

Exercise 2

GRADE DISTRIBUTION

Spatial Spread of Cultural Phenomena (cultural diffusion)

Assignment: Select a topic and explain the linear and temporal movements from the source area to the final distribution.

10 = A

3 = B

0 = C

5 = D with option to rewrite

2 = F with option to rewrite

2 = Not submitted

GEOG 247 Cultural Geography

The Geography of Language

Part 2

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Language Diffusion and Change

- ✓ **Language spreads through dispersion of speakers** or with acquisition of new speakers (**diffusion/acculturation**).
- ✓ **The location of language speakers may give rise to mutually unintelligible tongues** through segregation and isolation of groups of people (**diffusion barriers**).
- ✓ **Language evolves:** it may be gradual/cumulative or it may be massive/abrupt (**acculturation: borrowing words and phrases from other languages**).
- ✓ **Language may be monitored to maintain purity.** (L'Académie Française has set an official standard of French language purity since the mid-1600s.)

International English

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Nigeria has hundreds of languages. English was selected as the neutral official language to avert regional conflict between the Hausa (north), Yoruba (southwest) and Ibo (southeast) speakers.

Spread and Change of the English Language

Evolution and spread of English

- Within 400 years developed from localized language of 7 million islanders to international language.

English today

- About 400 million **native speakers**
- About 600 million use it as a **second language**
- Millions more have **some competence** in English as a foreign language
- **Official language** of 60 countries
- ❖ **Dominant language** facilitating increased global interaction (commerce, trade, science, computer technology, education)

Standard and Variant Languages

❖ **Linguistic Geography**

Study of the character and spatial pattern of geographic or regional dialects within a language family.

A **language family** usually possesses **both** a standard language and a number of dialects.

Key Terms in Language

- ❖ **Standard language:**
Composed of accepted community norms of syntax, vocabulary and pronunciation.
- ❖ **Dialect:**
Distinctive local or regional variant of a language
- ❖ **Pidgin:**
Composite language consisting of small vocabulary borrowed from groups engaged in commerce
- ❖ **Creole:**
Language derived from pidgin with a fuller vocabulary that has become the native language of its speakers
- ❖ **Lingua franca:**
A language of communication, commerce and education; used where it is not a mother tongue.

Major Dialects of North American English

Dialect: Distinctive local or regional variant of a language including vocabulary, syntax, slang, pronunciation, cadence and pace of speech.

Dialect Boundaries: Word Usage

What is a sweet carbonated beverage called?

What are the words used to describe a controlled-access divided highway in the US?

- **Freeway** - California/West Coast term.
- **Turnpike** - mainly used in the Northeast/Midwest for toll road.
- **Parkway** - mainly used in the Northeast/Midwest for non-toll road; local connotation; no trucks allowed.
- **Thruway, expressway** - usually a high speed toll road.
- **Interstate** - non-toll road used for long-distance travel.

Isogloss: The border of usage of a variant as an individual word, phrase or pronunciation.

Standard and Variant Languages

Pidgin

- ❖ New auxiliary language which is an amalgam of languages, usually a simplified form of one of them with borrowings from another.

Slang: Words/phrases that are not part of the standard language but are used and understood by some of its speakers (subcultures).

- ✓ **Simplified** grammatical structure and reduced vocabulary.
- ✓ **Not the mother tongue** of any of its speakers but the second language for all its users.
- ✓ Generally used for commerce, administration or work supervision (i.e., communication).

➤ *Note: If a pidgin becomes the first language of a group of speakers, a "creole" has evolved.*

<http://www.eveofhawaii.com/Hawaiian/hawaiian.htm>
<http://www.eveofhawaii.com/Pidgin/pidgin.htm>

Standard and Variant Languages

ENGLISH
SPANISH
PORTUGUESE
ARABIC

Standard and Variant Languages

Creole

- ❖ **Native tongue developed from a pidgin.**
- Acquires more complex grammatical structure and has an enhanced vocabulary

Examples: Afrikaans, Haitian Creole Bazaar, Malay, Louisiana Creole, French, Camfranglais (Cameroon)

Louisiana Creole

Louisiana Folk Regions

- New Iberia Cultural Subregion
- Upper Mississippi Valley Cultural Subregion
- Lower Mississippi Valley Cultural Subregion
- Acadian Cultural Subregion
- Cajun Cultural Subregion
- Creole Cultural Subregion
- Bayou Cultural Subregion

When a pidgin becomes the **first language** of a group of speakers, a “**creole**” has evolved.

Louisiana French Creole: Subregion and Urban Centers of Use

- Subregion where French Creole is spoken primarily by a small number
- In other locations, French Creole speakers' ancestors grew in New Orleans and migrated to other urban places and elsewhere

http://www.louisianafolklife.org/LT/creole_maps.html

Standard and Variant Languages

Lingua franca

- ❖ An established language used habitually for communication by people whose native tongues are mutually incomprehensible.
- It is a second language for its users.
 - Examples: English, French, Swahili, Latin

Lingua Francas

| Language | Number of Users (millions) |
|------------|----------------------------|
| English | ~1000 |
| Mandarin | ~800 |
| Spanish | ~500 |
| Arabic | ~300 |
| Hindi | ~250 |
| Russian | ~150 |
| Bengali | ~150 |
| Malay | ~100 |
| Urdu | ~100 |
| Swahili | ~100 |
| French | ~100 |
| Portuguese | ~100 |
| Italian | ~100 |
| Hebrew | ~100 |
| Yiddish | ~100 |
| Swahili | ~100 |

Seven languages which cumulatively enjoy official status across 75% of the world's land area

Language and Culture

- ❖ Language embodies the culture complex of a people, reflecting both environment and technology.
 - A common language fosters unity among people.
 - Bilingualism or multilingualism complicates national linguistic structure: Canada, Belgium, India, Cyprus, Uganda, South Africa, Hong Kong, former Yugoslavia.....
- There are linguistic differences between the sexes, as vulgar and curse words that women should not say or dainty (unmanly) words and phrases that men would avoid saying.
- Linguistic differences between social and class groups exist, as social media lingo, slang words and phrases, gangsta-speak, the King's English, and regional dialects.

Language and Culture: Minced Oaths

| | |
|---|---------------------------------|
| Good gravy — Good God | Gosh darn it — God damn it |
| For crying out loud — For Christ's sake | Drat — God rot it |
| Goodness gracious — Good God | Jeepers Creepers — Jesus Christ |
| Suffering succotash — Suffering saviour | Egad — Oh God |
| Blimey — God blind me | Good grief — Good God |
| Dangnabbit — God damn it | Tarnation — Damnation |
| Gee whizz / geewhilkers — Jesus' whiskers | Doggone it — God damn it |
| For Pete's sake — For St. Peter's Sake | By golly — By God's body |

London Newspaper Stand

Newspaper display in London illustrates that London is an international city as well as a major migration destination.

Decline of Khoisan Languages in Africa

Khoisan (or "click") **Languages:** unique group of African languages not related to any language family; found mainly in southern Africa with two languages in eastern Africa. **Their most distinctive linguistic characteristic is the extensive use of click consonants.**

The Khoisan languages declined with the expansion of Bantu outside of its hearth and as Bantu dominance grew within the new region.

Why would this happen?

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Linguistic Ecology Recap

- ✓ **Environment affects vocabulary**
 - Many languages have numerous words for variations of natural phenomena that are within their areas but no words for phenomena they never experienced.
- ✓ **Environment shapes language areas and guides migration**
- ✓ **Environment provides linguistic refuge** (isolation/protection from outside influences)
 - Caucasus Mountains
 - Sea Island District of South Carolina, Florida, Georgia (Gullah language)
 - Islands of the South Pacific
 - Urban ethnic neighborhoods

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Linguistic Refuge in Europe

For a small area, the Caucasus Mountains have a wide variety of unique languages. This is a result of rugged terrain and limited mobility (isolation).

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Language Ecology of Australia

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Culturo-Linguistic Interaction

Interaction between religion and language

- ✓ **Arabic diffuses with spread of Islam;** studying the Koran helps to spread literacy.
- ✓ **Martin Luther's Bible translation leads to standardization of German;** the Guttenberg Press leads to the rapid spread of literacy by duplicating written works.
- ✓ **Hebrew and Yiddish spread and concentrate with the movement of Jewish communities;** studying of the Torah in its original language is a unifying characteristic.
- ✓ **In Fiji, the Bible was first published in one of the 15 local dialects, elevating it to the dominant native language.**

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Culturo-Linguistic Interaction

Technology, language, and empire

- **Written language allows record keeping and government bureaucracies**
- **Standard language allows for control over areas with different languages,** as the use of Latin by the Roman Empire and Chinese by the Chinese Dynasties over 2000 years ago.
- **Technological and transportation superiority bring about linguistic dominance** (other languages borrow words and phrases) as with the British Empire and all colonial powers, the use of American English in science, and the spread of Russian across Siberia along the Trans-Siberian Railroad.

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Russian-speaking Areas

Can you find the routes of the Trans-Siberian Railroad system?

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Language Distribution and Colonialism

Present-day distribution of European languages in South America reflects colonial holdings from 1500s-1900s.

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Icelandic: An Unchanging Language

- Icelandic is a Nordic branch of the Germanic family that came from Old Norwegian.
- ❖ Icelandic's significance is that it has **changed less than any other language in the Germanic family over the past 1000 yrs.**
- Present-day Icelandic grammar is similar to that of the 1200s when Christianity was introduced. It deviated from Norwegian in the 1400s.
- Since then, there have been additions of new words and terminology.

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Influence of Language on Culture's Geography

- Once a language has been established its use becomes part of that area's cultural identity.
- Linguistic landscapes are created.
- Written/spoken language conveys information about a place (creating perceptions).
- Enforced use of a language by one group over others can be seen as a power play – a means of control.

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