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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/acclturation).
- ✓ **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.)

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Spread and Change of the English Language

Evolution and spread of English

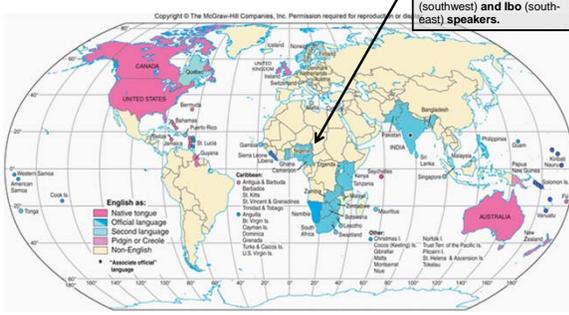
- Within 400 years developed from localized language of 7 million islanders to international language.

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 and education)

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International English



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English as:
■ Native tongue
■ Official language
■ Second language
■ Pidgin or Creole
■ Non-English
● "Associate official" language

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.

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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.

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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:**
Language of communication, commerce and education.

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.

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

Dialect Boundaries

What is a sweet carbonated beverage called?

Words used to describe a controlled-access divided highway in the US.

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

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

Standard and Variant Languages

Creole

- Native tongue developed from a pidgin.
- Acquires more complex grammatical structure and enhanced vocabulary
 - Examples: Afrikaans, Haitian Creole, Bazaar Malay, Louisiana Creole French, Camfranglais (Cameroon)

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

Mother Tongue	Number of Official Status Languages
English	110
Mandarin	100
Spanish	80
Arabic	70
Hindi	60
Russian	50
Bengali	40
Malay	30
Urdu	20
German	15
French	10
Portuguese	8
Italian	5
Turkish	4
Swahili	3
Yiddish	2
Latin	1
Hebrew	1

Lingua Francas
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**, as social media lingo, slang words and phrases, gangsta-speak, the King's English and regional dialects.

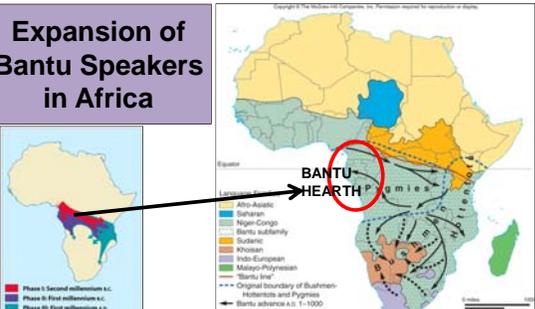
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London Newspaper Stand



This display of newspapers illustrates the fact that London is an international city as well as a major migration destination.

Expansion of Bantu Speakers in Africa



Khoisan languages, a unique group of African languages not related to any language family. It is spoken mainly in southern Africa with two languages found in east Africa. **Their most distinctive linguistic characteristic is the original and extensive use of click consonants.** The linguistic use of clicks is restricted to these few African languages. They declined as Bantu expanded south and east.

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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.



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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 and studying the Koran helps to spread literacy
 - Martin Luther's Bible translation leads to standardization of German and the Guttenberg Press leads to the rapid spread of literacy
 - Hebrew and Yiddish spread and concentrate with the movement of Jewish communities and the studying of the Torah
 - 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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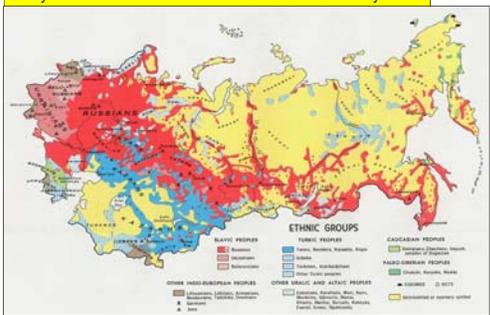
Culturo-Linguistic Interaction

- **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.



Figure 4.11 Foundations of The Human World, Second Edition © 2014 W. H. Freeman and Company

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 thousand years.
- Present day Icelandic structure 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.



Languages Spoken at Home in the USA

Language	Number of Speakers 5 Years and Older		
	1990	2000	2010
English only	198,600,798	215,423,557	228,699,523
Spanish, Spanish Creole	17,339,172	28,101,052	35,466,501
Chinese	1,249,213	2,022,143	2,600,150
Tagalog	843,251	1,224,241	1,513,734
French (including Patois, Cajun)	1,702,176	1,643,838	1,305,503
Vietnamese	507,069	1,009,627	1,251,468
German	1,547,099	1,383,442	1,109,216
Korean	626,478	894,063	1,039,021
Russian	241,798	706,242	881,723
Arabic	355,150	614,582	845,396

(Source: U.S. Census, 1990; 2000; 2010.)
Table 4.2 Foundations of The Human World, Second Edition © 2014 W. H. Freeman and Company

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Language and the Naming of the Landscape

- ❖ **Toponyms:** Place names (language on the land)
 - Record of past and present cultures
 - A means of personalizing earth features making them more meaningful and “giving life to them”
 - Gives us hints about who inhabits/inhabited an area

Similar to you being named after a grandparent or significant place in your parent's life!
- ❖ **Toponymy:** The study of place-names.
 - Revealing and useful tool for cultural and historical geographers

Linguistic Landscapes

1. **Messages:** By the presence or absence of language communication on the land (spoken, written, signage, colors, graffiti, music) we get a “*feeling*” about an area. Can be **outright** or subliminal. Can convey **inclusion** or **exclusion**.
2. **Toponyms:** Names that may give us a “sense of place.” People name areas to convey both information and give a sense of identity to places with which they are (or were) in contact. Descriptive add-ons to place names as are often repeated over an area or within a region.
3. **Remnant Toponyms:** Historic names that have outlasted the people who created them but remain as an integral part of the new culture group's identification and important to the navigation of the landscape.

TOPONYMY

How are places named?

What do the names signify?

Sometimes mistakes are made.

Toponyms

- **Place names often are indicative of a group's sense of importance, identity, or attitude.** The result of naming falls into one or more categories (Table 4.4):
 - Commemorative** (named after someone or thing)
 - Commendatory** (praises or emphasizes)
 - Descriptive** (characteristic or feature)
 - Incident-related** (relates to something that happened)
 - Manufactured** (made up)
 - Mistaken** (error)
 - Possessive** (named for ownership)
 - Shift** (named after some other place)
- Place names often directly reflect spatial patterns of language, dialect, and ethnicity (note pattern or similarity).
- Become part of the visible cultural landscape when they appear on signs, placards and maps.

Toponym Types		
Type of Toponym	Origin	Examples
Commemorative	Honors a famous or important person	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monrovia, Liberia (U.S. President James Monroe) Seattle, Washington (Squamish Indian Chief Si'ahl [Seattle]) Illinois (the Illini Indians)
Commemorative	Praises some physical or environmental characteristic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pleasant Valley, Greenland Sun City, Arizona Paradise, Texas
Descriptive	Describes a physical feature or environmental characteristic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rocky Mountains Great Falls, Montana Land's End, England
Incident related	Recalls an historic event	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Battle Creek, Michigan Fourth of July Mountain, Washington Massacre Lake, Nevada
Manufactured	Made-up or coined	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tesnus, Texas ("sunset" spelled backward) Reklaw, Texas (for Ann Walker, with "Walker" spelled backward) Truth or Consequences, New Mexico (after a 1950s radio show as part of a contest)
Mistaken	Traceable to an historic error in identification or translation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The West Indies (southern part of the Indies nor west of them) Texas (mistakenly translated from the word <i>teyucha</i>, a Caddoan Indian word for "friend") Lasker, North Carolina (mistranslation of Alaska, for which the town is named)
Possessive	Indicates an historic claim to ownership or control of a place	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Castro Valley, Pennsylvania Johnson City, Tennessee Hall's Store, Texas
Shift	Relocated from another place, often settlers' homeland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New Leipzig, North Dakota (Germany) Lancaster, Pennsylvania (England) New Mexico

Origin of some NYC Area Place Names



PLACE NAME	ORIGIN
Amsterdam Avenue	Amsterdam, a city in the Netherlands
Bergen Street	Hans Hansen Bergen, Dutch settler originally from Norway
Beverly	Beverly, Dutch for "farm"
Brooklyn	Broedelen, a town in the Netherlands
Brox	Jonas Brox, Dutch settler originally from Sweden
Brooklyn	Broeyck, Dutch for "swampy district"
Cassette	Cassara Indian. The name means "long small grasses."
Coney Island	Coyak Eiland, Dutch for "rabbit island"
Cortlyon Road	Jacques Cortlyon, a Walloon settler
Frank Kill	Kil, Dutch for stream or river
Grassy	Keren many, Dutch for crooked marsh
Greenwich	Greenwed, a town in the Netherlands
Greenwich Village	Greenwyck, Dutch for "pine area"
Govans Bay	Delaware Indian name meaning "the slopes"
Harlem	Harlem, a town in the Netherlands
Jamaica	Indian name meaning "barbaric"
Long Island	Lang Eiland, Dutch for "long island"
Manhattan	The Manhattan Indians. The name means "hilly island" or "place where wood is gathered for bows and arrows."
Manhasset	Delaware Indian name meaning "great head"
Midwood	Midwood, Dutch for "middle woods"
Murray Street	Indian name meaning "wooded swamp"
New Deep	Nieuw Diep, Dutch for "new village"
New Utrecht	Utrecht, a town in the Netherlands
Raritan Bay	The Raritan Indians. The name means "a point on a tidal river."
Rikers Island	Albans Rycken, an early Dutch settler
Rockaway Peninsula	The Rockaway Indians. The name means "sandy place."
Sutton Street	Patro Strycken, Dutch District Council
Wallabout Bay	"Wallow Bay," Dutch for "Wallow's Cove"
Yankees	Adriaen Van der Donck, Dutch settler known as Jankie (the gentleman)

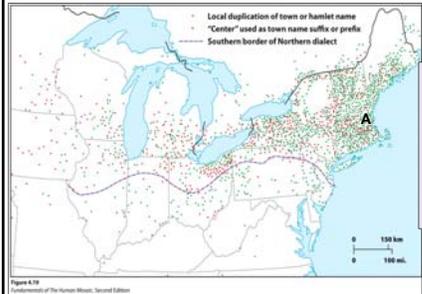
Toponyms

➤ Many place-names consist of two parts — the *generic* and the *specific*.

Examples: New York, Huntsville, Harrisburg, Ohio River, Newfound Gap, Cape Hatteras

- The **specific part** of the names listed would be: *York, Hunts, Harris, Ohio, Newfound, and Hatteras*
- The **generic parts**, which tell what kind of place is being described are: *new, ville, burg, river, gap, and cape*

Location of "New England-type" Generic Place Names

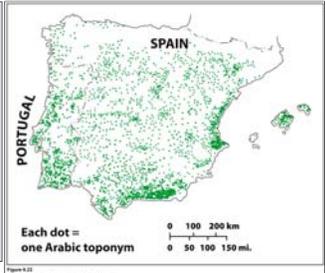


Concentration is evident in area "A" and thins away from the core. Terminology does not extend into Canada nor much past the southern border of the Northern dialect.

Arabic Toponyms in Iberia

In the early 700s the Moors of North Africa invaded Spain taking their language and religion with them.

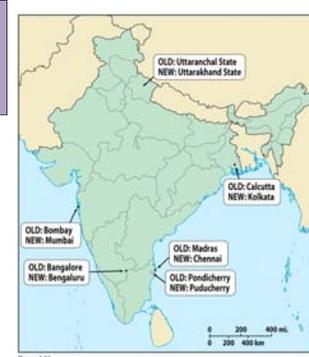
Over the course of 700 years they were pushed out of Spain and Portugal but their presence remains in names, designations and other cultural remnants.



India's Postcolonial Toponym Shift

The British named places in many cases by mishearing native speakers.

Upon independence India sought to revert to its original place names.



Signage

Ethnic neighborhoods tend to have signs exclusively in the language of the majority group. Some are more inclusive.

When populations are diverse, sign-age tends to incorporate the main languages spoken. Below English, Arabic and Hebrew are used.

Brooklyn Culture Signage

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Multilingual Signage

**NEXT:
Race and Ethnicity**

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