

## KEY ISSUE 4

# Why Do People Preserve Local Languages?

- Language Diversity
- Global Dominance of English

### Learning Outcome 5.4.1

Understand how several countries peacefully embrace more than one language.

The distribution of a language is a measure of the fate of a cultural group. English has diffused around the world from a small island in northwestern Europe because of the dominance of England and the United States over other territory on Earth's surface. Icelandic remains a little-used language because of the isolation of the Icelandic people.

As in other cultural traits, language displays the two competing geographic trends of globalization and local diversity. English has become the principal language of communication and interaction for the entire world. At the same time, local languages endangered by the global dominance of English are being protected and preserved.

## Language Diversity

In some countries, multiple languages coexist, with varying degrees of success. Other countries maintain the use of languages that have little if any relationship to other languages.

### MULTILINGUAL STATES

Difficulties can arise at the boundary between two languages. Belgium, Switzerland, and Nigeria offer examples of varying degrees of difficulties.

**BELGIUM.** Note in Figures 5-9 (Indo-European languages) and 5-10 (Germanic languages) that the boundary between the Romance and Germanic branches runs through the middle of two small European countries, Belgium and Switzerland. Belgium has had more difficulty than Switzerland in reconciling the interests of the different language speakers.

Southern Belgians (known as Walloons) speak French, whereas northern Belgians (known as Flemings) speak Flemish, a dialect of the Germanic language Dutch (Figure 5-27). The language boundary sharply divides the country into two regions. Antagonism between the Flemings and Walloons is aggravated by economic and political



▲ **FIGURE 5-27 LANGUAGES IN BELGIUM** Flemings in the north speak Flemish, a Dutch dialect. Walloons in the south speak French. The two groups have had difficulty sharing national power.

differences. Historically, the Walloons dominated Belgium's economy and politics, and French was the official state language. Brussels, the capital city, is officially bilingual, and signs are in both French and Flemish (Figure 5-28).

In response to pressure from Flemish speakers, Belgium has been divided into two autonomous regions, Flanders and Wallonia. Each elects an assembly that controls cultural affairs, public health, road construction, and urban development in its region. But for many in Flanders, regional autonomy is not enough. They want to see Belgium divided into two independent countries. Were that to occur, Flanders would be one of Europe's richest countries and Wallonia one of the poorest.

▼ **FIGURE 5-28 LANGUAGE DIVERSITY IN BELGIUM** Delhaize, a supermarket chain in Belgium, advertises on adjacent posters "the best at the best prices" (left) in French and (right) in Flemish.



**SWITZERLAND.** In contrast with Belgium, Switzerland peacefully exists with multiple languages. The key is a long tradition of decentralized government, in which local authorities hold most of the power, and decisions are frequently made by voter referenda. Switzerland has four official languages—German (used by 65 percent of the population), French (18 percent), Italian (10 percent), and Romansh (1 percent). Swiss voters made Romansh an official language in a 1938 referendum, despite the small percentage of people who use the language.

Switzerland is divided into four main linguistic regions, as shown in Figure 5-29, but people living in individual communities, especially in the mountains, may use a language other than the prevailing local one. The Swiss, relatively tolerant of citizens who speak other languages, have institutionalized cultural diversity by creating a form of government that places considerable power in small communities.

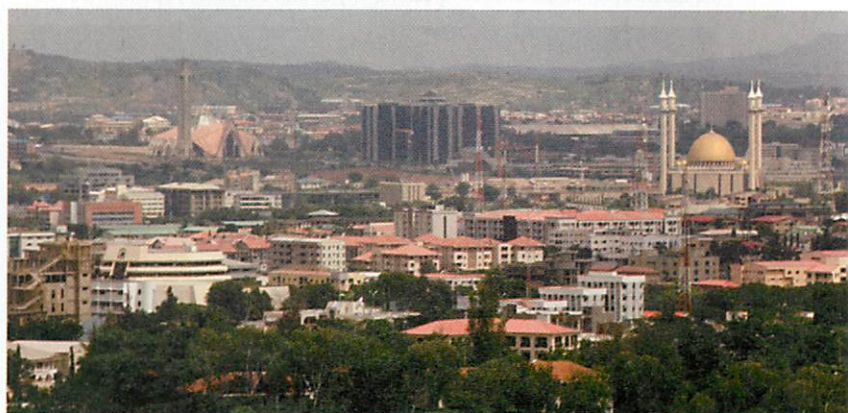
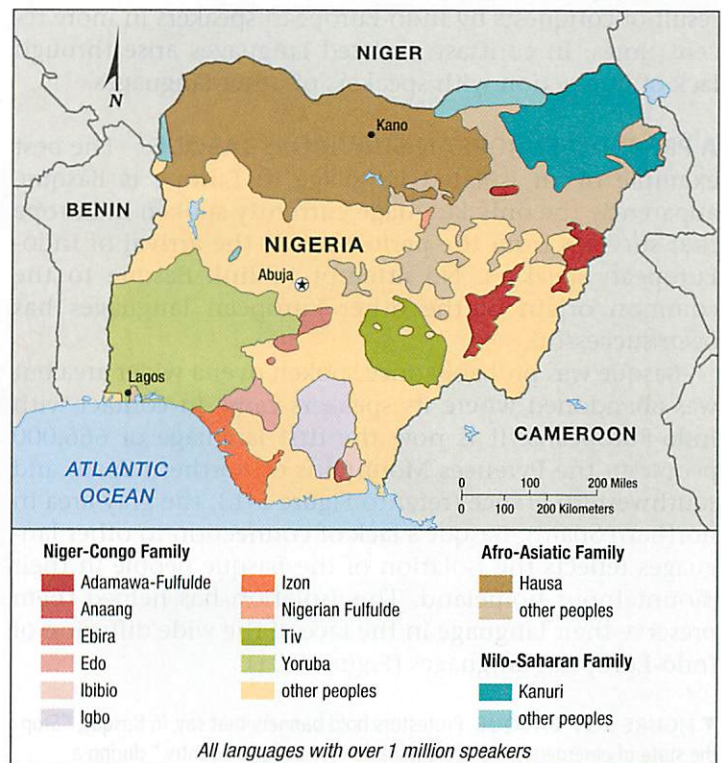
**NIGERIA.** Africa's most populous country, Nigeria, displays problems that can arise from the presence of many speakers of many languages. Nigeria has 527 distinct languages, according to *Ethnologue*, only three of which have widespread use—Hausa, Yoruba, and Igbo, each spoken by one-eighth of the population (Figure 5-30).



▲ **FIGURE 5-29 LANGUAGE DIVERSITY IN SWITZERLAND** The map shows Switzerland's four official languages. The photo shows a sign that prevents hikers, vehicles, and horses from entering the forest because of timber cutting. German is top left, French top right, Italian lower left, and Romansh lower right. Switzerland lives peacefully with four official languages, including Romansh, which is used by only 1 percent of the population.

Groups living in different regions of Nigeria have often battled. The southern Igbos attempted to secede from Nigeria during the 1960s, and northerners have repeatedly claimed that the Yorubas discriminate against them. To reduce these regional tensions, the government has moved the capital from Lagos in the Yoruba-dominated southwest to Abuja in the center of Nigeria.

Nigeria reflects the problems that can arise when great cultural diversity—and therefore language diversity—is packed into a relatively small region. Nigeria also illustrates the importance of language in identifying distinct cultural groups at a local scale. Speakers of one language are unlikely to understand any of the others in the same language family, let alone languages from other families.



▲ **FIGURE 5-30 LANGUAGE DIVERSITY IN NIGERIA** The map shows Nigeria's principal languages. The photo shows Nigeria's capital city Abuja, which was built in the center of the country, where none of the three largest languages dominates. The city skyline includes a cathedral (left), national bank (center), and mosque (right).

## ISOLATED LANGUAGES

### Learning Outcome 5.4.2

Understand what is meant by an isolated language and an extinct language.

An **isolated language** is a language unrelated to any other and therefore not attached to any language family. Similarities and differences between languages—our main form of communication—are a measure of the degree of interaction among groups of people.

The diffusion of Indo-European languages demonstrates that a common ancestor dominated much of Europe before recorded history. Similarly, the diffusion of Indo-European languages to the Western Hemisphere is a result of conquests by Indo-European speakers in more recent times. In contrast, isolated languages arise through lack of interaction with speakers of other languages.

**A PRE-INDO-EUROPEAN SURVIVOR: BASQUE.** The best example of an isolated language in Europe is Basque, apparently the only language currently spoken in Europe that survives from the period before the arrival of Indo-European speakers. No attempt to link Basque to the common origin of the other European languages has been successful.

Basque was probably once spoken over a wider area but was abandoned where its speakers came in contact with Indo-Europeans. It is now the first language of 666,000 people in the Pyrenees Mountains of northern Spain and southwestern France (refer to Figure 5-13, the gray area in northern Spain). Basque's lack of connection to other languages reflects the isolation of the Basque people in their mountainous homeland. This isolation has helped them preserve their language in the face of the wide diffusion of Indo-European languages (Figure 5-31).

▼ **FIGURE 5-31 BASQUE** Protestors hold banners that say, in Basque, “Stop the state of emergency; self-determination for Basque Country,” during a demonstration in the Basque-speaking city of San Sebastian, Spain, in 2009.



▲ **FIGURE 5-32 ICELANDIC** The warning sign in Icelandic and English is located in Hveragerdi, Iceland.

**AN UNCHANGING LANGUAGE: ICELANDIC.** Icelandic is related to other languages in the North Germanic group of the Germanic branch of the Indo-European family (Figure 5-32). Icelandic's significance is that over the past 1,000 years, it has changed less than any other language in the Germanic branch. As was the case with England, people in Iceland speak a Germanic language because their ancestors migrated to the island from the east, in this case from Norway. Norwegian settlers colonized Iceland in A.D. 874.

When an ethnic group migrates to a new location, it takes along the language spoken in the former home. The language spoken by most migrants—such as the Germanic invaders of England—changes in part through interaction with speakers of other languages. But in the case of Iceland, the Norwegian immigrants had little contact with speakers of other languages when they arrived in Iceland, and they did not have contact with speakers of their language back in Norway. After centuries of interaction with other Scandinavians, Norwegian and other North Germanic languages had adopted new words and pronunciation, whereas the isolated people of Iceland had less opportunity to learn new words and no reason to change their language.

**A “DISCOVERED” LANGUAGE: KORO AKA.** Isolated languages continue to be identified and documented. For example, a research team from Oregon's Living Tongues Institute for Endangered Languages was in India in 2008 to study other rarely spoken languages. The team heard people in the area speaking another language that was not listed in authoritative sources such as *Ethnologue*. The researchers concluded that the language, known as Koro Aka, is a distinct language that belongs to the Tibeto-Burman branch of Sino-Tibetan, but they were not able to classify it in a group. Koro Aka has around 1,000 speakers, in northeastern India.

## EXTINCT AND REVIVED LANGUAGES

Thousands of languages are **extinct languages** that were once in use—even in the recent past—but are no longer spoken or read in daily activities by anyone in the world. *Ethnologue* considers 473 languages to be nearly extinct

because only a few older speakers are still living, and they are not teaching the languages to their children. According to *Ethnologue*, 46 of these nearly extinct languages are in Africa, 182 in the Americas, 84 in Asia, 9 in Europe, and 152 in the Pacific.

#### MANY EXTINCT LANGUAGES: NATIVE AMERICANS.

When Spanish missionaries reached the eastern Amazon region of Peru in the sixteenth century, they found more than 500 languages. Only 92 survive today, according to *Ethnologue*, and 14 of these face immediate extinction because fewer than 100 speakers remain. Of Peru's 92 surviving indigenous languages, only Cusco, a Quechuan language, is currently used by more than 1 million people.

*Ethnologue* lists 74 languages based in the United States that are now extinct. These are languages once spoken by groups of Native Americans, especially in the West (Figure 5-33).

**AN EXTINCT LANGUAGE: GOTHIC.** Gothic was widely spoken by people in Eastern and Northern Europe in the third century. Not only is Gothic extinct but so is the entire language group to which it belonged, the East Germanic group of the Germanic branch of Indo-European. The last speakers of Gothic lived in the Crimea in Russia in the sixteenth century.

The Gothic language died because the descendants of the Goths were converted to other languages through processes of integration, such as political dominance and cultural preference. For example, many Gothic people switched to speaking the Latin language after their con-

▼ **FIGURE 5-33 ALGONQUIN** Student in Chisasibi, Québec, writes in Cree, an Algonquian language.



version to Christianity. Similarly, indigenous languages are disappearing in Peru as speakers switch to Spanish.

**REVIVING AN EXTINCT LANGUAGE: HEBREW.** Hebrew is a rare case of an extinct language that has been revived (Figure 5-34). Most of the Jewish Bible (Christian Old Testament) was written in Hebrew. (A small part of it was written in another Afro-Asiatic language, Aramaic.) A language of daily activity in biblical times, Hebrew diminished in use in the fourth century B.C. and was thereafter retained only for Jewish religious services. At the time of Jesus, people in present-day Israel generally spoke Aramaic, which in turn was replaced by Arabic.

When Israel was established as an independent country in 1948, Hebrew became one of the new country's two official languages, along with Arabic. Hebrew was chosen because the Jewish population of Israel consisted of refugees and migrants from many countries who spoke many languages. Because Hebrew was still used in Jewish prayers, no other language could so symbolically unify the disparate cultural groups in the new country.

The task of reviving Hebrew as a living language was formidable. Words had to be created for thousands of objects and inventions unknown in biblical times, such as telephones, cars, and electricity. The revival effort was initiated by Eliezer Ben-Yehuda, who lived in Palestine before the creation of the State of Israel and who refused to speak any language other than Hebrew. Ben-Yehuda is credited with the invention of 4,000 new Hebrew words—related when possible to ancient ones—and the creation of the first modern Hebrew dictionary.

#### Pause and Reflect 5.4.2

Can you think of other words that would not have existed in ancient times?

▼ **FIGURE 5-34 HEBREW** The road signs are in (top) Hebrew, (middle) Arabic, and English.



## PRESERVING ENDANGERED LANGUAGES: CELTIC

### Learning Outcome 5.4.3

Understand why the number of Celtic speakers has declined and how the languages are being preserved.

Some endangered languages are being preserved. Nonetheless, linguists expect that hundreds of languages will become extinct during the twenty-first century and that only about 300 languages are clearly safe from extinction because they have sufficient speakers and official government support.

The Celtic branch of Indo-European is of particular interest to English speakers because it was the major language in the British Isles before the Germanic Angles, Jutes, and Saxons invaded. Two thousand years ago, Celtic languages were spoken in much of present-day Germany, France, and northern Italy, as well as in the British Isles. Today, Celtic languages survive only in remote parts of Scotland, Wales, and Ireland and on the Brittany peninsula of France.

The Celtic language branch is divided into Goidelic (Gaelic) and Brythonic groups. Two Goidelic languages survive—Irish Gaelic and Scottish Gaelic. Speakers of Brythonic (also called Cymric or Britannic) fled westward during the Germanic invasions to Wales, southwestward to Cornwall, or southward across the English Channel to the Brittany peninsula of France. Recent efforts have prevented the disappearance of Celtic languages and others in Europe. The fate of five Celtic languages is described here, in order of number of speakers.

**WELSH (BRYTHONIC).** Wales—the name derived from the Germanic invaders' word for *foreign*—was conquered by the English in 1283. Welsh remained dominant in Wales until the nineteenth century, when many English speakers migrated there to work in coal mines and factories. A 2004 survey found 611,000 Welsh speakers in Wales, 22 percent of the population. In some isolated communities in the northwest, especially in the county of Gwynedd, two-thirds speak Welsh.

*Cymdeithas yr Iaith Gymraeg* (Welsh Language Society) has been instrumental in preserving the language. Britain's 1988 Education Act made Welsh language training a compulsory subject in all schools in Wales, and Welsh history and music have been added to the curriculum. All local governments and utility companies are now obliged to provide services in Welsh. Welsh-language road signs have been posted throughout Wales, and the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) produces Welsh-language television and radio programs (Figure 5-35). Knowledge of Welsh is now required for many jobs, especially in public service, media, culture, and sports.



▲ FIGURE 5-35 WELSH Members of the Welsh Language Society protest closure of small rural schools; the signs say “save our Welsh-speaking village schools.”

**IRISH.** Irish Gaelic and English are the Republic of Ireland's two official languages. Irish is spoken by 350,000 people on a daily basis, and 1.5 million say that they can speak it (Figure 5-36). An Irish-language TV station began broadcasting in 1996. English road signs were banned from portions of western Ireland in 2005. The revival is being led by young Irish living in other countries who wish to distinguish themselves from the English (in much the same way that Canadians traveling abroad often make efforts to distinguish themselves from U.S. citizens). Irish singers, including many rock groups (although not U2), have begun to record and perform in Gaelic.

In the 1300s, the Irish were forbidden to speak their own language in the presence of their English masters. By the nineteenth century, Irish children were required

▼ FIGURE 5-36 IRISH The name of the pub means “the little bridge” in Irish.



to wear “tally sticks” around their necks at school. The teacher carved a notch in the stick every day the child used an Irish word, and at the end of the day meted out punishment based on the number of tallies. Parents encouraged their children to learn English so that they could compete for jobs.

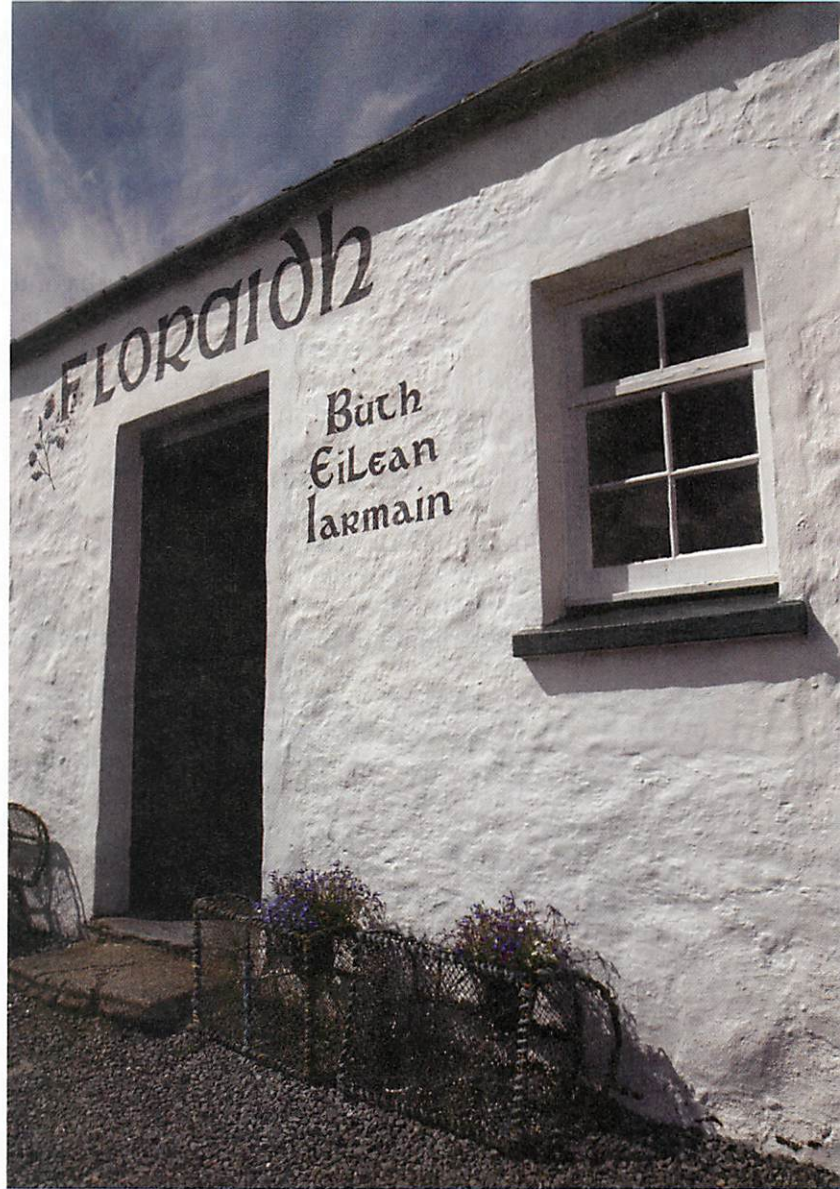
#### Pause and Reflect 5.4.3

Use Google Translate to type something in English and see its translation in Irish and in Welsh. Do Irish and Welsh appear similar or very different?

**BRETON.** In Brittany—like Cornwall, an isolated peninsula that juts out into the Atlantic Ocean—around 250,000 people speak Breton regularly. Breton differs from the other Celtic languages in that it has more French words (Figure 5-37).

**SCOTTISH.** In Scotland 59,000, or 1 percent of the people, speak Scottish Gaelic (Figure 5-38). An extensive body of literature exists in Gaelic languages, including the Robert Burns poem *Auld Lang Syne* (“old long since”), the basis for the popular New Year’s Eve song. Gaelic was carried from Ireland to Scotland about 1,500 years ago.

**CORNISH.** Cornish became extinct in 1777, with the death of the language’s last known native speaker, Dolly Pentreath, who lived in Mousehole (pronounced “muzzle”). Before Pentreath died, an English historian wrote down as much of her speech as possible so that future generations could study the Cornish language. One of her last utterances was later translated as “I will not speak English . . . you ugly, black toad!”



▲ FIGURE 5-38 SCOTTISH The sign over the door says that this is a florist. Eilean Iarmain is the Scottish name for the village of Isleornsay, Scotland.

▼ FIGURE 5-37 BRETON Sign for the town is in French and Breton. In the background is the world’s largest collections of ancient stones, which were erected more than 5,000 years ago by people who inhabited Brittany before the Celts.



A few hundred people have become fluent in the formerly extinct Cornish language, which was revived in the 1920s. Cornish is taught in grade schools and adult evening courses and is used in some church services. Some banks accept checks written in Cornish. See the Sustainability and Inequality in Our Global Village box for more on the revival of Cornish. After years of dispute over how to spell the revived language, various groups advocating for the revival of Cornish reached an agreement in 2008 on a standard written version of the language. Because the language became extinct, it is impossible to know precisely how to pronounce Cornish words.

The long-term decline of languages such as Celtic provides an excellent example of the precarious struggle for survival that many languages experience. Faced with the diffusion of alternatives used by people with greater political and economic strength, speakers of Celtic and other languages must work hard to preserve their linguistic cultural identity.

## PRESERVING ABORIGINAL AND MAORI IN AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND

English is the most widely used language in Australia and New Zealand as a result of British colonization during the early nineteenth century. Settlers in Australia and New Zealand established and maintained outposts of British culture, including use of the English language.

Though English remains the dominant language of Australia and New Zealand, the languages that predate British settlement survive in both countries. However, the two countries have adopted different policies with regard to preserving indigenous languages. Australia regards English as a tool for promoting cultural diversity, whereas New Zealand regards linguistic diversity as an important element of cultural diversity.

**AUSTRALIA.** In Australia, 1 percent of the population is Aboriginal. Many elements of Aboriginal culture are now being preserved. But education is oriented toward teaching English rather than maintaining local languages. English is the language of instruction throughout Australia, and others are relegated to the status of second language.

An essential element in maintaining British culture was restriction of immigration from non-English-speaking places during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Fear of immigration was especially strong in Australia because of its proximity to other Asian countries. Under a “White Australia” policy, every prospective immigrant was required to write 50 words of a European language dictated by an immigration officer. The dictation test was not eliminated until 1957. The Australian government now merely requires that immigrants learn English.

**NEW ZEALAND.** In New Zealand, more than 10 percent of the population is Maori, descendants of Polynesian people who migrated there around 1,000 years ago (Figure 5-39). In contrast with Australia, New Zealand has adopted policies to

preserve the Maori language. Most notably, Maori has become one of New Zealand's three official languages, along with English and sign language. A Maori Language Commission was established to preserve the language. Despite official policies, only 1 percent of New Zealanders are fluent in Maori, most of whom are over age 50. Preserving the language requires skilled teachers and the willingness to endure inconvenience compared to using the world's lingua franca, English.

On the other hand, New Zealand's language requirement for immigrants is more stringent than Australia's: In most circumstances, immigrants must already be fluent in English, although free English lessons are available to immigrants for the exceptions. More remote from Asian landmasses, New Zealand has attracted fewer Asian immigrants.

### Pause and Reflect 5.4.6

Which language policy do you favor, Australia's or New Zealand's? Why?

## PRESERVING OCCITAN IN FRANCE

The most important linguistic difference within France is between the north and the south (refer to Figure 5-13). In the north, the most commonly spoken language is what is now known as French. The standard form of French derives from Francien, which was once a dialect of the Île-de-France region of the country.

Francien became the standard form of French because the region included Paris, which became the capital and largest city of France. Francien French became the country's official language in the sixteenth century, and local dialects tended to disappear as a result of the capital's long-time dominance over French political, economic, and social life.

Occitan is spoken by about 2 million people in southern France and adjacent countries. The name derives from the French region of Aquitaine, which in French has a similar



▲ **FIGURE 5-39 MAORI LANGUAGE, NEW ZEALAND** The sign, in Maori, is the name of this place, and is said to be the world's second-longest place name, at 85 letters. The Maori translates as “the summit where Tamatea, the man with the big knees, the climber of mountains, the land-swallower who travelled about, played his nose flute to his loved one.”

## SUSTAINABILITY AND INEQUALITY IN OUR GLOBAL VILLAGE

# Preserving Lesser-Used Languages

The sustainability of any language depends on the political and military strength of its speakers. The Celtic languages declined because the Celts lost most of the territory they once controlled to speakers of other languages. Most remaining Celtic speakers also know the language of their English or French conquerors.

In 1982, the European Union established the European Bureau for Lesser Used Languages (EBLUL), based in Dublin, Ireland, to provide financial support for the preservation of several dozen indigenous, regional, and minority languages spoken by 46 million Europeans. The Celtic languages received a lot of attention from EBLUL; for example, in 2002, EBLUL granted Cornish official status within the European Union (Figure 5-40).



▲ FIGURE 5-40 CORNISH Sign for the town is in English and Cornish. The literal English translation of the Cornish version is "Cornwall welcomes you."

The European Union cut off funding for EBLUL in 2010, and the office was closed. Local individually based organizations such as *Cymdeithas yr*

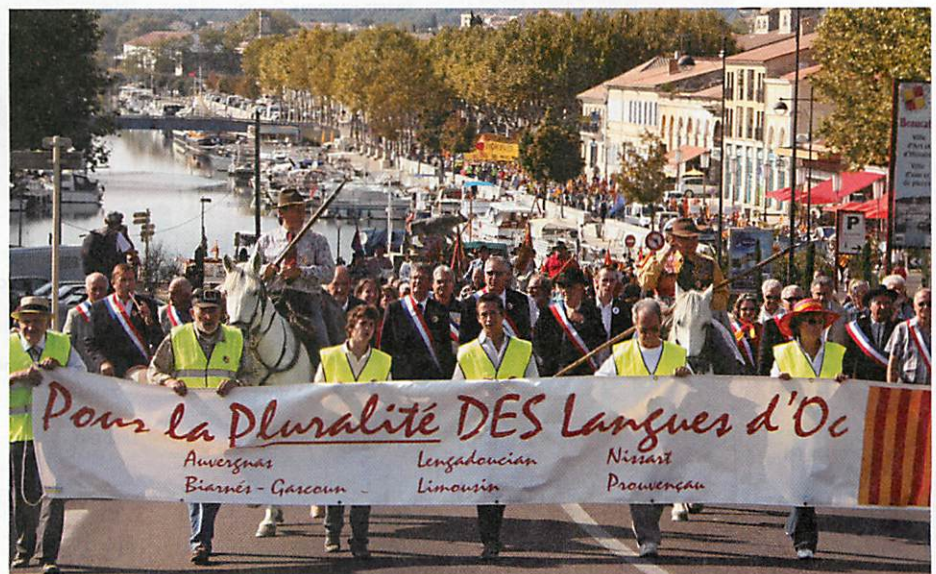
*Iaith Gymraeg* are expected to carry the responsibility of preserving lesser-used languages.

pronunciation to Occitan. Numerous dialects of Occitan are spoken, including Auvergnat, Gascon, and Provençal

French dialects of northern France are sometimes known by the French phrases *langue d'oïl* and the southern as *langue d'òc*. It is worth exploring these terms, for they provide insight into how languages evolve. These names derive from different ways in which the word for "yes" was said. One Roman term for "yes" was *hoc illud est*, meaning "that is so." In the south, the phrase was shortened to *hoc*, or *òc*, because the /h/ sound was generally dropped, just as we drop it on the word *honor* today. Northerners shortened the phrase to *o-il* after the first sound in the first two words of the phrase, again with the initial /h/ suppressed. If the two syllables of *o-il* are spoken very rapidly, they are combined into a sound like the English word *wheel*. Eventually, the final consonant was eliminated, as in many French words, giving a sound for "yes" like the English *we*, spelled in French *oui*.

The French government has established bilingual elementary and high schools called *calandretas* in the Occitan region. These schools teach both French and Occitan, according to a

curriculum established by the national ministry of education. Still, many people living in southern France want to see more efforts by the government of France to encourage the use of Occitan (Figure 5-41).



▲ FIGURE 5-41 PROVENÇAL People demonstrate in Beaucaire, France, for the preservation of the Provençal language *langue d'òc*.



## Global Dominance of English

### Learning Outcome 5.4.4

Understand the concept of a lingua franca.

One of the most fundamental needs in a global society is a common language for communication. Increasingly in the modern world, the language of international communication is English. A Polish airline pilot who flies over Spain speaks to the traffic controller on the ground in English. Swiss bankers speak a dialect of German among themselves, but with German bankers they prefer to speak English rather than German. English is the official language at an aircraft factory in France and an appliance company in Italy.

The dominance of English as an international language has facilitated the diffusion of popular culture and science and the growth of international trade. However, people who forsake their native language must weigh the benefits of using English against the cost of losing a fundamental element of local cultural identity.

English is the first language of 328 million people and is spoken fluently by another estimated  $\frac{1}{2}$  to 1 billion people (Figure 5-42). English is an official language in 57 countries, more than any other language, and is the predominant language in 2 more (Australia and the United States). Two billion people—one-third of the world—live in a country where English is an official language, even if they cannot speak it (Figure 5-43).

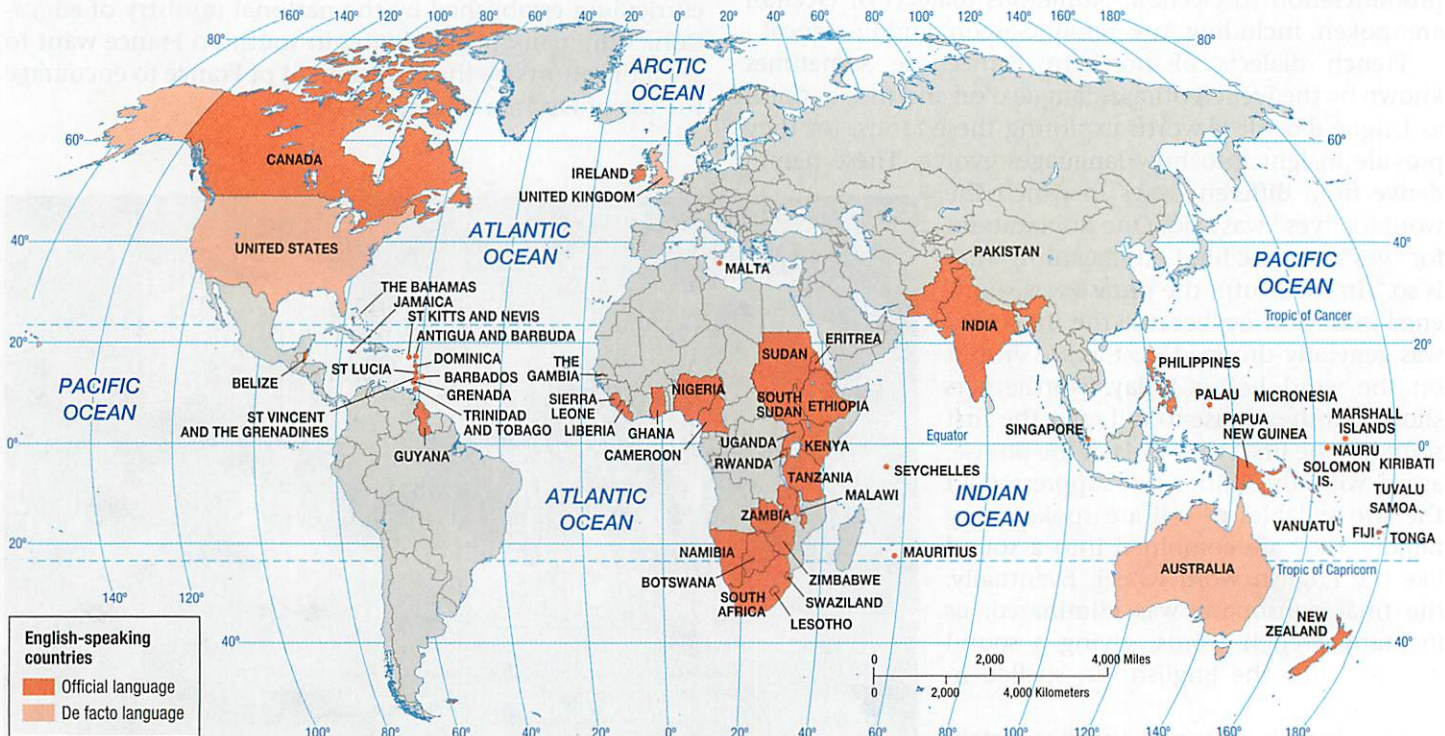
## ENGLISH: AN EXAMPLE OF A LINGUA FRANCA

A language of international communication, such as English, is known as a *lingua franca*. To facilitate trade, speakers of two different languages create a lingua franca by mixing elements of the two languages into a simple common language. The term, which means *language of the Franks*, was originally applied by Arab traders during the Middle Ages to describe the language they used to communicate with Europeans, whom they called Franks.

People in smaller countries need to learn English to participate more fully in the global economy and culture. All children learn English in the schools of countries such as the Netherlands and Sweden to facilitate international communication. This may seem culturally unfair, but obviously it is more likely that several million Dutch people will learn English than that a half-billion English speakers around the world will learn Dutch.

The rapid growth in importance of English is reflected in the percentage of students learning English as a second language in school. More than 90 percent of students in the European Union learn English in middle or high school, not just in smaller countries such as Denmark and the Netherlands but also in populous countries such as France, Germany, and Spain. The Japanese government, having determined that fluency in English is mandatory in a global economy, has even considered adding English as a second official language.

Foreign students increasingly seek admission to universities in countries that teach in English rather than in



▲ FIGURE 5-42 ENGLISH-SPEAKING COUNTRIES English is an official language in 56 countries. English is also the predominant language in the United Kingdom, United States, and Australia, although these countries have declared it to be the official language.



▲ FIGURE 5-43 TEACHING ENGLISH English is widely taught around the world, including this school in China.

German, French, or Russian. Students around the world want to learn in English because they believe it is the most effective way to work in the global economy and participate in the global culture.

A group that learns English or another lingua franca may learn a simplified form, called a **pidgin language**. To communicate with speakers of another language, two groups construct a pidgin language by learning a few of the grammar rules and words of a lingua franca, mixing in

some elements of their own languages. A pidgin language has no native speakers; it is always spoken in addition to one's native language.

Other than English, modern lingua franca languages include Swahili in East Africa, Hindi in South Asia, Indonesian in Southeast Asia, and Russian in the former Soviet Union. A number of African and Asian countries that became independent in the twentieth century adopted English or Swahili as an official language for government business, as well as for commerce, even if the majority of the people couldn't speak it.

In view of the global dominance of English, many U.S. citizens do not recognize the importance of learning other languages. One of the best ways to learn about the beliefs, traits, and values of people living in other regions is to learn their language. The lack of effort by Americans to learn other languages is a source of resentment among people elsewhere in the world, especially when Americans visit or work in other countries. The inability to speak other languages is also a handicap for Americans who try to conduct international business. Successful entry into new overseas markets requires knowledge of local culture, and officials who can speak the local language are better able to obtain important information. Japanese businesses that wish to expand in the United States send English-speaking officials, but American businesses that wish to sell products to the Japanese are rarely able to send a Japanese-speaking employee.

## CONTEMPORARY GEOGRAPHIC TOOLS

# The Death of English as a Lingua Franca?

English will disappear as a lingua franca, claims Nicholas Ostler, who heads the United Kingdom's Foundation for Endangered Languages, and no other language will replace it. Advances in technology enable people to continue speaking their native language while using the computer and speech recognition devices to translate between it and English.

Figure 5-44 is an excerpt from the Welsh language version of the 2011 UK census form. What are questions 18 and 19 asking? Use an online translation service, such as Google translator, at <http://translate.google.com>. Set the left box for Welsh and the right box for English, and type the Welsh from the census form into the left box.

18 Beth yw eich prif iaith?  
 Darllen Cymraeg  
 Ysgrifennu Cymraeg  
 Dim un o'r uchod

19 Pa mor dda allwch chi siarad Saesneg?  
 Da iawn  
 Da  
 Ddim yn dda  
 Dim o gwbl

▲ FIGURE 5-44 UK CENSUS FORM IN WELSH What is being asked in questions 18 and 19?

## EXPANSION DIFFUSION OF ENGLISH

### Learning Outcome 5.4.5

Understand how English has diffused to other languages.

In the past, a lingua franca achieved widespread distribution through migration and conquest. Two thousand years ago, use of Latin spread through Europe along with the Roman Empire. In recent centuries, use of English spread around the world primarily through the British Empire.

In contrast, the recent growth in the use of English is an example of expansion diffusion, the spread of a trait through the snowballing effect of an idea rather than through the relocation of people. Expansion diffusion has occurred in two ways with English:

1. English is changing through diffusion of new vocabulary, spelling, and pronunciation.
2. English words are fusing with other languages.

For a language to remain vibrant, new words and usage must be coined to deal with new situations. Unlike most examples of expansion diffusion, recent changes in English have percolated up from common usage and ethnic dialects rather than being directed down to the masses by elite people. Examples include dialects spoken by African Americans and residents of Appalachia.

**AFRICAN AMERICAN ENGLISH.** Some African Americans speak a dialect of English heavily influenced by the group's distinctive heritage of forced migration from Africa during the eighteenth century to be slaves in the southern colonies. African American slaves preserved a distinctive dialect in part to communicate in a code not understood by their white masters. Black dialect words such as *gumbo* and *jazz* have long since diffused into the standard English language.

In the twentieth century, many African Americans migrated from the South to the large cities in the Northeast and Midwest (see Chapter 7). Living in racially segregated neighborhoods within northern cities and attending segregated schools, many African Americans preserved their distinctive dialect. That dialect has been termed African American Vernacular English (AAVE). Since 1996, the term **Ebonics**, a combination of *ebony* and *phonics*, has sometimes been used as a synonym for AAVE.

The American Speech, Language and Hearing Association classifies AAVE as a distinct dialect, with a recognized vocabulary, grammar, and word meaning. Among the distinctive elements of Ebonics are the use of double negatives, such as "I ain't going there no more," and such sentences as "She be at home" instead of "She is usually at home."

Use of AAVE is controversial within the African American community. On one hand, some regard it as substandard, a measure of poor education, and an obstacle to success in the United States. Others see AAVE as a means for preserving a distinctive element of African American culture and

an effective way to teach African Americans who otherwise perform poorly in school.

### Pause and Reflect 5.4.5

Should AAVE be taught in schools? Why or why not?

**APPALACHIAN ENGLISH.** Natives of Appalachian communities, such as in rural West Virginia, also have a distinctive dialect, pronouncing *hollow* as "holler" and *creek* as "crick." Distinctive grammatical practices include the use of the double negative as in Ebonics and adding "a" in front of verbs ending in "ing," such as *a-sitting*.

As with Ebonics, speaking an Appalachian dialect produces both pride and problems. An Appalachian dialect is a source of regional identity but has long been regarded by other Americans as a sign of poor education and an obstacle to obtaining employment in other regions of the United States. Some Appalachian residents are "bidialectic": They speak "standard" English outside Appalachia and slip back into their regional dialect at home.

## DIFFUSION TO OTHER LANGUAGES

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

**FRANGLAIS.** Traditionally, language has been an especially important source of national pride and identity in France. The French are particularly upset with the increasing worldwide domination of English, especially the invasion of their language by English words and the substitution of English for French as the most important language of international communications.

French is an official language in 29 countries and for hundreds of years served as the lingua franca for international diplomats. Many French are upset that English words such as *cowboy*, *hamburger*, *jeans*, and *T-shirt* were allowed to diffuse into the French language and destroy the language's purity. The widespread use of English in the French language is called **Franglais**, a combination of *français* and *anglais*, the French words for *French* and *English*. (Figure 5-45)

Since 1635, the French Academy has been the supreme arbiter of the French language. In modern times, it has promoted the use of French terms in France, such as *stationnement* rather than *parking*, *fin du semaine* rather than *the weekend*, *logiciel* rather than *software*, and *arrosage* rather than *spam*. France's highest court, however, ruled in 1994 that most of the country's laws banning Franglais were illegal.

**SPANGLISH.** English is diffusing into the Spanish language spoken by 34 million Hispanics in the United States to create **Spanglish**, a combination of Spanish and English (Figure 5-46). In Miami's large Cuban American community, Spanglish is sometimes called **Cubonics**, a combination of Cuban and phonetics.



▲ **FIGURE 5-45 FRANGLAIS** A restaurant awning mixes French (*dejeuner*, *salades*, and *pâtes*), English (*burgers* and *bagels*), and Franglais (*club sandwichs*).

As with Franglais, Spanglish involves converting English words to Spanish forms. Some of the changes modify the spelling of English words to conform to Spanish preferences and pronunciations, such as dropping final consonants and replacing *v* with *b*. For example, *shorts* (pants) becomes *chores*, and *vacuum cleaner* becomes *bacuncliner*. In other cases, awkward Spanish words or phrases are dropped in favor of English words. For example, *parquin* is used rather than *estacionamiento* for “parking,” and *taipear* is used instead of *escribir a máquina* for “to type.”

Spanglish is a richer integration of English with Spanish than the mere borrowing of English words. New words have been invented in Spanglish that do not exist in English but would be useful if they did. For example, *textear* is a verb

▼ **FIGURE 5-46 SPANGLISH** A restaurant in Santa Ana, California, mixes Spanish and English.



derived from the English text, and is less awkward than the Spanish *mandar un mensajito*; *i-meiliar* is a verb that means “to e-mail someone.” Spanglish also mixes English and Spanish words in the same phrase. For example, a magazine article is titled “When he says *me voy* . . . what does he really mean?” (*me voy* means “I’m leaving”).

Spanglish has become especially widespread in popular culture, such as song lyrics, television, and magazines aimed at young Hispanic women, but it has also been adopted by writers of serious literature. Inevitably, critics charge that Spanglish is a substitute for rigorously learning the rules of standard English and Spanish. And Spanglish has not been promoted for use in schools, as has Ebonics. Rather than a threat to existing languages, Spanglish is generally regarded as enriching both English and Spanish by adopting the best elements of each—English’s ability to invent new words and Spanish’s ability to convey nuances of emotion. Many Hispanic Americans like being able to say *Hablo un mix de los dos lenguajes*.

**DENGLISH.** The diffusion of English words into German is called **Denglish**, with the “D” for *Deutsch*, the German word for *German* (Figure 5-47). In Germany, airlines, car dealers, and telephone companies use English slogans in advertising. For many Germans, wishing someone “happy birthday” sounds more melodic than the German *Herzlichen Glückwunsch zum Geburtstag*.

The German telephone company Deutsche Telekom uses the German word *Deutschlandverbindungen* for “long distance” and the Denglish word *Cityverbindungen* for “local” (rather than the German word *Ortsverbindungen*). The telephone company originally wanted to use the English “German calls” and “city calls” to describe its long-distance and local services, but the Institute for the German Language, which defines rules for the use of German, protested, so Deutsche Telekom compromised with one German word and one Denglish word.

English has diffused into other languages as well. The Japanese, for example, refer to *beisboru* (“baseball”), *naifu* (“knife”), and *sutoroberi keki* (“strawberry cake”).

▼ **FIGURE 5-47 DENGLISH** An ad for a radio station in Berlin, Germany, mixes German and English.



## SPANISH AND FRENCH IN THE UNITED STATES AND CANADA

### Learning Outcome 5.4.6

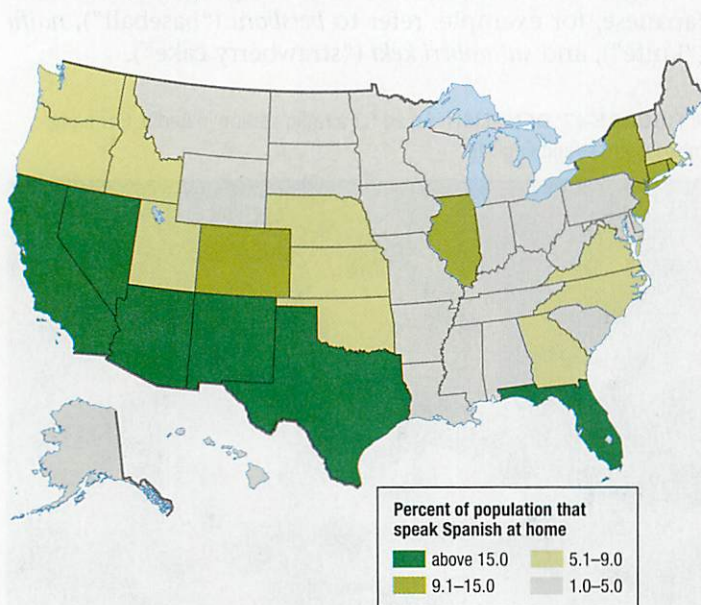
Understand the role of Spanish and French in North America.

North America is dominated by English speakers. However, other languages, especially French in Canada and Spanish in the United States, are becoming increasingly prominent.

**SPANISH-SPEAKING UNITED STATES.** Linguistic unity is an apparent feature of the United States, a nation of immigrants who learn English to become Americans. However, the diversity of languages in the United States is greater than it first appears. In 2008, a language other than English was spoken at home by 56 million Americans over age 5, 20 percent of the population. Spanish was spoken at home by 35 million people in the United States. More than 2 million spoke Chinese; at least 1 million each spoke French, German, Korean, Tagalog, and Vietnamese.

Spanish has become an increasingly important language in recent years because of large-scale immigration from Latin America. In some communities, public notices, government documents, and advertisements are printed in Spanish. Several hundred Spanish-language newspapers and radio and television stations operate in the United States, especially in southern Florida, the Southwest, and large northern cities, where most of the 35 million Spanish-speaking people live (Figure 5-48).

Promoting the use of English symbolizes that language is the chief cultural bond in the United States in an otherwise heterogeneous society. With the growing dominance of the English language in the global economy and culture, knowledge of English is important for people around the world, not just inside the United States. At the same



▲ **FIGURE 5-48** SPANISH SPEAKERS IN THE UNITED STATES The largest percentages of Spanish speakers are in the Southwest and in Florida.

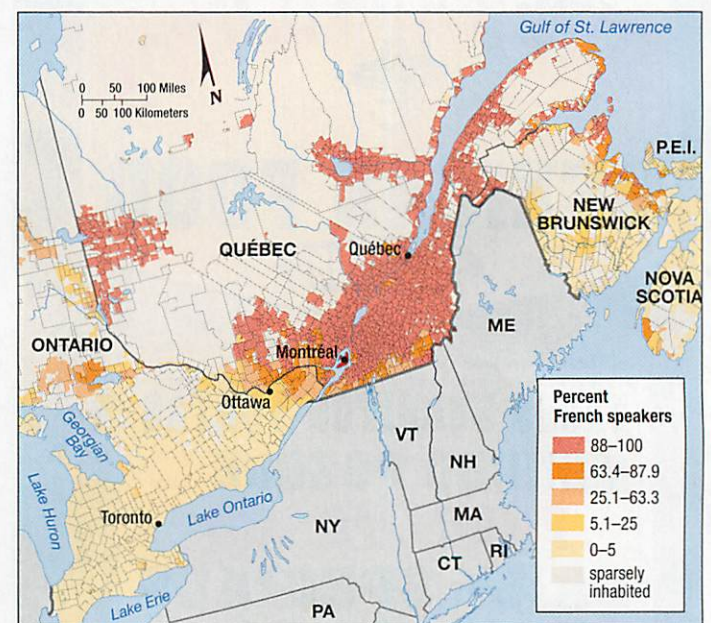
time, the increasing use of other languages in the United States is a reminder of the importance that groups place on preserving cultural identity and the central role that language plays in maintaining that identity.

In reaction against the increasing use of Spanish in the United States, 30 states and a number of localities have laws making English the official language. (Hawaii has two official languages, English and Hawaiian, which is in the Austronesian language family.) Some courts have judged these laws to be unconstitutional restrictions on free speech. The U.S. Congress has debated enacting similar legislation. For a state such as Montana, the law is symbolic, because it has few non-English speakers. But for states such as California and Florida, with large Hispanic populations, the debate affects access to jobs, education, and social services.

**FRENCH-SPEAKING CANADA.** French is one of Canada's two official languages, along with English. French speakers comprise one-fourth of the country's population. Most French-speaking Canadians are clustered in Québec, where they account for more than three-fourths of the province's speakers (Figure 5-49). Colonized by the French in the seventeenth century, Québec was captured by the British in 1763, and in 1867 it became one of the provinces in the Confederation of Canada.

Until recently, Québec was one of Canada's poorest and least-developed provinces. Its economic and political activities were dominated by an English-speaking minority, and the province suffered from cultural isolation and lack of French-speaking leaders.

When French President Charles de Gaulle visited Québec in 1967, he encouraged the development of an independent Québec by shouting in his speech, "*Vive le Québec libre!*" ("Long live free Québec!") Voters in Québec have thus far rejected separation from Canada, but by a slim majority.



▲ **FIGURE 5-49** CANADA'S FRENCH-ENGLISH LANGUAGE BOUNDARY French is the first language of 81 percent living in the province of Québec and 8 percent of Canadians living elsewhere in the country.

The Québec government has made the use of French mandatory in many daily activities. Québec's Commission de Toponymie has renamed towns, rivers, and mountains that have names with English-language origins. French must be the predominant language on all commercial signs, and the legislature passed a law banning non-French outdoor signs altogether. (However, the Canadian Supreme Court ruled this legislation unconstitutional.)

Confrontation during the 1970s and 1980s has been replaced in Québec by increased cooperation between French and English speakers. The neighborhoods of Montréal, Québec's largest city, were once highly segregated between French-speaking residents on the east and English-speaking residents on the west, but in recent years they have become more linguistically mixed. One-third of Québec's native English speakers have married French speakers in recent years. Children of English speakers are increasingly likely to be bilingual.

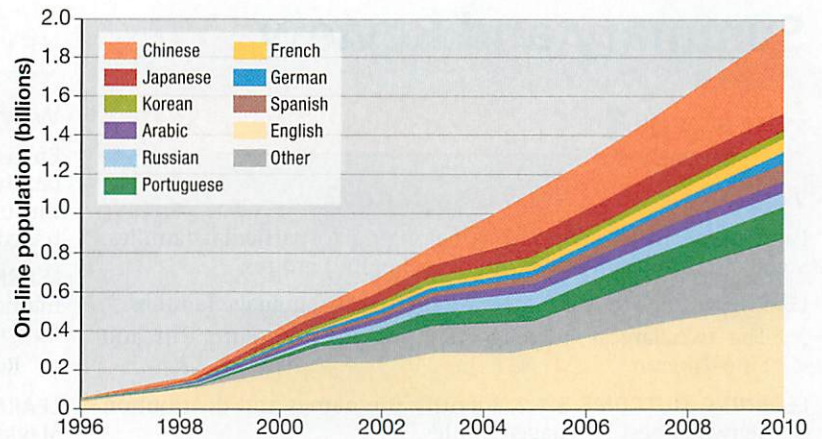
Although French dominates over English, Québec faces a fresh challenge of integrating a large number of immigrants from Europe, Asia, and Latin America who don't speak French. Many immigrants would prefer to use English rather than French as their lingua franca but are prohibited from doing so by the Québec government. Even immigrants who learn to speak French charge that they face discrimination because of their accents.

## ENGLISH ON THE INTERNET

The emergence of the Internet as an important means of communication has further strengthened the dominance of English. Because a majority of the material on the Internet is in English, knowledge of English is essential for Internet users around the world. English was the dominant language of the Internet during the 1990s. In 1998, 71 percent of people online were using English (Figure 5-50). The early dominance of English on the Internet was partly a reflection of the fact that the most populous English-speaking country, the United States, had a head start on the rest of the world in making the Internet available to most of its citizens (refer to Figure 4-32).

English continued as the leading Internet language in the first years of the twenty-first century, but it was far less dominant. The percentage of English-language online users declined from 46 percent in 2000 to 27 percent in 2010. Chinese (Mandarin) language online users increased from 2 percent of the world total in 1998 to 22 percent in 2010, and Mandarin will probably replace English as the most-frequently used online language before 2020.

English may be less dominant as the language of the Internet in the twenty-first century. But the United States—and with it the English language—remains the Internet leader in key respects. The United States created the English-language nomenclature for the Internet that the rest of the world has followed. The designation “www,” which English speakers recognize as an abbreviation of “World Wide Web,” is awkward in other languages, most of which do not have an equivalent sound to the English *w*. In French, for example, *w* is pronounced “doo-blah-vay.”



▲ FIGURE 5-50 LANGUAGES OF ONLINE SPEAKERS English remains the most widely used language on the Internet, but Chinese is growing more rapidly.

The U.S.-based Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) has been responsible for assigning domain names and for the suffixes following the dot, such as “com” and “edu.” Domain names in the rest of the world include a two-letter suffix for the country, such as “fr” for France and “jp” for Japan, whereas U.S.-based domain names don't need the suffix. Reflecting the globalization of the languages of the Internet, ICANN agreed in 2009 to permit domain names in characters other than Latin. Arabic, Chinese, and other characters may now be used.

U.S.-based companies provide the principal search engines for Internet users everywhere. U.S.-based Google was used for 83 percent of all searches worldwide in 2011. Google, which offers search engines in languages other than English, was heavily criticized when its Mandarin-language Google.cn was designed to block web sites that China's government deemed unsuitable. A distant second was another U.S.-based company, Yahoo!, with 6 percent. A Chinese-language service Baidu was in third place in 2011, at 5 percent worldwide.

### Pause and Reflect 5.4.4

Go to the home page of Google in a language other than English. How similar or different does it appear from the familiar English version?

### CHECK-IN: KEY ISSUE 4

#### Why Do People Preserve Local Languages?

- ✓ Some countries peacefully embrace multiple languages.
- ✓ Some languages survive in isolation from others, while some languages become extinct.
- ✓ Some endangered languages are being preserved.
- ✓ English has increasingly become the world's most important lingua franca, but Mandarin is catching up.