguishing languages from dialects, the actual number of languages in use in the world remains a matter of considerable debate. The most conservative calculation puts the number at about 3000. However, most linguists and linguistic geographers today recognize between 5000 and 7000 languages, including more than 700 in India and over 3000 in Africa.

Standardized Language

Language is dynamic: New discoveries, technologies, and ideas require new words. A **standard language** is published, widely distributed, and purposely taught. A government can help sustain a standard language by making it official and requiring literacy in the language for government jobs. For example, Ireland promotes the use of the Irish language by requiring all government employees to pass an Irish-language examination before they can be hired.

Who decides what the standard language will be? The answer has to do with influence and power. In France, the Académie Française chose the French spoken in and around Paris as the official, standard language during the seventeenth century. In the United Kingdom, the standard English is called “The King’s English” and is the dialect spoken in and around London. In China, the government chose the Northern Mandarin Chinese heard in and around the capital, Beijing, as the official standard language.

One country may have several dialects of a language, and the standard one usually reflects who in the country had power when the standard language was chosen. The Italian spoken in Sicily is quite different from the Italian spoken north of Venice, and both dialects differ from the standard Italian spoken in Florence and Tuscany. The dialect in Florence and Tuscany became standard Italian because it was the language of the great thinkers and writers of the Italian Renaissance.

Dialects

Variants of a standard language along regional or ethnic lines are called **dialects**. Differences in vocabulary, syntax (the way words are put together to form phrases), pronunciation, cadence (the rhythm of speech), and even the pace of speech all mark a speaker’s dialect. Even if the written form of a statement follows the standard language, an accent can reveal the regional home of a person who reads the statement aloud. In the United States, the words *horse* and *oil* are written the same way in New England and in the South,



FIGURE 6.5 Major Chinese Dialects. Mandarin dialects are in the north, and southern dialects include Yue, which is also known as Cantonese.

Source: <https://www.dartmouth.edu/~chinese/maps/map4.html>

Data from: Bert Vaux, Harvard Survey of North American Dialects. Visualization by E.H. Foubberg and A.B. Murphy. © 2020 John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

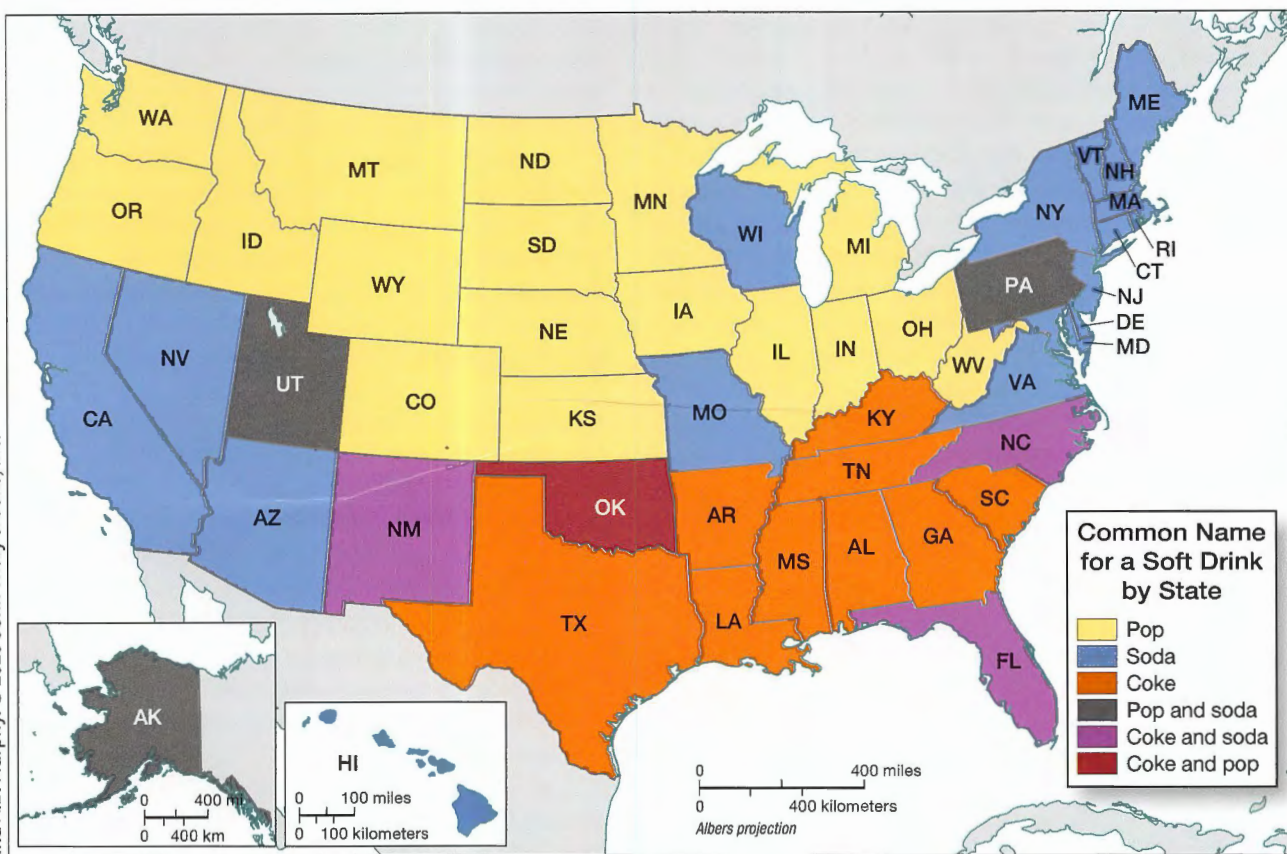


FIGURE 6.6 Common Names for a Soft Drink in the United States, by State. The isogloss for soda and pop generally divides the coasts from the rest of the country. A north-south isogloss distinguishes where pop and coke are commonly used. For county level data and to submit the word you use, see: <http://popvssoda.com/>

but to the Southerner, the New Englander may be saying “hahse,” and to the New Englander, the Southerner seems to be saying “all.”

Linguists think about dialects in terms of **dialect chains**. Dialects closest to each other geographically will be the most similar (greater spatial interaction), but as you travel farther, dialects will be increasingly different. If all of the dialects are part of one language, which dialect is the language? Language is an umbrella for a collection of dialects, and we tend to see one of these dialects as the “true” language only because it is the one we speak or because it is the one a government declares standard.

Dialects are often marked by actual differences in vocabulary. Linguistic geographers map the spatial distribution of words and use the map to mark isoglosses. An **isogloss** is a geographic boundary within which a particular linguistic feature occurs. In addition to the use of certain words, linguists who study dialects examine pronunciations, vocabularies, use of colloquial phrases, and syntax to determine isoglosses. While an isogloss looks like it has clear boundaries, the linguistic feature may occur beyond the isogloss. Fuzzy isoglosses may mean that a dialect is either expanding or declining in use.

Linguistic geographer Hans Kurath published atlases of dialects in the United States, defining Northern, Southern, and Midland dialects in the eastern part of the country. In the mid-1900s, Kurath drew distinct isoglosses among the three dialects, based on pronunciation of certain sounds and words. A more recent study of American dialects by linguist Bert Vaux used a 122-question online survey to map dialects in the United States. Maps of the soda, pop, and coke question (**Fig. 6.6**) and the hero, sub, poor-boy question reveal prominent dialects. New England and the South are distinct dialects, and the fuzzy border between the two regions is what Kurath called the Midland dialect. Much of the rest of the country has a mixture of dialects with some very localized dialects.

TC Thinking Geographically

Dialects in American English have different words for common things like soft drinks and sandwiches. Think of a unique word for a common thing in your region. Where do you think the **hearth** of this word is? Study the history of your region and think about relocation **diffusion** in your answer.

6.2 Explain How Languages Are Related and Distributed.

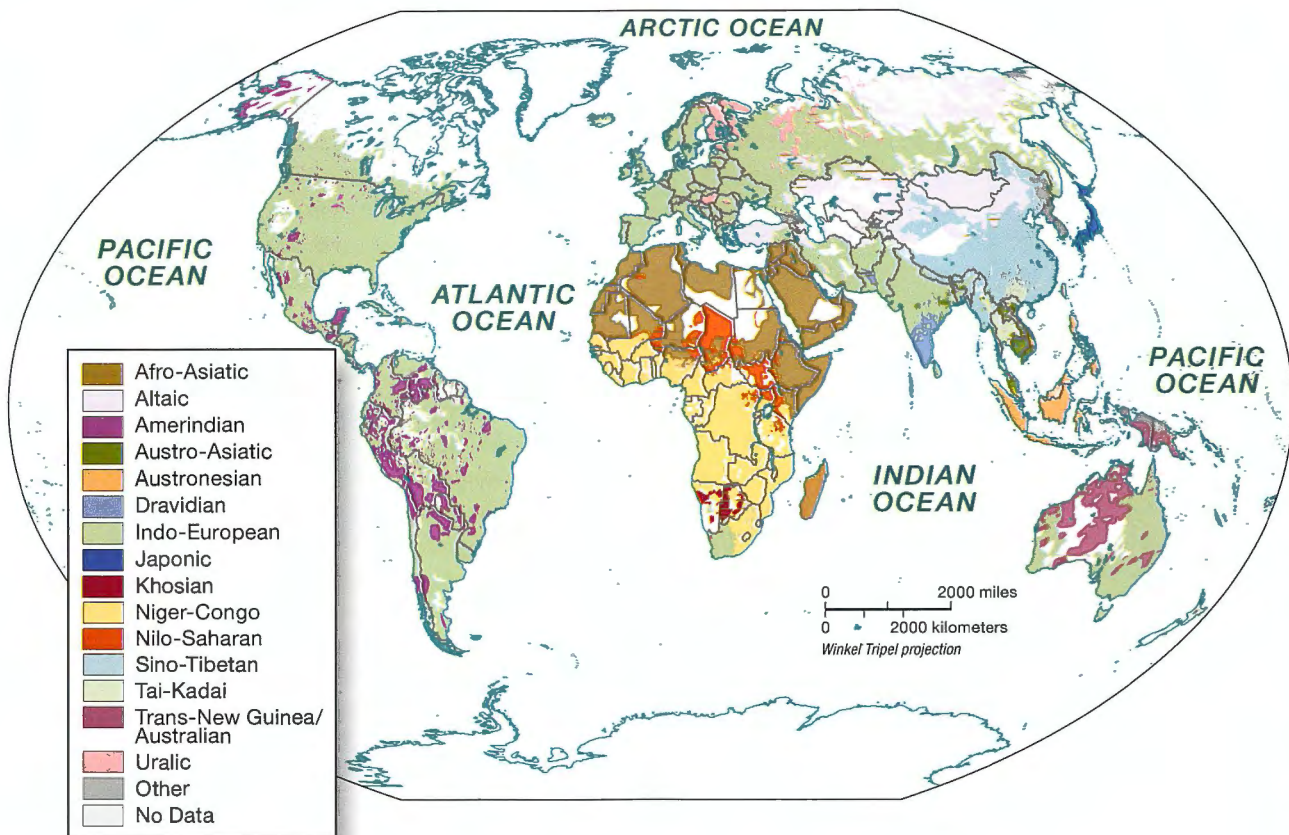
Linguists classify languages based on how closely related they are to one another. At the global scale, we classify languages into language families. Each **language family** includes multiple languages that have a shared but fairly distant origin. We break language families into **language subfamilies**, which are divisions within a language family that have more definitive commonalities and more recent common origins. The spatial extent of subfamilies is smaller than the extent of language families. Arranging from largest spatial extent to smallest, we classify languages into language families, language subfamilies, languages, and dialects.

Definition and Debate

Mapping language families at the global scale (**Fig. 6.7**) shows us how widespread some language families like Afro-Asiatic and Indo-European are and how limited the

extent of other language families like Japonic are. Figure 6.7 maps the distribution of 15 major language families, but not every language fits into this list of 15. The Indo-European language family has the widest spatial distribution and claims the largest number of speakers. Its distribution is a result of both contiguous and relocation diffusion. Very early on, Indo-European languages spread from their hearth into Europe and Asia. More recently, Europeans diffused Indo-European languages to the Americas, Africa, Asia, and Australia and the Pacific through colonization.

The world map of languages shows several language families spoken by small or isolated groups. For example, languages in the Austro-Asiatic language family survive in the interior of eastern India and in Cambodia and Laos. Remoteness helps account for the remaining languages in the Amerindian language family. These languages remain strongest in areas of Middle America, the high Andes, and northern Canada.



Source: Data from World Language Mapping System. Visualization by E.H. Fouberg and A.B. Murphy. © 2020 John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

FIGURE 6.7 Language Families of the World. The global distribution of language families reflects centuries of spatial interaction and flows of migrants. Indo-European languages came to the Americas from Europe through relocation diffusion after 1500 during the European colonial era. Languages in Southeast Asia and Madagascar (just east of Africa) are in the Austronesian language family and are connected as a result of centuries of spatial interaction.

If you look carefully at the map of world language families, some interesting questions arise. Look at the island of Madagascar off the east coast of Africa. The primary languages people in Madagascar speak are not part of a language family found in Africa, but instead are part of the Austronesian family. Look at the spatial distribution of the Austronesian language family. Why is a language from this family spoken on an island so close to Africa? Anthropologists have found evidence that people traveled by sea from the islands of Southeast Asia across the Indian Ocean to Madagascar. At the time this happened, Africans had not sailed across the strait to Madagascar, so no African languages diffused to the island. By the time Africans arrived later in Madagascar, the Austronesian language had been well established.

Language Formation

To classify languages, linguists and linguistic geographers study relationships among languages, looking for similarities and differences. One way to find similarities among languages is to examine particular words, looking for cognates across languages. A **cognate** is a word that has the same origin, that is derived from the same word. Take the case of Italian, Spanish, and French, all of which are members of the Romance language subfamily of the Indo-European language family because they are derived from Latin. The Latin word for milk, *lacte*, became *latte* in Italian, *leche* in Spanish, and *lait* in French; all are cognates. Also, the Latin for the number eight, *oto*, became *otto*, *ocho*, and *huit*, respectively. Even if linguists did not already know that Italian, Spanish, and French were languages rooted in Latin, they could deduce a connection among the languages through the cognates.

During the nineteenth century Jakob Grimm, a scholar and a writer of fairy tales, suggested that cognates might prove the relationships between languages scientifically. He explained that related languages have similar, but not identical, consonants. He believed these consonants would change over time in a predictable way. Hard consonants, such as the *v* and *t* in the German word *vater*, softened into *vader* (Dutch) and *father* (English). Using Grimm's theory that consonants became softer over time, linguists realized that consonants would become harder as they went "backwards" toward the original hearth and original language. From Jones's notions and Grimm's ideas came the first major linguistic hypothesis. Linguists proposed the existence of an ancestral Indo-European language called Proto-Indo-European, which in turn gave rise to modern languages from Scandinavia to North Africa and from North America through parts of Asia to Australia.

Locating the Hearth of Proto-Indo-European

German linguist August Schleicher was the first to compare the world's language families to the branches of a tree (Fig. 6.8). In the mid-nineteenth century, he suggested that new languages form through **language divergence**, which happens when spatial

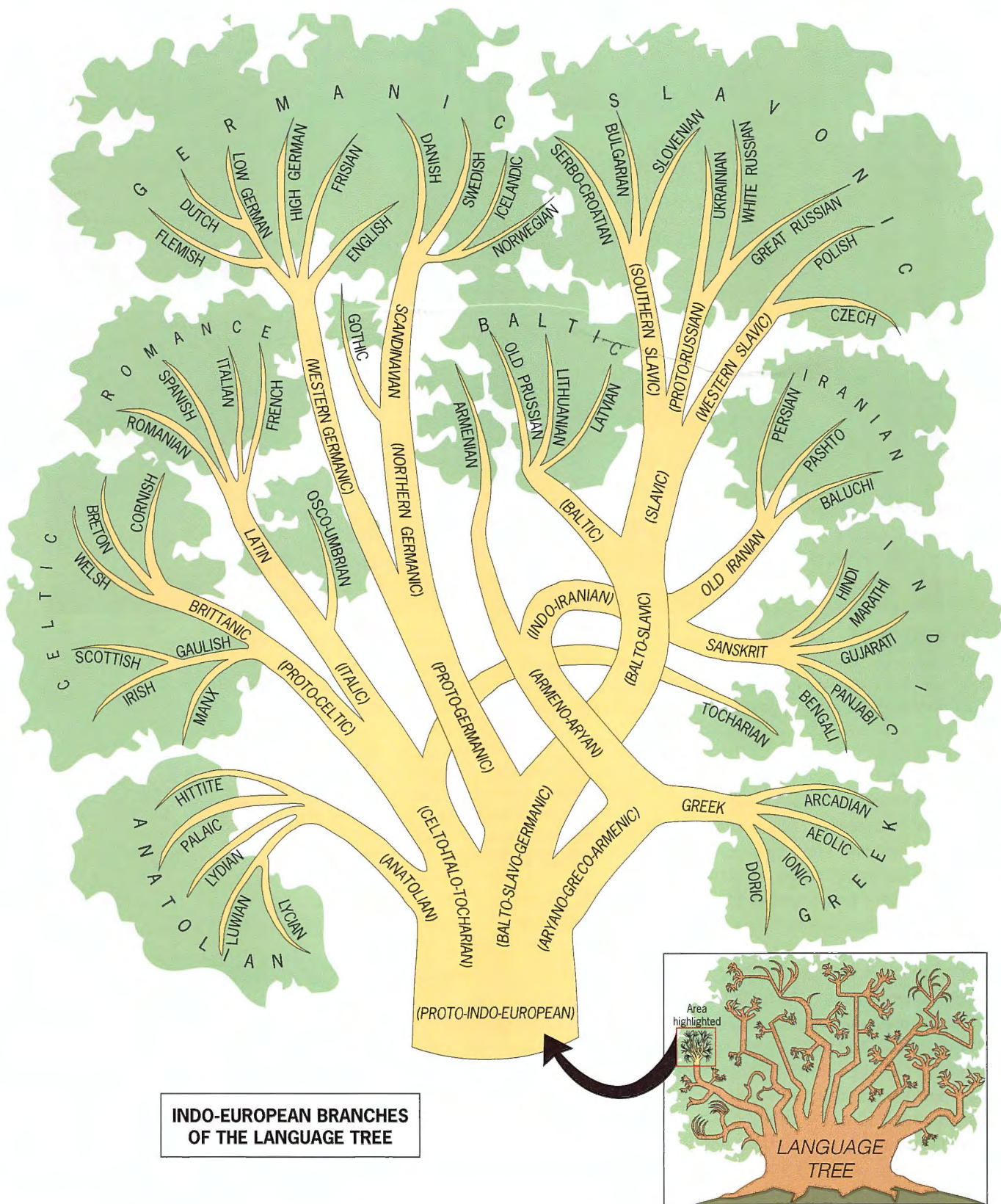
interaction decreases among speakers of a language. First, the language fragments into dialects, and then dialects form discrete languages. Language divergence happened between Spanish and Portuguese and is now happening with Korean. Modern Korean may eventually diverge into two languages because of the lack of spatial interaction between North and South Koreans (see Fig. 6.1). Each new language becomes a new leaf on a tree, its branches leading back to the hearth, a major branch or even the trunk of the tree.

Through **backward reconstruction**, tracking consonants and cognates to reconstruct elements of a prior common language, linguists can provide insight into how languages fit together and where the branches were once joined. Finding the major branch of a language family is a daunting task because reconstructing even a small branch of the language tree is complicated. Languages do not change solely through divergence (the splitting of branches). They also change through convergence and extinction. If peoples with different languages have consistent spatial interaction, **language convergence** can take place, collapsing two languages into one. Instances of language convergence create special problems for researchers because the rules of reconstruction may not apply or may be unreliable.

Language extinction creates branches on the tree with dead ends, representing a halt in interaction between the **extinct language** and languages that continued (Fig. 6.9). Languages become extinct either when all descendants perish, which can happen when an entire people succumb to disease or invaders, or when descendants use another language and abandon learning and speaking their native language. The process of language extinction does not occur overnight. It takes place across generations, with degrees of bilingualism occurring in the interim.

Tracking divergence, convergence, extinction, and spatial interaction, linguists theorize that the hearth of the Proto-Indo-European language was somewhere near the Black Sea. The hearth was most likely in Anatolia, which is present-day Turkey. Proto-Indo-European speakers moved out from the hearth, vocabularies grew, and linguistic divergence occurred, creating new languages. Analyzing the vocabulary of the Proto-Indo-European language, linguists can see the environment, physical geography, culture, and economy of the language's hearth. Based on the reconstructed vocabulary of Proto-Indo-European, it looks like the language dates back to people who used horses, had the wheel, and traded goods widely.

Indo-European diffused from its hearth west into Europe and east into South Asia, including what is now Pakistan and India (Fig. 6.10). In Europe, the presence of Europe's oldest Indo-European language, Celtic (including Irish and Welsh), in the far west supports the idea that newer languages arrived from the east. In South Asia, evidence supports diffusion from the hearth, south to the Caspian Sea, and then east into the Indus and Ganges river basins around 3500 years ago. A second wave of Indo-European speakers moved from the hearth into present-day Iran around 2800 years ago.



INDO-EUROPEAN BRANCHES OF THE LANGUAGE TREE

FIGURE 6.8 Indo-European Language Tree. The Indo-European language family is just one of more than a dozen major language families mapped in Figure 6.7. This graphic shows how the languages in the Indo-European family branched off of the same major branch, what linguists call Proto-Indo-European.

Source: Adapted from T. V. Gamkrelidze and V. V. Ivanov, "The Early History of Indo-European Languages," Scientific American, March 1990, p. 111.



EyesWideOpen/Getty Images News/Getty Images

FIGURE 6.9 Mahiyangana, Sri Lanka. The Vedda people in Sri Lanka are the indigenous, aboriginal people who have lived on the island for more than 2500 years. The Vedda language is nearly extinct, as people have adopted Sinhala (an Indo-European language), which is the majority language in Sri Lanka, as their primary language. Vedda villages like this one are located in the remote interior of the country.

How Indo-European languages took hold is another question. The **conquest theory** gives one explanation. This theory holds that early speakers of Proto-Indo-European spread from the hearth into Europe on horseback, overpowering earlier inhabitants and beginning the diffusion and differentiation of Indo-European languages. Over time Proto-Indo-European diverged into languages that are clustered today in the subfamilies of the Indo-European language family.

The **agricultural theory** gives another explanation for the spread of Proto-Indo-European. This theory holds that Proto-Indo-European spread with the diffusion of agriculture. Citing the archaeological record, Luca Cavalli-Sforza and Albert Ammerman proposed that for every generation (25 years), the agricultural frontier moved approximately 18 kilometers (11 mi). Farmers from the hearth of the Proto-Indo-European language moved across Europe for thousands of years. The archaeological record supports the agricultural thesis (**Fig. 6.11**). With established

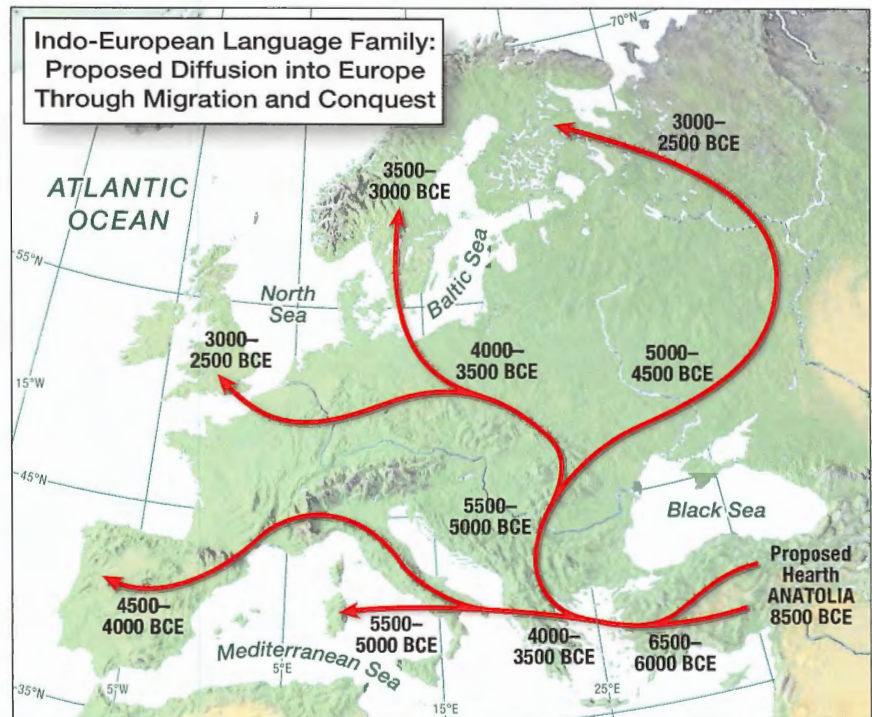
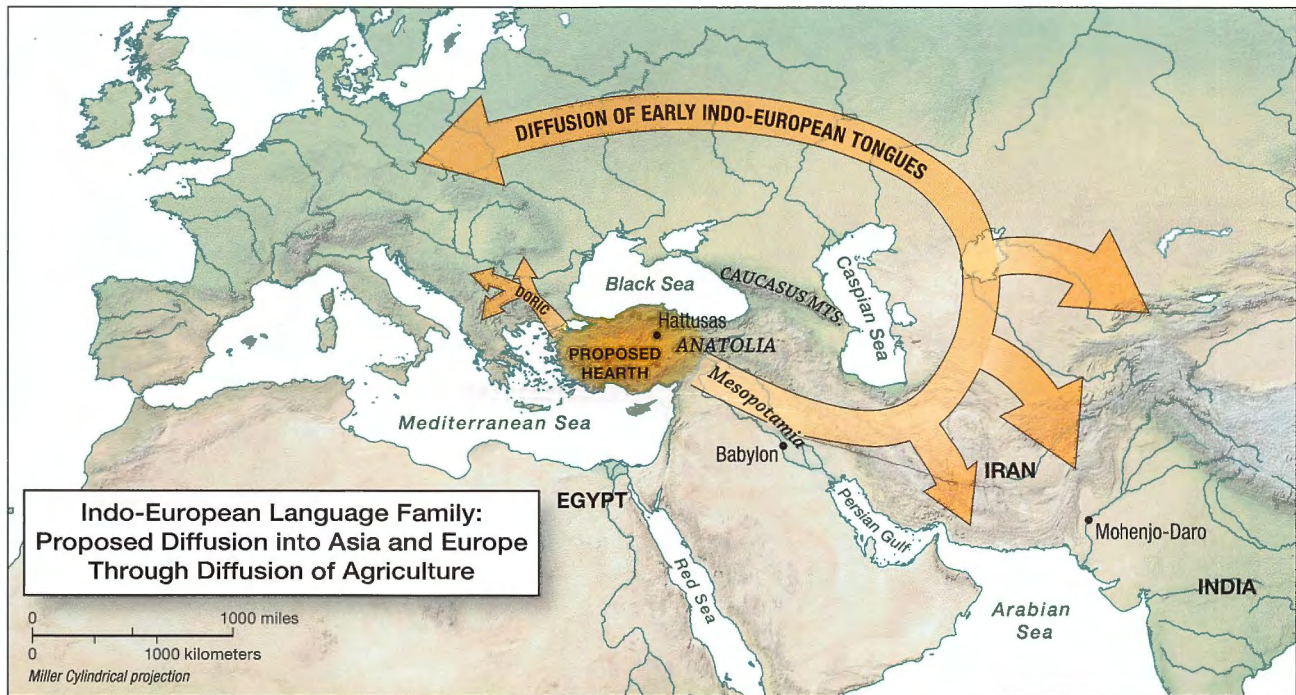


FIGURE 6.10 Indo-European Language Family: Proposed Diffusion into Europe through Migration and Conquest. Approximate timings and routes for the diffusion of Indo-European languages into Europe through migration and conquest.



Source: Based on: Bouckaert et al., 2012.

FIGURE 6.11 Indo-European Language Family: Proposed Diffusion into Europe and Asia through Diffusion of Agriculture. This theory proposes that the Indo-European language family began in Anatolia and spread eastward into South Asia and westward into Europe with the diffusion of agriculture.

farming providing a more reliable food supply, population rose. A slow but steady wave of farmers moved further into Europe and mixed with nonfarming peoples. Some of the nonfarming societies in their path held out, and their languages persevered. Euskera (the Basque language) survives to this day as a probable direct link to Europe's preagricultural era.

Celtic, the oldest Indo-European language in Europe, migrated into Europe around 3000 years ago. Celtic speech survives in western Ireland, Wales, Scotland, and western France. In most places, Celtic languages fell victim to subsequent migrations, and empire-building. Celtic speakers maintained their language in the most remote western margins of Europe.

The Languages of Europe

The map of world languages (Fig. 6.7) demonstrates how widespread the Indo-European language family is, dominating not just Europe but also significant parts of Asia (including Russia and India), North and South America, Australia, and portions of southern Africa. About half the world's people speak Indo-European languages. The Indo-European language family is broken into subfamilies such as Romance, Germanic, and Slavic. And each subfamily is broken into individual languages, such as English, German, Danish, and Norwegian within the Germanic subfamily.

The language map of Europe (Fig. 6.12) shows mainly Indo-European languages, with pockets of the Uralic and Altaic language families also represented. Finnish, Estonian, and Hungarian are major languages of the Uralic family, which, as Figure 6.7 shows, extends across Eurasia to the Pacific Coast. The Altaic family, to which Turkish belongs, is equally widespread and includes Turkish, Kazakh, Uigur, Kyrgyz, and Uzbek languages.

The Subfamilies The Romance languages (French, Spanish, Italian, Romanian, and Portuguese) lie in the areas of Europe that were once controlled by the Roman Empire. Over time, local languages mixed with Latin, which the Roman Empire introduced to the region. The Romance languages have much in common because of their Latin connection.

The Germanic languages (English, German, Danish, Norwegian, and Swedish) reflect the expansion of peoples out of northern Europe to the west and south. Some Germanic peoples spread to the northern and northeastern edges of the Roman Empire. Other Germanic peoples spread into areas that were never part of an ancient empire (present-day Sweden, Norway, Denmark, and the northern part of the Netherlands). The Germanic character of English bears the imprint of a further migration—that of the Normans into England in 1066, which brought a Romance language to the British Isles. The essential Germanic character of English remained, but many new words were added that are Romance in origin.



FIGURE 6.12 Language Subfamilies and Languages in Europe. The Indo-European language family includes three major sub-families in Europe: Romance, Germanic, and Slavic languages. Romance languages are in the Mediterranean region. Germanic languages are found in northern Europe. Most people in eastern Europe speak Slavic languages. The distribution of language sub-families that are not part of the Indo-European language family, including Celtic, Euskera (Basque), and Finno-Ugric can be seen on this map, as well.

The Slavic languages (Russian, Polish, Czech, Slovak, Ukrainian, Slovenian, Serbo-Croatian, and Bulgarian) developed as Slavic people migrated from a base in present-day Ukraine around 2000 years ago. Slavic languages overwhelmed Latin-based languages along much of the eastern part of the old Roman Empire. One notable exception is Romanian, a Latin-based language that either survived the Slavic invasion or was reintroduced by migrants.

Relationship to the Political Pattern A comparison of Europe's linguistic and political maps shows a high correlation between the languages spoken and country borders (see Fig. 6.12). Several Romance languages have their

own countries: French in France; Spanish in Spain; Portuguese in Portugal; Romanian in Romania; and Italian in Italy. The eastern border of Germany marks the transition from Germanic to Slavic languages.

In some places, linguistic and political borders do not coincide. French extends into Belgium, Switzerland, and Italy. Even inside of France, you will find Basque in the south, Dutch in the north, and Celtic in Breton in the northwest. Romanian extends into Moldavia. Figure 6.2 underscores the complex cultural pattern of eastern Europe, where borders and languages do not coincide perfectly. There are German speakers in Hungary; Hungarian speakers in Slovakia, Romania, and Yugoslavia; Romanian speakers in Greece and Moldavia; Turkish speakers in Bulgaria; and Albanian speakers in Serbia.

One language on the map of Europe stands out for two reasons: First, it covers a very small land area, and second, it is not related to any other language family in Europe. Isolated in the Andorra Mountain region between Spain and France, the Basque people and their Euskera language survived the tumultuous history of Europe for thousands of years. Euskera never blended with another language or diffused from the Andorra region. Basques have a strong identity tied to their language and independent history, an identity that was cemented by repression under fascist dictator Francisco Franco. As ruler of Spain during and after World War II, Franco banned the Basque language and placed cultural and political leaders in prisons.

The Spanish government finally recognized Basque autonomy in its 1979 constitution. Spain gave the Basque language official status and transferred (devolved) some taxation and education powers from the Spanish capital to the Basque region. The Basque region now has a parliament and its own education system. The Basque government has the right to collect taxes, which makes it possible for it to fund programs and policies passed by its parliament. For a time, a group of Basque separatists continued to demand more and waged a campaign of violence against Spanish targets and moderate Basque leaders. The main opposition organization, ETA (Euskadi Ta Azkatasuna), disarmed in 2017. Basque identity and Basque nationalism remain strong (**Fig. 6.13**).

Languages in North America

The Spanish-speaking population in the United States is growing (**Fig. 6.14**). Business owners who employ Spanish speakers advocate for Spanish-language driving tests and education to help ready Spanish speakers for the workforce. In contrast, people who are opposed to migration and who object to the growth of the Spanish language are leading movements to promote “official English” policies. Although Spanish is only one of many non-English languages spoken in the United States, it overshadows all others in terms of number of speakers and is therefore typically the focus of the official English movement (**Table 6.1**).

During the 1980s, over 30 different states considered passing laws declaring English the state’s official language, and some 30 states today have declared English the official language of the state, either by statute or by amending the state constitution. A few states have passed English-plus laws, encouraging bilingualism for non-English speakers, and a few other states are officially bilingual, including Hawai’i (Hawai’ian and English), or have bilingual education, including New Mexico (Spanish and English).

Canada is officially bilingual, English and French, reflecting the country’s two major colonizers: Great Britain and France. Government documents, newspapers, websites, and even scholarly journals are printed in both English and French. Most of the country’s French speakers live in

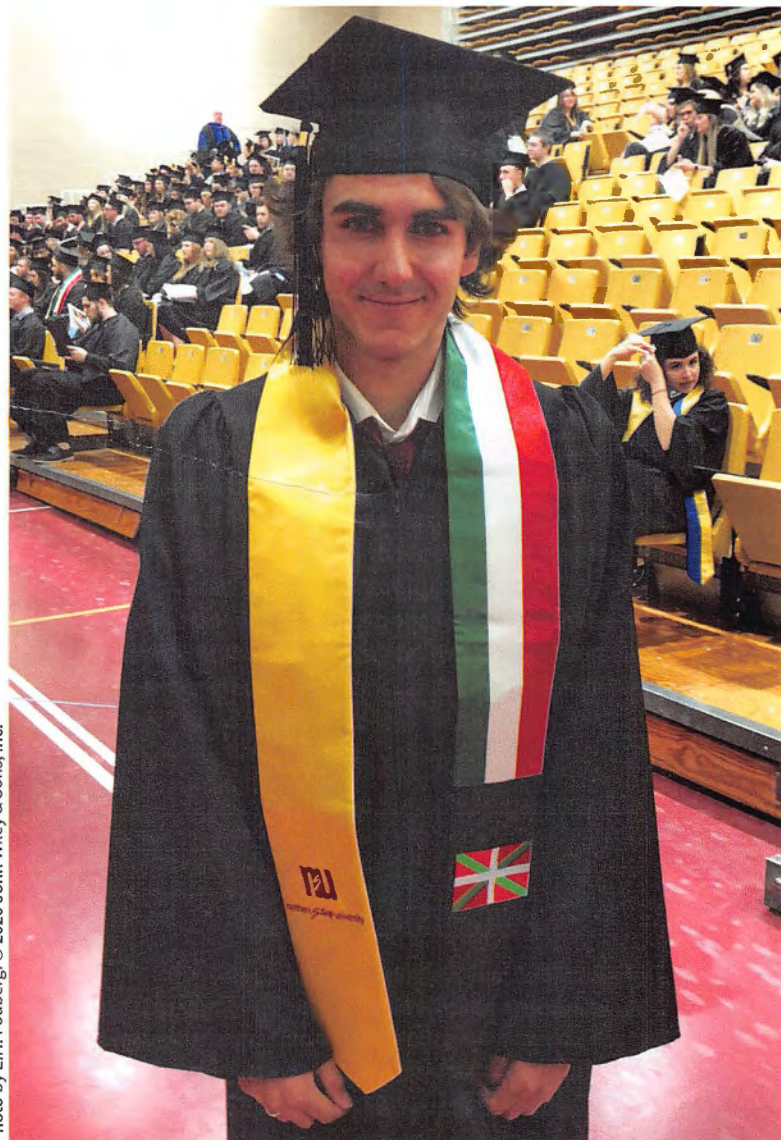


Photo by E.H. Fouberg. © 2020 John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

FIGURE 6.13 Aberdeen, South Dakota. International students in the United States may receive a sash with their home country’s colors or flag to wear at graduation. This young man from the Basque region in Spain asked his university (Northern State University) in the United States to put the Basque flag, not the Spanish flag, on his graduation sash.

the province of Quebec, and most people in Quebec speak French at home.

Since the 1970s, the Québécois (the people of Quebec) have used laws and policies to ensure that French is used in the province. In 1977, Quebec passed Law 101, which compelled all businesses in the province to demonstrate that they functioned in French. In response, many businesses and individuals moved out of the province of Quebec into neighboring Ontario. In 1993, the Quebec government passed a law requiring the use of French in advertising (**Fig. 6.15**). The Quebec law allows the inclusion of both French and English (or another language) translations on signage if the French

Data from: Census American Community Survey data, 2010. Visualization by E.H. Fouberg and A.B. Murphy. © 2020 John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

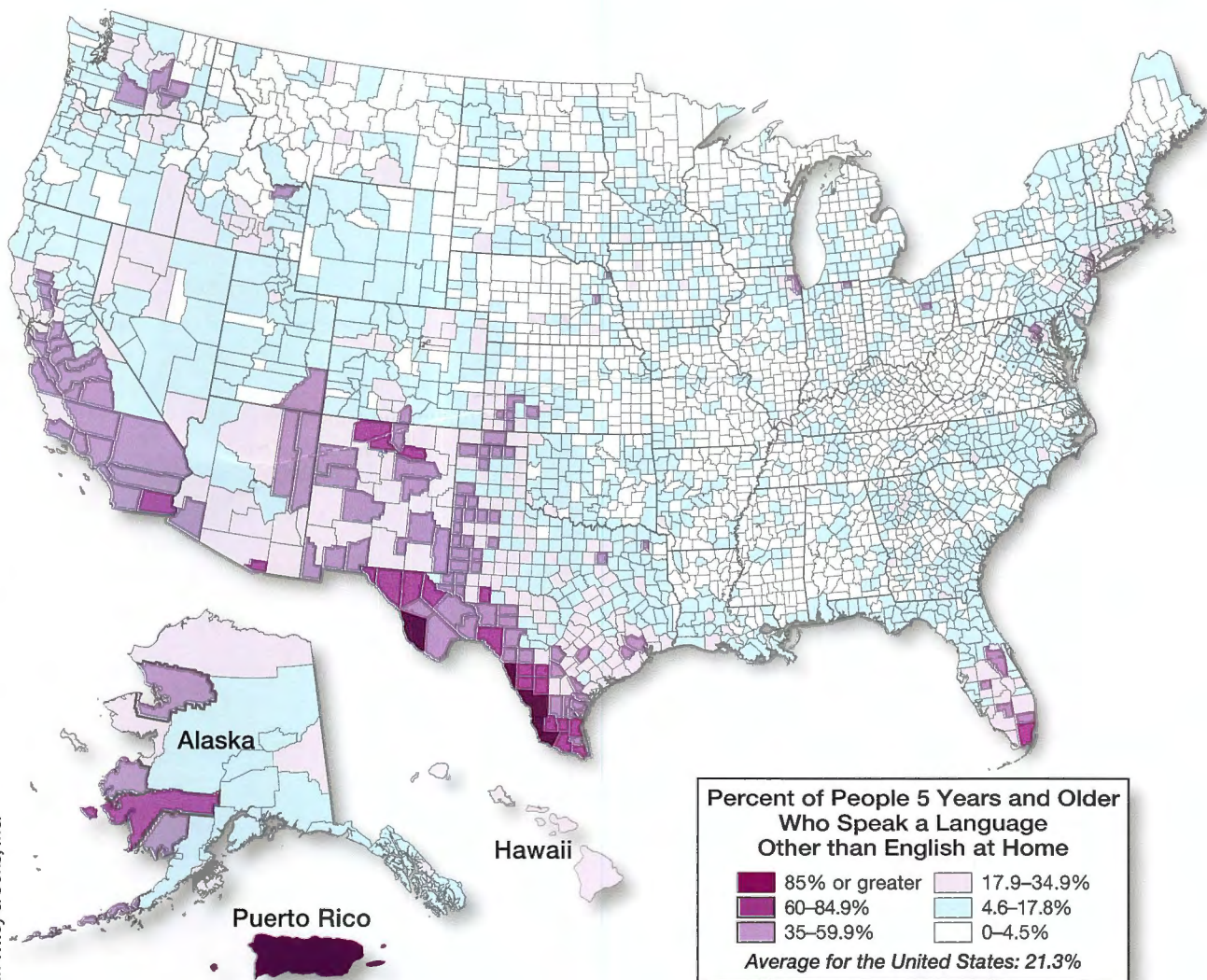


FIGURE 6.14 Percent of People 5 Years and Older Who Speak a Language Other than English at Home in the United States. The data presented include all non-English languages by county, including Alaska, Hawaii, and Puerto Rico. Residents of counties in the Southwest, Florida, and Puerto Rico are predominantly Spanish speaking. Bethel County in Alaska, where most residents are Yup'ik people who speak their indigenous language, also stands out in the 60 to 84.9 percent category on the map.

letters are twice the size of the other language's letters. In 2013, the province's strict language policies made international news when an Italian restaurant was asked to provide French-language translations for menu items, including pasta. The outrage over Pastagate, as the scandal came to be known, led the provincial government to promise to respond to language compliance complaints in a more "balanced" and "measured" manner, recognizing that menus and bank statements cannot be held to the same standard as educational materials and signage.

Not all of Quebec's residents identify with the French language. Within the province, a small proportion of people speak English at home, others speak indigenous languages, and still others speak another language altogether—one associated with their country of origin. When the Quebec parliament passed several laws promoting French during the 1980s and

1990s, members of Canada's First Nations who live in Quebec, including the Crees and Mohawks, expressed a desire to remain part of Canada if Quebec ever secedes from the country. During the same period, Quebec experienced a flow of international migrants, many of whom sought residence in Quebec. New immigrants must learn French under Quebec law.

Separatist movements are strongest when the group calling for autonomy or independence is ethnically or culturally distinct, wealth is unevenly distributed, or the group is remote from the center of power (see discussion of devolution in Chapter 8). Since the vote for independence failed in 1994, calls for independence in Quebec are decreasing and the separatist political party has captured fewer seats in recent parliamentary elections in the province. But even if Québécois are happy to remain in Canada, they may still feel a connection to France. The province even has a presence in

TABLE 6.1 Top Non-English Languages Spoken at Home by People over the Age of 5 in the United States.

Languages other than English spoken at home in the United States. Most Americans who speak these languages at home are also fluent in English.

Language	Total	Percent
1. Spanish	41,017,620	13.4
2. Chinese	3,462,091	1.1
3. Tagalog	1,746,344	0.6
4. Vietnamese	1,498,874	0.5
5. Arabic	1,227,768	0.4
6. French	1,202,060	0.4
7. Korean	1,095,161	0.4
8. Russian	936,344	0.3
9. German	917,812	0.3
10. Haitian	886,765	0.3

Source: Data from: United States Census Bureau Statistical Abstract, 2014. Visualization by E.H. Fouberg and A.B. Murphy. © 2020 John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

Paris in the Maison Quebec (House of Quebec), which functions like an embassy for Quebec in France. As people, ideas, and power flow through Quebec, change will continue. The desire of the Québécois to remain loyal to their French identity will keep the language alive.

Languages of Sub-Saharan Africa

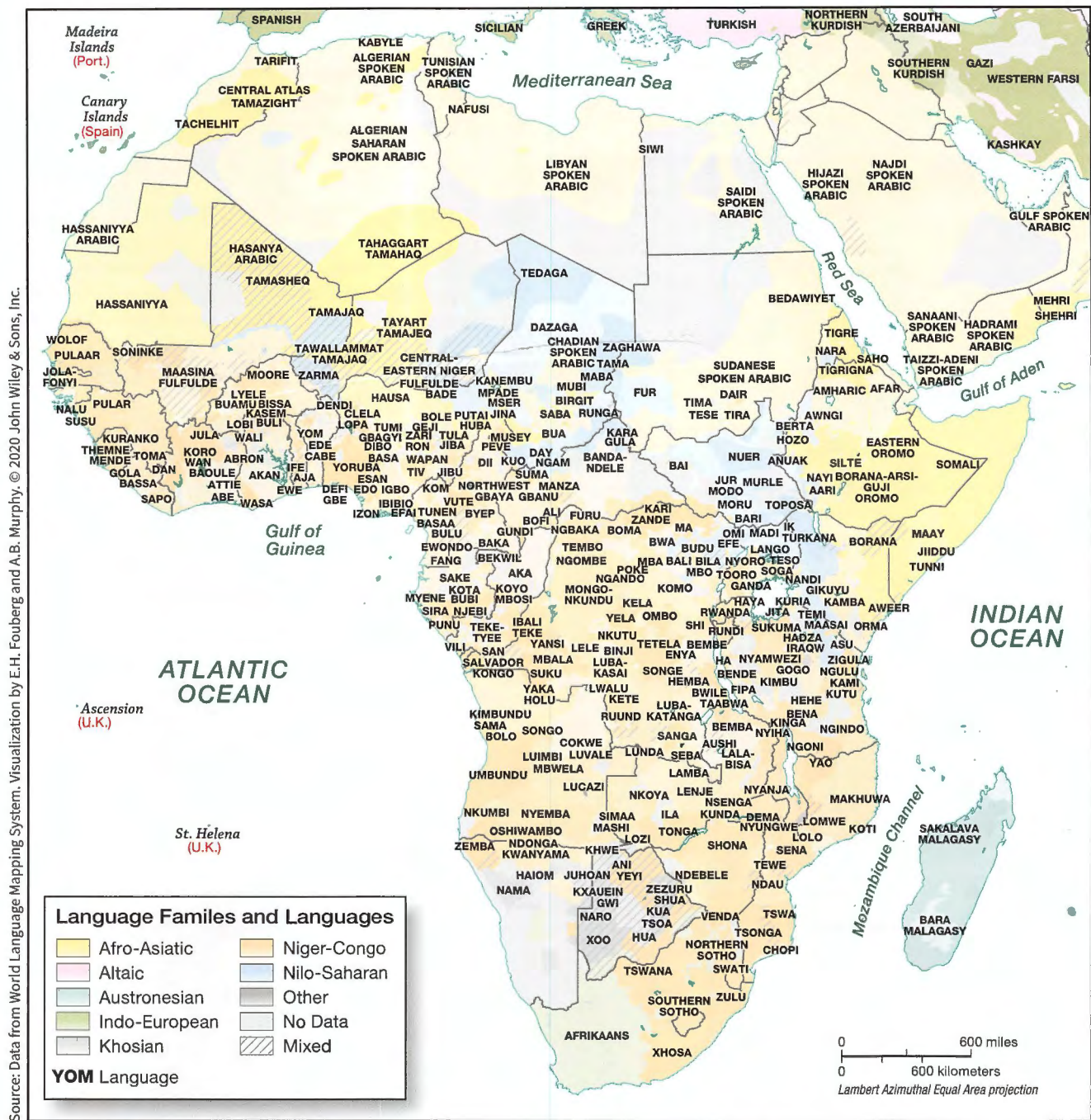
The world map of language families does not show the extreme fragmentation of languages in parts of the world, including sub-Saharan Africa. Figure 6.7 shows six major language families in Africa, with Afro-Asiatic the most widespread in North Africa and Niger-Congo the most widespread in sub-Saharan Africa. At the scale of Africa, we can map individual languages with different color tones for different language subfamilies so you can start to see the true extent of language diversity (**Fig. 6.16**).

The oldest languages of sub-Saharan Africa are the Khoisan languages, which include “click” sounds. Although



Andre Jenny/Alamy Stock Photo

FIGURE 6.15 Quebec City, Quebec. The imprint of the French-Canadian culture is evident in the cultural landscape of Rue Saint-Louis in Quebec City. Here, the architecture and store signs confirm that this region is not simply Canadian; it is French-Canadian.



Source: Data from World Language Mapping System. Visualization by E.H. Foubert and A.B. Murphy. © 2020 John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

FIGURE 6.16 Languages in Africa. Africa has seven major language families and more than 3000 languages (not all are labeled here).

they once dominated much of the region, Khoisan languages were marginalized by the invasion of speakers of Bantu languages. Connections among languages in the Bantu subfamily can be seen through the similar prefixes and vocabularies. These similarities mean that the Bantu languages have been in sub-Saharan Africa for a shorter time. The longer a language has been in a place, the more deeply languages will have splintered.

Focusing on the country scale reveals great linguistic diversity in sub-Saharan Africa. Nigeria’s 190 million people speak more than 500 different languages. The three

most prominent languages are Hausa in the north, Yoruba in the southwest, and Igbo in the southeast (Fig. 6.17). Of the remaining languages spoken in Nigeria, the vast majority are spoken by fewer than one million people. Indigenous languages persist because culture, community, and daily interactions are built around them.

The Nigerian government’s language policy for education officially supports indigenous languages, but English is widespread even in primary school. Education in Nigeria is compulsory (required) in elementary and junior secondary school, which is a total of nine years. Primary school lasts six years



Source: Data from World Language Mapping System. Visualization by E.H. Foubert and A.B. Murphy. © 2020 John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

FIGURE 6.17 Languages in Nigeria. Nigeria has more than 500 languages (not all are labeled here). The three largest languages are Yoruba, Hausa, and Igbo. English is an official language and is used in education after early primary school.

and junior secondary school lasts three years. According to Nigerian education policy, the first three years of primary school should be taught in the student's indigenous language or the "language of his/her immediate environment," commonly Igbo, Hausa, or Yoruba (WENR 2018). This policy, however, is not always followed by schools. Although the law states that the first three years of primary school should be in the indigenous language, lessons are often delivered in English for all six years of primary school (WENR 2018). Reports of teachers punishing children for speaking their indigenous language are common in Nigeria.

Some Nigerian education reformers question the time and energy spent learning English because it takes away from learning other subjects. One argument is that, for many students, knowledge of English is irrelevant when they finish school. Another argument questions why the language of the colonizer is elevated over the three major indigenous languages in the school system. However, the government continues to enable

teaching in English because it sees the value of having a common language across the entire country when Nigeria has such a diversity of languages.

TC Thinking Geographically

Language is typically seen as a centripetal force that brings a **nation** together because it gives people a common way to communicate. But choosing one official language can be a centrifugal force (one that pulls a **nation** apart) because one language is elevated at the expense of other languages. Choose a country in the world and look up the diversity of languages spoken, the official language(s) of the country, and the language(s) used in primary and secondary education. Determine how the language choices made by this country help create or divide the **nation**.

6.3 Explain How Language Can Be Used as a Unifying or Dividing Force.

Languages become more fixed and stable when they are written down. Following its invention in 1440, the Gutenberg printing press stabilized language and helped spark a rise in nationalism centered on **vernacular** languages (see Chapter 8). A vernacular language is one used in everyday interaction among a group of people. Before the Renaissance and the invention of the Gutenberg press, government functions and academic conversations in western Europe were conducted in Latin, the language first of the Roman Empire and then of the Catholic Church. The choice of Latin reflected the distribution of power in western Europe at that time. However, the invention of the printing press enabled governments to claim power and reinforce that power by elevating the vernacular language over Latin. For example, the government of France could communicate to French-speaking citizens in a language shared by all citizens rather than in the language of the elite (Latin). In this way, the printing press sparked the rise of nationalism in Europe (see Chapter 8).

The printing press also sparked the Reformation in western Europe (see Chapter 7). In 1452, Gutenberg printed the first Gutenberg Bible (the sacred text for Christians), which brought the scriptures out of churches and into the hands of literate people. Before the Gutenberg Bible, the Bible was written in Latin because it was the language of the Catholic Church. The Gutenberg press made it possible to print the Bible in vernacular languages, including English, French, and German (**Fig. 6.18**). Access to the Bible in the vernacular language allowed for many interpretations of the scriptures, and printing the Bible in the vernacular also helped standardize the language. The Luther Bible played this role for German, as did the King James Bible for English. Because the ability to convey a message is politically empowering, standardizing a common language through print gave countries the opportunity to promote a common culture and a national identity. With the printing press and a standardized vernacular language, countries could distribute common histories, religious interpretations, and political thoughts.



dpa picture alliance archive/Alamy Stock Photo

FIGURE 6.18 Kassel, Germany. Experts believe Gutenberg published around 180 copies of the Gutenberg Bible between 1452 and 1456. This copy was discovered in 1958 in an attic of a church in the small German town of Immenhausen and is one of 49 copies certified as part of the original printing.

Lingua Franca

Since 1500, globalization has brought widespread cultural, linguistic, political, and economic interaction. Trade and commerce have stimulated the formation of new, hybrid languages to facilitate this interaction. Trade encourages people who speak different languages to find ways to communicate with one another. A **lingua franca** is a language used among speakers of different languages for the purposes of trade and commerce. It can be a single language, or it can be a mixture of two or more languages. When people speaking two or more languages are in contact and they combine parts of their languages in a simplified structure and vocabulary, we call it a **pidgin language**.

The first widely known lingua franca was a pidgin language. During the 1200s, trade in the Mediterranean Sea expanded, and traders from the ports of southern France (the Franks) revitalized the ports of the eastern Mediterranean. But the local traders did not speak the Franks's language. The language of the Franks mixed with Italian, Greek, Spanish, and Arabic and created a pidgin language that came to be known as the Frankish language. The term *lingua franca* translates to "language of the Franks," commemorating the language that served for centuries as the shared language of Mediterranean trade.

A lingua franca connects people and serves as a conduit for diffusing cultural values and systems. During the expansion of Islam, Arabic became a lingua franca that helped Arab traders establish ports and trade relationships and also furthered the diffusion of Islam. English became a lingua franca during British colonialism and became the main way British political values, including legal and governmental systems, were established in their colonies.

Creole Languages

Over time a pidgin language may gain native speakers, becoming the first language children learn in the home. When this happens, we call it a creolized or Creole language. A **Creole language** is a pidgin language that has developed a more complex structure and vocabulary, and has become the native language of a group of people. The word *Creole* stems from a pidgin language formed in the Caribbean from English, French, and Portuguese languages, mixed with the languages of enslaved Africans. The language became more complex and became the first language of people in the region, replacing African languages.

Swahili is a pidgin language that became a Creole language and is now the lingua franca of East Africa (**Fig. 6.19**). Through centuries of trade and interaction, Swahili developed from an African Bantu language mixed with Arabic and Persian, encompassing 100 million speakers from southern Somalia to northern Mozambique, and from coastal Kenya and Tanzania to Uganda and the East African Great Lakes region. Swahili has a complex vocabulary and structure, and while millions of East Africans communicate in the language, most still learn and speak a local language as their first or primary language. Swahili has gained prominence since 2000



Photo by A.B. Murphy. © 2020 John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

FIGURE 6.19 Zanzibar, Tanzania. Locals read front pages of newspapers outside of a news stand in Zanzibar. The newspapers are printed in several languages, including Swahili.

because of its status as the most widely used African language on the Internet. The British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) has a Swahili language website, and *Wikipedia* offers pages of its free encyclopedia in Swahili.

Multilingualism

More than 7000 languages are spoken in a world with fewer than 200 countries. Not a single country in the world is home to speakers of only one language. In practice, every country is multilingual, meaning that more than one language is spoken. Officially, a country can choose to recognize one official language (Indonesia), allow multiple official languages (Canada, Belgium), or not declare an official language at all (United States). Countries that have more than one official language are called *multilingual states*.

Multilingualism takes several forms. In Canada and Belgium, the two major languages are each tied to specific provinces or regions of the country. Canada recognizes two official languages at the federal level, French and English, and these languages have equal status. Each province and territory in Canada can choose its official language(s). For example, French is the official language of Quebec, and English is the official language in Nova Scotia. Canada's federal laws also protect speakers of minority languages. In Quebec, native English speakers have the right to education in their language, and in Nova Scotia, native French speakers have the right to education in their language. Several provinces officially recognize both English and French and use both languages in government and education. Indigenous languages are also recognized by some provinces and territories in Canada, especially the Inuit language in Nunavut.

Belgium has three distinct language regions. In the north, Flanders is Dutch-speaking (Flemish), and in the south,



FIGURE 6.20 Languages in Belgium. Belgians speak French, Dutch, and German. The borders of Belgium's three regions, Wallonia, Flanders, and Brussels, and the provinces of each region, follow the pattern of language speakers. German speakers are in the east, and Brussels is officially a bilingual (French and Flemish) region.

Wallonia is French-speaking. Brussels is designated as a bilingual capital region even though the city is physically surrounded by Flanders (Fig. 6.20). Power and decision making rest with the individual governments of Flanders and Wallonia rather than with the national government of Belgium. No political party in Belgium operates at the national scale. Flanders and Wallonia each have their own political parties that vie for power, and each have their own source of power and government administration across their five provinces.

Another form of multilingualism combines the language of the colonizer with one local or regional language as an official means of communication. In India and Malaysia, British colonization left the imprint of English on education and government. Choosing English as one of the official languages acknowledged the common language spoken by the educated and politically powerful elite. During colonization, the British encouraged academically gifted Indians and Malaysians to go to college in England to become fluent in English and Western

political philosophy, legal systems, and medicine. When India and Malaysia gained independence and set up parliamentary governments similar to their colonizer, each chose English as one of its official languages.

In addition to the language of their colonizer, however, India and Malaysia each chose a second official language from among the many indigenous languages spoken in the newly independent states. India selected Hindi (the first language of 26 percent of Indians and now spoken by 44 percent of Indians), and Malaysia selected Malay (now spoken as the first language by 46 percent of Malaysians). Elevating a major indigenous language that is not spoken by the majority of people in the country has caused strife in both India and Malaysia. For example, in Malaysia, the Malay ethnic group is politically privileged, and Malay's status reinforces this place of privilege. The Chinese ethnic group, which makes up 35 percent of Malaysia, has a great concentration of wealth and economic power, but the Malaysian government keeps the economic might of the



FIGURE 6.21 Languages in India. India has two major language families, Indo-European in the north and Dravidian in the south. Across the country, Indians speak more than 700 different languages (not all are labeled here).

Chinese in check by granting government jobs and seats in universities to those fluent in Malay.

In India, Hindi and English are recognized as co-official languages at the federal level. Hindi is spoken primarily in the north, in and around the capital of Delhi. It's most common among Hindus, and it was Hindu political leaders who advocated for Hindi as an official language. However, protests came from non-Hindu groups and from political leaders and academics who spoke languages other than Hindi. Efforts to teach

Hindi in secondary schools created backlash and protests in non-Hindi-speaking areas of India in the 1960s. Today, non-Hindi speakers, especially in the south, resist the imposition of the Hindi language in education.

India is very linguistically diverse, with over 700 spoken languages (Fig. 6.21). Because “no single language is spoken by a majority of Indians” (Wharton 2018), neither Hindi nor English actually binds everyone together (Fig. 6.22). Each Indian state can also officially recognize its own languages, with the result

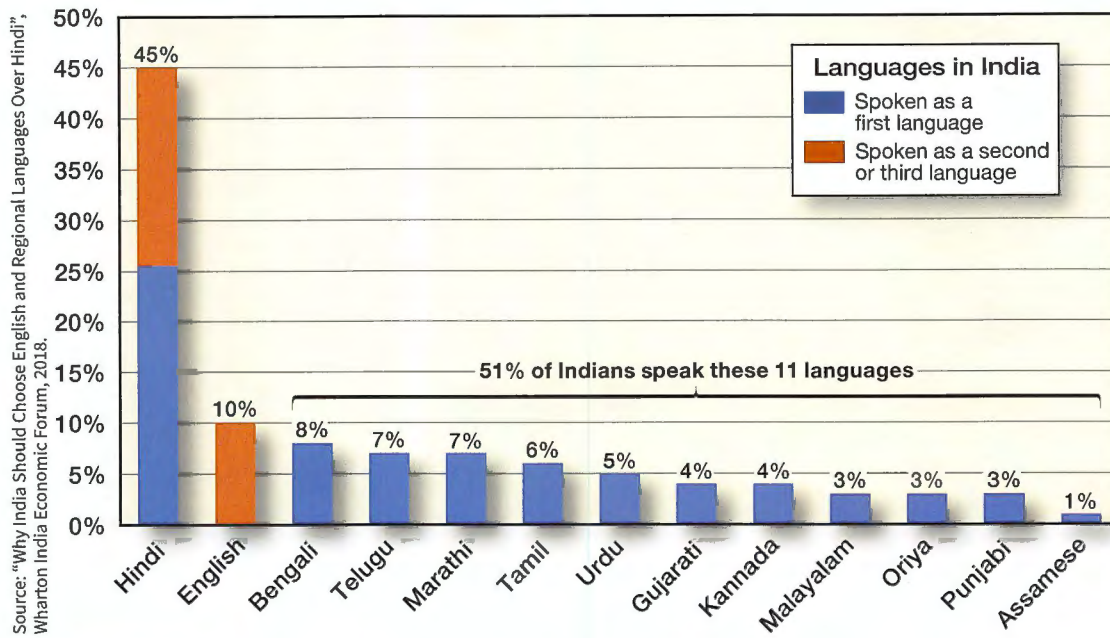


FIGURE 6.22 Language Diversity in India. No single language in India is spoken by a majority of people. Hindi is spoken by 45 percent of Indians, followed by English, which is spoken by 10 percent of Indians.

that across India's 29 states, 22 languages are recognized. This diversity is reflected in elections. Although India is the world's largest democracy, its extreme diversity in languages and the fact that 25 percent of the people are illiterate mean that symbols must be used in elections. The ballot in the latest vote for the Lok Sabha (lower house of parliament) and prime minister was presented in 35 symbols, including a hand, a lotus flower, and an elephant. Each symbol represented one political party, enabling voters to cast their ballots by symbol instead of by language (Fig. 6.23).

The Prospect of a Global Language

What will the global language map look like 50 years from now? More and more people are using English in a variety of contexts. English is now the lingua franca of international business and travel, and it is also the language of music, movies, and television in popular culture. Much of the engineering in the computer and telecommunications industries relies heavily on English. Does this mean that English is on its way to becoming a global language?

If global language means the principal language people use around the world in their day-to-day activities, English is not becoming a global language (Fig. 6.24). Population growth rates are generally lower in English-speaking areas than they are in other areas, and little evidence shows that people in non-English-speaking areas are willing to abandon their local or national language in favor of

English. Language embodies deeply held cultural views and is an essential part of cultural identity, so even if English diffuses broadly, many people will actively resist switching to English.

If global language means a common language of trade and commerce used around the world, the picture looks rather different. Although not always welcomed, English is a



The India Today Group/The India Today Group/Getty Images

FIGURE 6.23 Noida, India. Poll workers receive instructions on how to operate voting machines before the 2019 election for prime minister. Ballots displayed photos of prime minister candidates and symbols for political parties, because no one language is spoken by a majority of Indians and 25 percent of Indians are not literate.

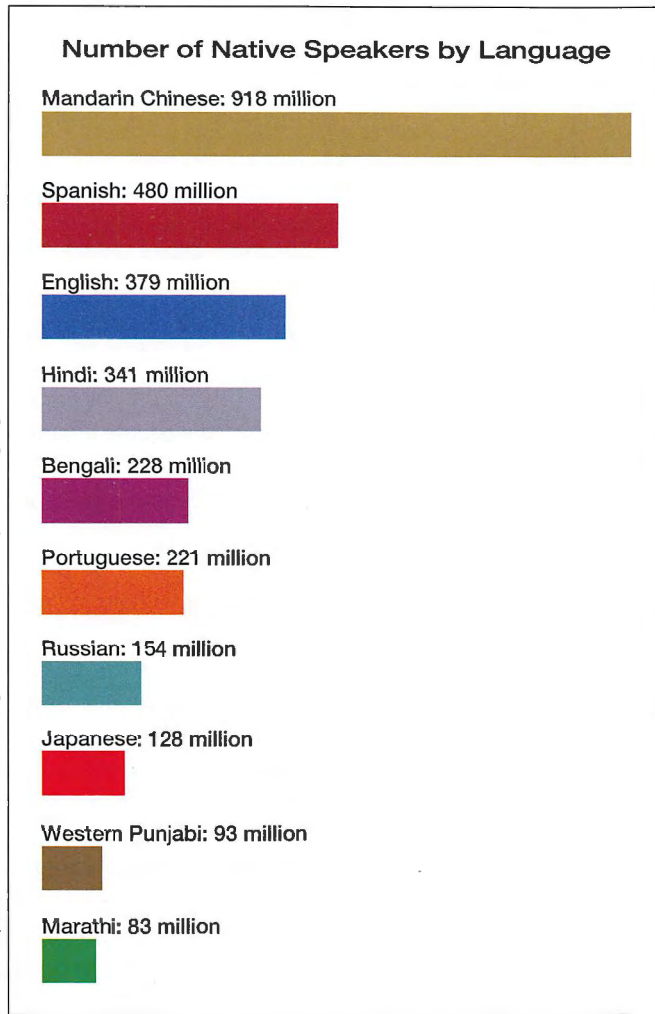
Source: https://www.babbel.com/en/magazine/the_10-most-spoken-languages-in-the-world/

FIGURE 6.24 Native Speakers of World Languages. English is a global lingua franca in business, academics, and trade, but Chinese and Spanish have many more native speakers than English.

major language of cross-cultural communication—especially in the areas of science, technology, travel, business, and education. Korean scholars are likely to communicate with their Russian counterparts in English. Japanese scientific journals are increasingly published in English. Danish tourists visiting Italy likely use English to get around. Meetings of most international financial and governmental institutions are dominated by English. Under these circumstances, the role of English as an international language will likely grow.

We must be careful in this conclusion, however. Anyone looking at the world 200 years ago would have predicted that French would be the principal language of cross-cultural communication in the future. Instead, English grew to ascendancy because Great Britain was the most powerful country in the world in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and it remained on top in the twentieth century because the United States was the most powerful country in the world. Today, political geographers are looking to the rise of China as a global power. China is massively investing in much of the world through its One Belt, One Road and Maritime Silk Road initiatives (see Chapter 8), and through its development banks, which rival the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (see Chapter 10). We are decades away, but as China grows in power, the number of people learning Chinese will grow, making it possible for Chinese to become a global language for cross-communication in the future.

TC Thinking Geographically

What role has **globalization** played in the diffusion of some languages and the extinction of other languages around the world? How does learning to speak a global language other than your native language change your **identity** at different **scales**?

6.4

Determine the Role Language Plays in Making Places.

Geographer Yi-Fu Tuan argued that by simply *naming a place*, people call that place into being. Geographers call place-names **toponyms**. A toponym allows us to see a location as a place and imparts a certain character to a place. Tuan contrasts the examples of “Mount Prospect” and “Mount Misery” to help us understand that a name alone can color the character of a place and even the experiences of people in a place. Tuan believed that a visit to “Mount Prospect” would create different expectations and experiences than a visit to “Mount Misery.”

Toponyms and History

Toponyms give us a quick glimpse into the history of places. Knowing who named a place and how the name was chosen helps us understand the uniqueness of that place. In his book, *Names on the Land: A Historical Account of Place-Naming in the*

United States (1982), English professor George Stewart recognized that 10 themes are common American toponyms. He developed a classification scheme focused on 10 basic types of place-names, including *descriptive* (Rocky Mountains), *commendatory* (Paradise Valley, Arizona), and *possession* (Johnson City, Texas) (**Table 6.2**). Toponyms can be *manufactured*, like Truth or Consequences, New Mexico, where the people voted to change the town name in response to an incentive offered by a 1950s-era radio game show. Another classification of toponyms is *shift names*, which happen when migrants name a new place after their home region (Lancaster, Pennsylvania, which is named for Lancaster, England) (**Fig. 6.25**).

The 10 classes of toponyms reinforce that every toponym has a story. The stories of toponyms quite often have their roots in migration, movement, and interaction among people. When languages diffuse through migration, so too do toponyms. Toponyms brought by a group of migrants can remain

TABLE 6.2 Toponym Classification Scheme Designed by George Stewart.

Stewart identified ten classes of toponyms into which most place-names can be sorted.

Type of Toponym	Example
<i>Descriptive</i>	Rocky Mountains
<i>Associative</i>	Mill Valley, California
<i>Commemorative</i>	San Francisco, California
<i>Commendatory</i>	Paradise Valley, Arizona
<i>Incidents</i>	Battle Creek, Michigan
<i>Possession</i>	Johnson City, Texas
<i>Folk</i>	Plains, Georgia
<i>Manufactured</i>	Truth or Consequences, New Mexico
<i>Mistakes</i>	Lasker, North Carolina
<i>Shift</i>	Lancaster, Pennsylvania

long after the migrants move on. Clusters of Welsh toponyms in Pennsylvania, French toponyms in Louisiana, and Dutch toponyms in Michigan reveal historical migration flows.

Brazil's toponyms provide an interesting case study of the history of migration flows in one country. Most Brazilian toponyms are Portuguese, reflecting the history of Portuguese colonization. Amid the Portuguese toponyms sits a cluster of German toponyms in the southern state of Santa Catarina. Because German migrants had a fondness for the tropical flowers they saw in Brazil, the toponyms of several towns incorporate the German word for flower, *Blume*. Toponyms in Santa Catarina include Blumenau, Blumberg, Blumenhof, Blumenort,

Blumenthal, and Blumenstein. Brazilian toponyms also reflect the enormous forced migration of enslaved Africans from West Africa to Brazil during the slave trade. The Brazilian state of Bahia has several toponyms that originated in West Africa.

Changing Toponyms

Tuan explained that when people change the toponym of a place, they have the power to “wipe out the past and call forth the new.” For example, people in a small town in Wales feared that the rise of English had diminished the use of the Welsh language. They also wanted to boost their local economy by attracting tourists to their town. In the mid-1800s, the people renamed their town with a Welsh word unpronounceable by others: Llanfairpwllgwyngyllgogerychwyrndrobwllllantysiliogogoch (Fig. 6.26).

The toponym accurately describes the location of the town: “The Church of St. Mary in the hollow of white hazel near the rapid whirlpool by the church of St. Tysilio of the red cave.” Wales has an official policy of teaching both Welsh and English in the schools in order to preserve and boost usage of the Welsh language. Saying the name of this town correctly is now a benchmark for students learning Welsh, and the residents of the town take pride in their ability to pronounce it.

Toponyms are part of the cultural landscape. Changes in place-names give us an idea of the layers of history. For example, on the Kenai Peninsula in Alaska, where Clare Swan (whom we cited earlier in this chapter) is from, the history of toponyms gives us insight into identity questions in the place. Natives in one town on the Kenai Peninsula called their home Nanwalek in the early 1800s. When the Russians came in and took over the peninsula, they changed the name to Alexandrof. Then, when Americans mapped Alaska and made it a state,

Author Field Note Naming New Glarus, Wisconsin

“Driving from Chicago to Minneapolis, I decided to get off the interstate and wind my way through the hilly countryside of southwestern Wisconsin. Dairy cattle dotted the hillsides, and I knew I was not only in Wisconsin, but also nearing the site of the first Swiss cheese factory in Wisconsin. Approaching from the south, I stopped to take a photo of the Welcome to New Glarus sign. Described by a resident as ‘the most typical Swiss village on Earth outside Switzerland,’ New Glarus, Wisconsin was settled by 108 Swiss migrants in 1845 (Hillinger 1985). The migrants left the Glarus canton in Switzerland during a period of economic hardship and migrated first to New York and then to Wisconsin. The site for the town and its surrounding dairies and cheese factories was chosen by two scouts from the party who headed north on the Mississippi River from St. Louis and stopped in the hills of Wisconsin to found their town and name it ‘New Glarus.’ The first cheese factories were founded as farmer-factory cooperatives, and the idea of cooperative production persists in New Glarus. On the outskirts of town, the New Glarus Brewing Company makes Spotted Cow beer, a regional favorite sold only in Wisconsin. Started by Deb and Dan

Carey, the successful brewery owners created an employee stock ownership program that will eventually hand ownership of the privately held company to its employees.”

—E. H. Fouberg



FIGURE 6.25 New Glarus, Wisconsin.



Photo by A.B. Murphy. © 2020 John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

FIGURE 6.26 Llanfairpwllgwyngyllgogerychwyrndrobwlllantysiliogogoch, Wales. The town with the self-proclaimed longest name in the world attracts hordes of tourists each year to a place whose claim to fame is largely its name.

they changed the name to English Bay. In 1991, the townspeople changed the name of their home back to Nanwalek. When you arrive in Nanwalek, you will see Native people, see signs of the Russian Orthodox religion, hear English spoken, and talk with Alaskan Natives who are reviving their Native language and culture. Each period of history is reflected in the toponyms of this one place.

Postcolonial Toponyms Toponyms may change when power shifts hands in a place. When African colonies became independent countries, new governments immediately changed the toponyms that commemorated colonial figures and renamed several countries: Upper Volta to Burkina Faso, Gold Coast to Ghana, Nyasaland to Malawi, and Northern and Southern Rhodesia to Zambia and Zimbabwe. Leopoldville (named after a Belgian king) became Kinshasa, capital of the Congo. Salisbury, Zimbabwe, named after a British leader, became Harare. Lourenço Marques, Mozambique, commemorating a Portuguese naval hero, became Maputo.

The decision to choose a new toponym can also come years after independence. India changed *Bombay* to *Mumbai* in 1995, about 50 years after independence. *Bombay* is an Anglicized word that came from the name the Portuguese used for

the city, *Bombaim*, which meant “good bay.” When a nationalist party won local elections in 1995, it renamed the city Mumbai, a toponym that both reinforces the city’s Marathi identity and celebrates its patron Hindu goddess, Mumbadevi.

Postrevolution Toponyms Independence prompts name changes, and so too do changes in power through coups and revolutions. During his reign, authoritarian dictator General Mobutu Sese Seko changed the name of the Belgian Congo in sub-Saharan Africa to Zaïre (**Fig. 6.27**). At first, other governments and international agencies did not take this move seriously, but eventually they recognized Mobutu’s Zaïre. Governments and companies changed their maps and atlases to reflect Mobutu’s decision. The government of Zaïre changed the name of its money from the franc to the zaïre, and it even changed the name of the Congo River to the Zaïre.

In 1997, the revolutionary leader Laurent Kabila ousted Mobutu and established his regime in the capital, Kinshasa. Almost immediately, he renamed the country. Zaïre became the Democratic Republic of the Congo (reflecting the colonial name). Again, governments and companies reacted, changing their maps and atlases to reflect Kabila’s decision.



JOHN WESSELS/AFP/Getty Images

FIGURE 6.27 Gbadolite, Congo. The palace of former dictator Mobutu Sese Seko now stands in ruins in his hometown, Gbadolite. Once called the “Versailles of the Jungle,” the palace had swimming pools, an international airport, and opulent design. It was once a five-star hotel and is now used to house soldiers and families of the armed forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, including the child walking through this photo.

Both the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the overthrow of Apartheid in South Africa spurred many changes in toponyms. After the Soviet Union replaced the Russian tsars, it changed many places that were named for tsars. Then, when the Soviet Union collapsed, a new round of name changes occurred, often going back to tsarist-era names. Leningrad reverted to St. Petersburg, Sverdlovsk went back to Yekaterinburg (its name under the tsars), and Stalingrad was renamed Volgograd (for the river).

South Africa experienced a major revolution that also resulted in a fundamental change in governance. Under Apartheid, black South Africans had little to no power. In post-Apartheid South Africa, however, the government restructured the country’s administrative framework, creating nine provinces out of four and giving some of the new provinces African names (Mpumalanga for the new Eastern Transvaal, Gauteng for a new central province). One of the old provinces, Natal, has become Kwazulu-Natal. The government also changed some names of towns and villages, but South Africa’s map still includes many names from the Apartheid period. A push to change the name of the capital from Pretoria to the more

indigenous Tshwane has been challenged by white South Africans, who say the city was named Pretoria when it was founded and that the current name is therefore uniquely South African.

Disputed Toponyms The toponyms we see on a map depend in large part on who produced the map. Places claimed by two groups will have more than one name at the same time. The National Geographic Society labels some contested toponyms with the predominant name, either based on power or widespread use, and then puts the variant name in parentheses. For example, the National Geographic labels the body of water between the Korean Peninsula and Japan as the Sea of Japan (East Sea) and labels the islands of the coast of Argentina as Falkland Islands (Islas Malvinas).

The *Sea of Japan* and the *East Sea* are two names for the same body of water. Because the Japanese colonized the Korean Peninsula from the 1800s through World War II, South Koreans see the toponym *Sea of Japan* as a continued colonial influence and power grab by the Japanese, arguing that the body of water was called the “East Sea” before

Japanese colonization and should be called the “East Sea” after Japanese colonization. Japanese argue that the *East Sea* does not make sense as a toponym because the body of water is to the west of Japan, and they continue to call it the “Sea of Japan.”

Argentineans refer to a small cluster (archipelago) of islands off the southeast coast of South America as *Islas Malvinas*, but the British call the same cluster of islands the Falkland Islands. In 1982, Argentina invaded the Malvinas, but the British forces fought back, and the islands remain under British control. British, American, and other allies call and map the islands as the Falklands, but Argentineans continue to call and map the islands as *Islas Malvinas*. The war ended in a matter of weeks, but the underlying dispute lingers, and so do both names.

Memorial Toponyms People can choose a toponym to memorialize an important person or event. Hundreds of parks in the United States are named Memorial Park to commemorate a person or event. Towns or government agencies can vote to change the name of a school, a library, or a public building to memorialize people who have played a role in shaping the place or who have had an enormous influence on people in the place.

Just as certain events such as decolonization or a political revolution can spur changes in toponyms, so too can revolutions in thought and behavior. The civil rights movement of the 1960s in the United States left many lasting impressions of people and events, especially in the South, where many

protests, sit-ins, and marches occurred. Geographer Derek Alderman explains that in recent decades, African Americans in the South have “taken a particularly active role in reconstructing commemorative landscapes—from calling for the removal of Confederate symbols from public places to the building of memorials and museums honoring the civil rights movement.” Because so many people travel along them daily, streets are often the focal point of commemoration in the cultural landscape, serving as a constant reminder of the person or event being memorialized.

Alderman studied the practice of changing street names to memorialize Martin Luther King Jr. (MLK), the major African American leader of the civil rights movement. Although streets named after MLK are found throughout the United States, the greatest concentration of memorial streets are in the South, especially in Georgia (King’s home state) and Mississippi (**Fig. 6.28**). Alderman studied the distribution of MLK streets in the South, comparing their locations with census data on race and socioeconomics. He found that although MLK streets are found in both cities and rural areas, “MLK streets are located—whether by choice or by force—in census areas that are generally poorer and with more African Americans than citywide averages” (**Fig. 6.29**). Alderman tempers this finding with a caution that not all MLK streets are in poorer areas of cities. Even when MLK streets are in depressed areas, the African American population may have purposely chosen a street because it runs through an African American neighborhood. Alderman’s subsequent studies explore the scale of the city and the contested views of what kinds of streets should

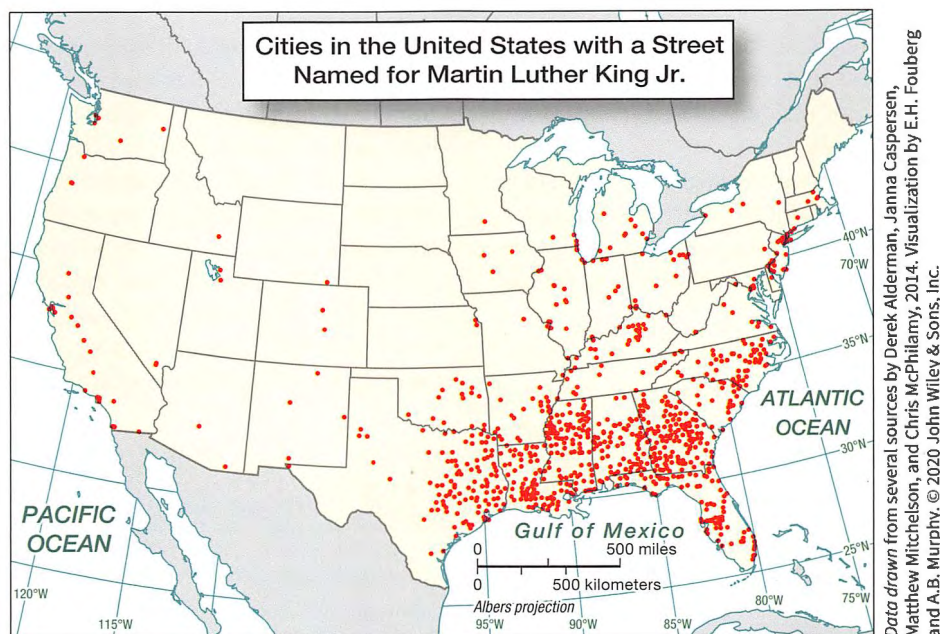


FIGURE 6.28 Cities in the United States with a Street Named for Martin Luther King Jr.

Streets named after Martin Luther King Jr. are concentrated in the southeastern United States (almost 70 percent of all MLK-named roads), even as such naming is a national trend. King came from Georgia, and the South was an early battleground in the civil rights movement.

Guest Field Note Commemorating Martin Luther King Jr. in Greenville, North Carolina

Derek Alderman

University of Tennessee

Greenville, North Carolina, changed West Fifth Street to Martin Luther King Jr. Drive in 1999. Originally, African American leaders wanted all of Fifth Street renamed—not just part of it—but residents and business owners on the eastern end strongly opposed the proposal. After driving and walking down the street, I quickly realized that King Drive marked an area that was predominantly black with limited commercial development, whereas East Fifth

was mostly white and more upscale. When I interviewed members of Greenville’s African American community, they expressed deep frustration over the marginalization of the civil rights leader. In the words of one elected official, “The accomplishments of Dr. King were important to all Americans. A whole man deserves a whole street!” Naming streets for King is a controversial process for many cities, often exposing continued racial tensions and the potential for toponyms to function as contested social boundaries within places.



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FIGURE 6.29 Greenville, North Carolina.

be named for MLK—be they residential, commercial, major thoroughfares (perhaps those that connect white and African American neighborhoods), or residential streets in largely African American neighborhoods.

The presence of streets named for civil rights leaders in the cultural landscapes of the American South creates a significant counterbalance to the numerous places of commemoration named for leaders of the Confederacy during the Civil War (see Chapter 1).

Commodification of Toponyms The practice of commodifying (buying, selling, and trading) toponyms is growing. International media corporations bring known names to new places, drawing consumers to the place based on a corporate identity. For example, the Disney Corporation opened Tokyo Disneyland in 1983 and Disneyland Paris in 1990, both places that capitalize on the success of Disneyland and Disney World in the United States. As corporations spread their names and logos to other places, they seek to “brand” places, creating or re-creating places that consumers associate with places of the same brand.

Corporations with a global reach have been stamped on the cultural landscape through toponyms. Stadiums are

especially susceptible to this form of commodification: FedEx Field, Verizon Center, TD Bank Garden, CenturyLink Field, and Coors Field are perfect examples. In 2004, the cash-strapped Metropolitan Transit Authority (MTA) in New York City proposed renaming the metro stops, bridges, and tunnels after corporate sponsors. The plan was approved in 2013, and metro riders have been assured the name changes will not elicit confusion. Corporate sponsors are only eligible to buy naming rights provided they have “a unique or iconic geographic, historic or other connection” to a particular MTA facility “that would readily be apparent to typical MTA customers.”

TC Thinking Geographically

The **toponym** of this place was first chosen by Gabrielino Indians. In 1769, Spanish Franciscan priests **migrated** to the place and gave it a new toponym. In 1850, English speakers renamed the place. Do not use the Internet to help you. Use only maps in this book or in atlases to help you deduce what this place is. Maps of European exploration and colonialism will help you the most. Look at the end of the chapter self-test for the answer.

Summary

Define Language and Describe the Role of Language in Culture.

1. A language is a set of sounds and symbols that is used for communication. Language is a fundamental element of local and national culture. The diffusion of global languages, including English, challenges the preservation of national languages. Some countries, including France, are working diligently to preserve national and local languages, while social networks, food, music, and popular culture are becoming more globalized.
2. Language is an essential part of culture because we think in our language and communicate our thoughts and feelings in a language. Language also makes members of a certain culture visible to each other through communication. Language even reflects how a culture views the world in terms of time and possibilities.
3. A standard language is published, widely distributed, and purposely taught. Governments often support standard languages. For example, the Chinese government standardized characters so that speakers of different Chinese dialects can read the same text. The Académie Française keeps the standard for the French language in France. And the government of Ireland helps support a standard Irish language by requiring public employees and officials to pass a test in the language. Variants of a standard language along regional or ethnic lines are called dialects. Differences in vocabulary, syntax (the way words are put together to form phrases), pronunciation, cadence (the rhythm of speech), and even the pace of speech all mark a speaker's dialect.

Explain How Languages Are Related and Distributed.

1. Linguists classify languages based on how closely related they are to one another. At the global scale, we classify languages into language families. Each language family includes multiple languages that have a shared but fairly distant origin. We break language families into language subfamilies, which are divisions within a language family that have more definitive commonalities and more recent common origins. Subfamilies have a smaller spatial extent than language families. Arranging from largest spatial extent to smallest, we classify languages into language families, language subfamilies, languages, and dialects.
2. The world map of language families shows 15 major language families, but not all languages spoken worldwide fit into those 15 families. Indo-European languages encompass most of Europe and the Americas. They are also spoken in northern Asia (especially Russia), southern Asia (especially India), and the Pacific (including Australia and New Zealand). Indo-European languages diffused into the Americas, Australia, and New Zealand during European colonization from the 1500s to the 1900s CE.
3. Linguists use several tools to understand how languages are related historically. Languages diverge when speakers of one language decrease spatial interaction to the point that the languages drift apart. Through backward reconstruction, or tracking consonants and cognates back to reconstruct elements of a prior common language, linguists can provide insight into how languages fit together and where the branches were once joined.

4. Indo-European languages are related historically to one language called Proto-Indo-European. Linguists generally agree that the original language began somewhere near the Black Sea in present-day Turkey. Linguists offer several theories of how Proto-Indo-European diffused from its hearth, including the two most common: the conquest theory and the agriculture theory.

Explain How Language Can Be Used as a Unifying or Dividing Force.

1. The Gutenberg printing press was invented in 1440 and helped unify speakers of vernacular languages by standardizing the languages, and printing political communications and also literature in the vernacular language. In 1452 Gutenberg printed the Bible in the vernacular language. The Reformation, a reform movement in the Catholic Church, was possible in part because the Gutenberg press made it possible to publish the Bible in local, vernacular languages, including English, French, and German, instead of the church's official language, Latin.
2. A lingua franca is a language used among speakers of different languages for the purposes of trade and commerce. It can be a single language or a mixture of two or more languages. When people speaking two or more languages are in contact and they combine parts of their languages in a simplified structure and vocabulary, we call it a pidgin language.
3. More than 7000 languages are spoken in a world with fewer than 200 countries. Not a single country in the world is home to speakers of only one language. In practice, every country is multilingual, meaning that more than one language is spoken. Officially, a country can choose to recognize one official language (Indonesia), support multiple official languages (Canada, Belgium), or not declare an official language at all (United States). Countries that have more than one official language are called multilingual states.

Determine the Role Language Plays in Making Places.

1. One way we express the identity of a place is through toponyms, or place-names. Geographers have studied toponyms and found that they can be descriptive, possessive, manufactured, or otherwise derived. A toponym can give insight into the layers of history in a place, often including stories of migrants who established and named a town or place. People may choose to change a toponym to commemorate a person or event. For example, many streets in the United States have been renamed Martin Luther King Jr. Street in honor of the civil rights leader.
2. Toponyms can be disputed. Maps produced by two different people or nations may have different place-names for the same feature or place. For example, the body of water between the Korean Peninsula and Japan is called the East Sea by Koreans and the Sea of Japan by Japanese. Koreans see the name Sea of Japan as a remnant of the Japanese colonization of Korea in the late 1800s and early 1900s. As another example, the islands off the east coast of Argentina are called *Islas Malvinas* by Argentinians and the Falklands by the British. In 1982, a war broke out between Argentina and Britain over the islands. The war ended, but the dispute over what to call the islands continues.

Self-Test

Define language and describe the role of language in culture.

- Globally, the two most commonly used languages by Internet browsers are:
 - French and English.
 - English and German.
 - Spanish and English.
 - English and Chinese.
- Language is an essential part of culture because:
 - a shared language makes people in a culture visible to one another.
 - language helps cement cultural identity.
 - thoughts and feelings are explained through language.
 - all of the above
- True or False: The Irish (Celtic) language has no words for “yes” and “no.”
- The number of languages spoken worldwide is difficult to pinpoint primarily because:
 - it is difficult to distinguish between languages and dialects.
 - not all languages are registered with the Académie Française.
 - European Union policies have led to the extinction of hundreds of languages.
 - the United Nations only keep statistics on the number of speakers of five major world languages.

Explain how languages are related and distributed.

- From largest spatial extent to smallest, languages are classified as:
 - dialects, languages, language subfamilies, language families.
 - language subfamilies, dialects, language families, languages.
 - language families, language subfamilies, languages, dialects.
 - languages, language families, dialects, language subfamilies.
- Indo-European languages diffused across the world primarily through:
 - expansion of the Roman Empire between 400 BCE and 400 CE.
 - European colonization between the 1500s and 1900s CE.
 - the invention and expansion of the Internet from the 1990s to the present.
 - efforts of Queen Victoria to expand the number of English speakers during the 1800s.
- Linguists understand that when spatial interaction decreases significantly among speakers of one language (e.g., Korean today), the language can _____ and two new languages can be created from one.
 - converge
 - conflate
 - deflate
 - diverge

- Canada is officially a bilingual country with official languages of _____. The Canadian province of Quebec identifies as _____.
 - English and German / English
 - French and German / German
 - English and French / French

Explain how language can be used as a unifying or dividing force.

- The Gutenberg printing press was significant because:
 - it helped spark a rise in nationalism centered on vernacular languages.
 - it helped standardize English and make it the major language used in government communications in England and its colonies around the world.
 - it helped spark the Reformation because Christians could read the Bible in their vernacular language.
 - all of the above
- A language used for purposes of trade and communication among speakers of different languages is called a:
 - pidgin language.
 - Creole language.
 - lingua franca.
 - vernacular language.
- Swahili is a good example of a Creole language because it:
 - began as a pidgin language and eventually developed a more complex vocabulary and syntax, and became the native language of a group of people.
 - began as a lingua franca and eventually became a pidgin language.
 - has been institutionalized by the government of Kenya.
 - has been adopted by the United Nations as an official language.
- True or False: Not a single country in the world is home to speakers of only one language.
- In India, at the federal level, Hindi and English are recognized as co-official languages. However:
 - neither language is spoken by a majority of Indians.
 - Hindi is spoken by 90 percent of Indians and English is only spoken by 10 percent of Indians.
 - English is spoken by 90 percent of Indians and Hindi is only spoken by 10 percent of Indians.
 - the majority of Indians speak both Hindi and English.

Determine the role language plays in making places.

- Toponyms that diffuse through migration, such as when migrants from Lancaster, England, brought the place-name *Lancaster* to Pennsylvania, follow _____ diffusion:
 - contagious
 - hierarchical
 - relocation
 - stimulus

15. After decolonization, a newly independent country may choose to change toponyms to:
- a. remove colonial place-names.
 - b. recognize locally significant people, cultural traits, and events.
 - c. help create a new national identity.
 - d. all of the above
16. Two people or two countries can call the same place different toponyms. Koreans call the body of water between the Korean Peninsula and Japan:
- a. the East Sea.
 - b. the West Sea.
 - c. the Sea of Japan.
 - d. the Sea of Korea.
17. Geographer Derek Alderman studied the location of MLK Jr. streets in the United States and found that most are located:
- a. in poorer areas of cities where more African Americans live.
 - b. in wealthier areas of cities where fewer African Americans live.
 - c. on main streets.
 - d. in industrial areas.

Answer to final Thinking Geographically question: Los Angeles, California.