

# Chapter

# 5 Languages



Why did someone spread graffiti on this sign? Page 163.



Why is this sign in four languages – but not English? Page 165.

## KEY ISSUE 1

Where Are Languages Distributed?

PLEASE DO NOT FEED THE PIGEONS  
請勿餵白鴿  
POR FAVOR NO DE COMIDA A LAS PALOMAS

### A World of Languages p. 143

Languages are like leaves growing from language families and branches.

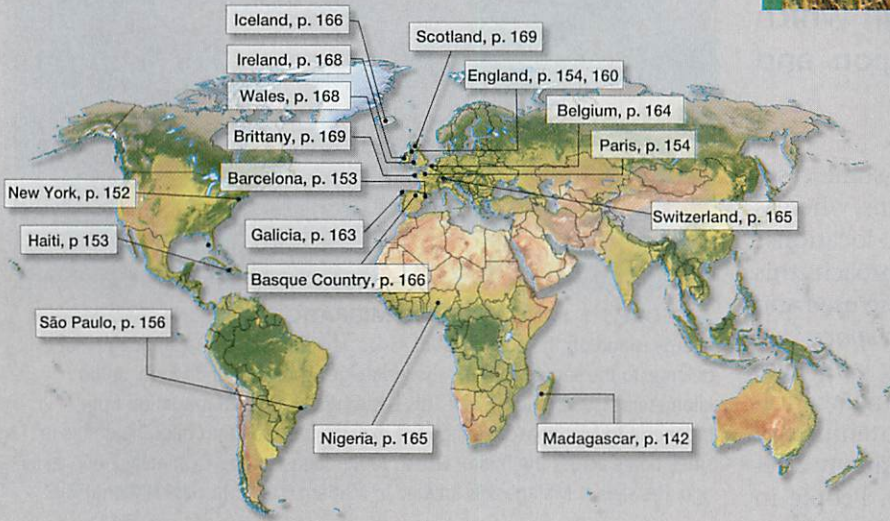
## KEY ISSUE 2

Why Is English Related to Other Languages?



### Languages Are Families p. 150

Most languages can be classified into a handful of families.



▲ No fishing in Israel's Alexander River. Can you identify the other three languages on the sign? Can you read any of them? Two-thirds of Americans believe that it is important to learn a second language, but only about one-fourth of Americans can hold a conversation in a second language.

### KEY ISSUE 3

#### Why Do Individual Languages Vary among Places?



#### It Doesn't Sound Like English p. 158

The English language can sound very different in the United Kingdom than in the United States. Patterns of migration explain differences.

### KEY ISSUE 4

#### Why Do People Preserve Local Languages?



#### What Does This Say? p. 164

Many languages have disappeared, meaning that no one who speaks them is alive today. But some, like Welsh, are being preserved.

# Introducing Languages

Language is an important part of culture, which, as shown in Chapter 1, has two main meanings—people’s values and their tangible artifacts. Chapter 4 looked at the material objects of culture. This chapter and the next two discuss three traits that distinguish cultural values—language, religion, and ethnicity. We start our study of the geographic elements of cultural values with language in part because it is the means through which other cultural values, such as religion and ethnicity, are communicated.

Where are different languages spoken? Why in some cases are two different languages spoken in two locations, whereas in other cases the same language is spoken in two locations? Consistent with this book’s where and why approach, this chapter first looks at where different languages are used and how these languages can be logically grouped in *space*.

The second and third sections examine why languages have distinctive distributions. The study of language follows logically from migration because the contemporary distribution of languages around the world is largely a result of past migrations of peoples (Figure 5-1). People in two locations speak the same language because of migration from one of the locations to another. If the two groups have few *connections* with each other after the migration, the languages spoken by the two groups will begin to differ. After a long period without contact, the two groups will speak languages that are so different, they are classified as separate languages. The interplay between interaction and isolation helps explain the distribution of *regions* of individual languages and entire language families.

Language is like luggage: People carry it with them when they move from place to place. They incorporate new words into their own language when they reach new *places*, and they contribute words brought with them to the existing language at the new location. Geographers look at the similarities among languages to understand the diffusion and interaction of people around the world.

The final section of this chapter discusses contradictory trends of *scale* in language. On the one hand, English has achieved an unprecedented globalization because people around the world are learning it to participate in a global economy and culture. On the other hand, people are trying to preserve local diversity in language because language is one of the basic elements of cultural identity and a major feature of a region’s uniqueness. Language is a



▲ **FIGURE 5-1 LANGUAGE AND MIGRATION** The people of Madagascar, a large island off the east coast of Africa, speak Malagasy, a language that belongs to the same family as the languages spoken in Indonesia, 3,000 kilometers (1,900 miles) away. This is strong evidence of migration from Indonesia to Madagascar. Language experts conclude that migrants sailed in small boats across the Indian Ocean to Madagascar approximately 2,000 years ago. The sign in Malagasy is located in Madagascar’s Masoala National Park.

source of pride to a people, a symbol of cultural unity. As a culture develops, language is both a cause of that development and a consequence.

- **KEY ISSUE 1** describes *where* languages are distributed around the world. The languages spoken by most of the world’s population can be grouped into a handful of families. These families have distinctive distributions.
- **KEY ISSUE 2** discusses the distribution of languages in the Indo-European family. Indo-European languages are used by nearly one-half of the world’s population, and Indo-European is the family to which English belongs.
- **KEY ISSUE 3** looks at the geographic differences within individual languages. The distribution of multiple dialects of a particular language is an example of *local diversity* of cultural traits.
- **KEY ISSUE 4** explains *why* English has become the most important language for communications in a world of *globalization* of culture and economy. At the same time, some countries are preserving and protecting a local diversity of languages.

## KEY ISSUE 1

# Where Are Languages Distributed?

- Classification of Languages
- Distribution of Language Families

How many languages do you speak? If you are Dutch, you were required to learn at least two foreign languages in high school. For those of you who do not happen to be Dutch, the number is probably a bit lower.

In fact, most people in the United States know only English. Fewer than one-half of American high school students have studied a foreign language. In contrast, nearly two-thirds of graduates from Dutch high schools have learned at least three foreign languages. Even in other English-speaking countries, foreign languages are studied more frequently than in the United States. For example, two-thirds of 10-year-olds in the United Kingdom are learning a foreign language in school.

**Language** is a system of communication through speech, a collection of sounds that a group of people understands to have the same meaning. Many languages also have a **literary tradition**, or a system of written communication. However, hundreds of spoken languages lack a literary tradition. The lack of written records makes it difficult to document the distribution of many languages.

Many countries designate at least one language as their **official language**, which is the one used by the government for laws, reports, and public objects, such as road signs, money, and stamps. A country with more than one official language may require all public documents to be in all languages. Logically, an official language would be understood by most if not all of the country's citizens, but some countries



▲ **FIGURE 5-2** THE WORLD'S THREE MOST WIDELY SPOKEN LANGUAGES (left) This sign in New York's Chinatown includes English, Mandarin, and Spanish. (right) Mandarin on an iPhone.

that were once British colonies designate English as an official language, even though few of their citizens can speak it.

Earth's heterogeneous collection of languages is one of its most obvious examples of cultural diversity. *Ethnologue*, one of the most authoritative sources of languages (see [www.ethnologue.com](http://www.ethnologue.com)), estimates that the world has 6,909 languages. Only 11 of these languages, including English, are spoken by at least 100 million people (Figure 5-2). Four of these are relatively familiar to North Americans (German, Portuguese, Spanish, and Russian), but others are less familiar (Arabic, Bengali, Hindi, Japanese, Lahnda, and Mandarin).

Approximately 85 languages are spoken by at least 10 million people, and approximately 300 languages by between 1 million and 10 million. The remaining 6,524 languages are spoken by fewer than 1 million people each. The distribution of some of these languages is easy for geographers to document, whereas others—especially in Africa and Asia—are difficult, if not impossible.

The world's languages can be organized into families, branches, and groups:

- A **language family** is a collection of languages related through a common ancestral language that existed long before recorded history.
- A **language branch** is a collection of languages within a family related through a common ancestral language that existed several thousand years ago; differences are not as extensive or as old as between language families, and archaeological evidence can confirm that the branches derived from the same family.
- A **language group** is a collection of languages within a branch that share a common origin in the relatively recent past and display many similarities in grammar and vocabulary.



## Classification of Languages

### Learning Outcome 5.1.1

Name the largest language families.

The several thousand spoken languages can be organized logically into a small number of language families. Larger language families can be further divided into language branches and language groups.

Figure 5-3 depicts differences among language families, branches, groups, and individual languages:

- Language families form the trunks of the trees.
- Individual languages are displayed as leaves.
- Some trunks divide into several branches, which logically represent language branches.
- The branches representing Germanic, Balto-Slavic, and Indo-Iranian in Figure 5-3 divide a second time into language groups.

The larger the trunks and leaves are, the greater the number of speakers of those families and languages.

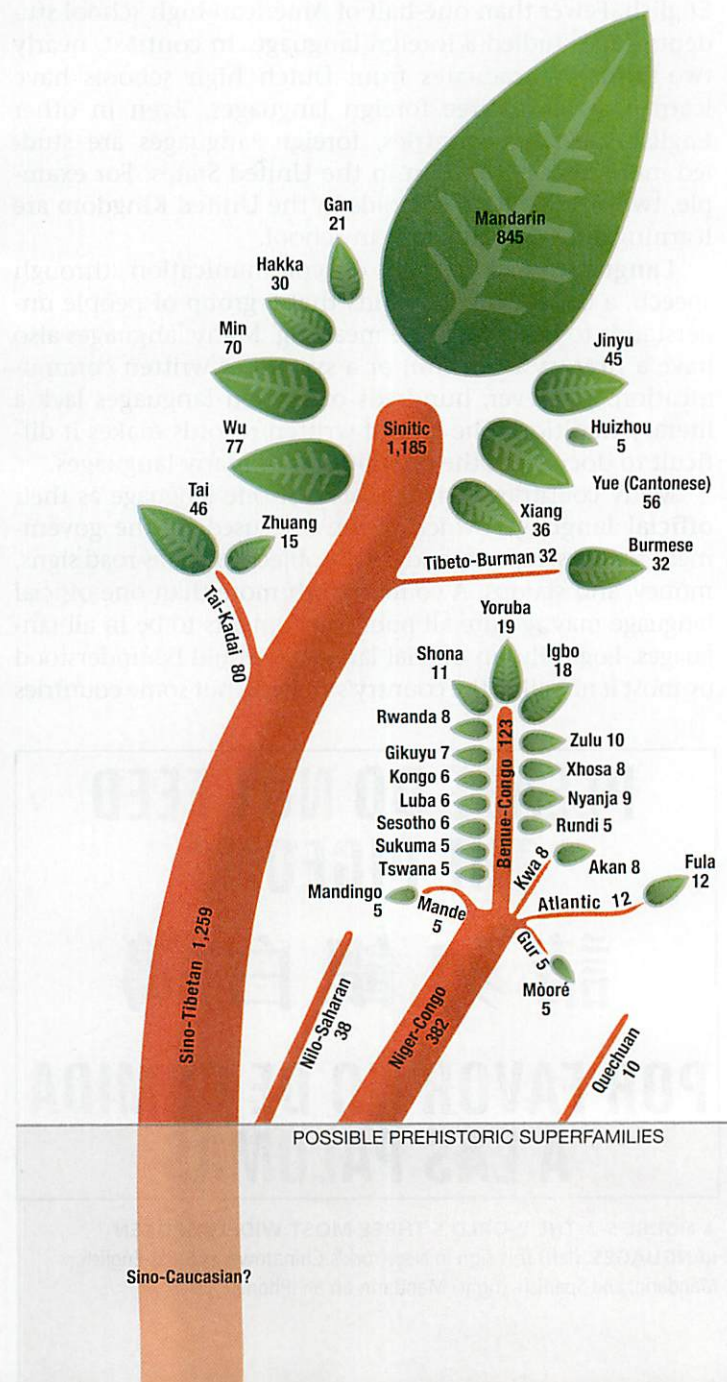
Two-thirds of the people in the world speak a language that belongs to the Indo-European or Sino-Tibetan language family. Seven other language families are used by between 2 and 6 percent of the world (Figure 5-4). The remaining 5 percent of the world's people speak a language belonging to one of 100 smaller families.

Figure 5-3 displays each language family as a separate tree at ground level because differences among families predate recorded history. Some linguists speculate that language families were joined together as a handful of superfamilies tens of thousands of years ago. Superfamilies are shown as roots below the surface because their existence is highly controversial and speculative. A researcher in New Zealand, Quentin Atkinson, carries the speculation further, arguing that all languages can be ultimately traced to Africa. According to Atkinson, languages are most complex and diverse in Africa. Atkinson thinks humans outside Africa display less linguistic diversity because their languages have had a shorter time in which to evolve into new languages than have African languages.

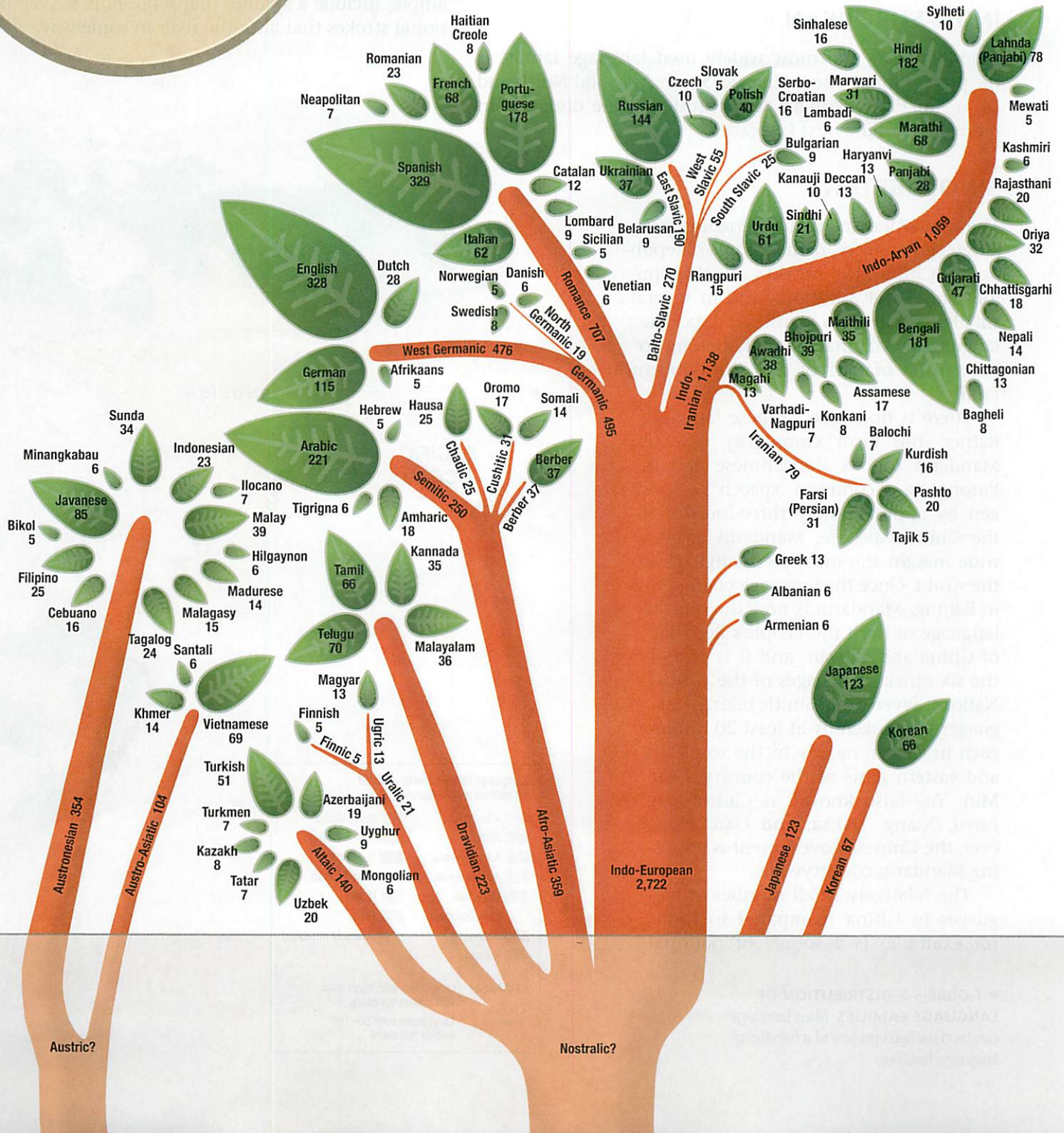
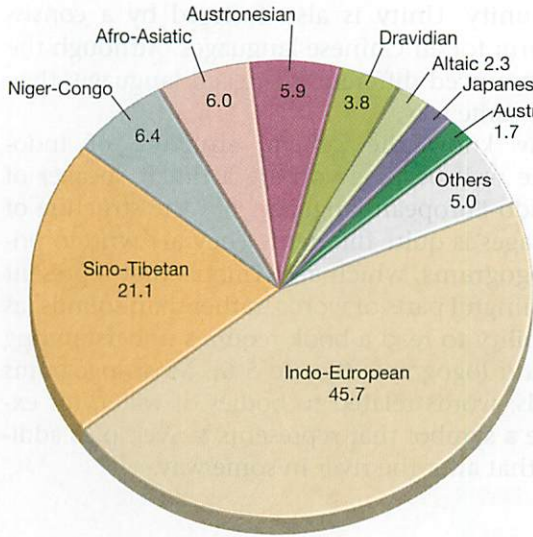
### Pause and Reflect 5.1.1

Based on Figure 5-3, what are the language family, branch, and group to which English belongs?

► **FIGURE 5-3 LANGUAGE FAMILY TREE** Language families with at least 10 million speakers according to *Ethnologue* are shown as trunks of trees. Some language families are divided into branches and groups. Individual languages that have more than 5 million speakers are shown as leaves. Below ground level, the language tree's "roots" are shown, but these are speculative because they predated recorded history.



◀ **FIGURE 5-4 SHARE OF EACH LANGUAGE FAMILY** The chart shows the percentage of people who speak a language from each major family.



## Distribution of Language Families

### Learning Outcome 5.1.2

Identify the names and distribution of the two largest language families.

Language families with at least 10 million native speakers are shown in Figure 5-5. Individual languages with at least 50 million speakers are named on the map.

### INDO-EUROPEAN

Indo-European, the most widely used language family, is the predominant one in Europe, South Asia, and North and Latin America. Its origin and distribution are discussed in more detail in the next key issue.

### SINO-TIBETAN

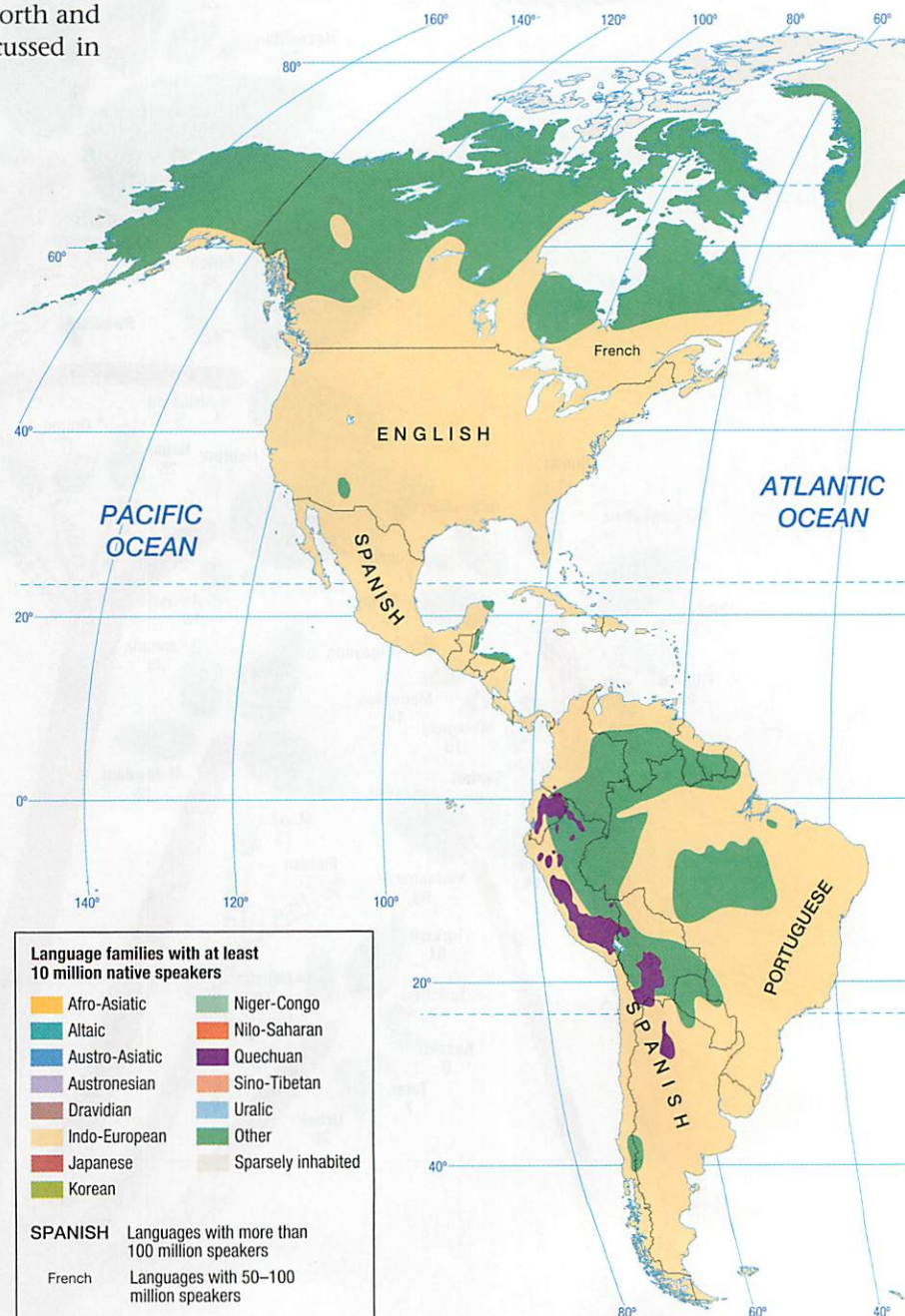
The Sino-Tibetan family encompasses languages spoken in the People's Republic of China—the world's most populous state, at 1.3 billion—and in several smaller countries in Southeast Asia. The languages of China generally belong to the Sinitic branch of the Sino-Tibetan family.

There is no single Chinese language. Rather, the most commonly used is Mandarin (or, as the Chinese call it, Putonghua—"common speech"). Spoken by approximately three-fourths of the Chinese people, Mandarin is by a wide margin the most-used language in the world. Once the language of emperors in Beijing, Mandarin is now the official language of both the People's Republic of China and Taiwan, and it is one of the six official languages of the United Nations. Seven other Sinitic branch languages are spoken by at least 20 million each in China, mostly in the southern and eastern parts of the country—Wu, Min, Yue (also known as Cantonese), Jinyu, Xiang, Hakka, and Gan. However, the Chinese government is imposing Mandarin countrywide.

The relatively small number of languages in China (compared to India, for example) is a source of national

strength and unity. Unity is also fostered by a consistent written form for all Chinese languages. Although the words are pronounced differently in each language, they are written the same way.

You already know the general structure of Indo-European quite well because you are a fluent speaker of at least one Indo-European language. But the structure of Chinese languages is quite different. They are written primarily with **logograms**, which are symbols that represent words, or meaningful parts of words, rather than sounds (as in English). Ability to read a book requires understanding several thousand logograms (Figure 5-6). Most logograms are compounds; words related to bodies of water, for example, include a symbol that represents a river, plus additional strokes that alter the river in some way.



► **FIGURE 5-5 DISTRIBUTION OF LANGUAGE FAMILIES** Most language can be classified into one of a handful of language families.

River 河  
 River bed 河床  
 Lake 湖  
 Stream 流  
 Riptide 冲

FIGURE 5-6 CHINESE Similar logograms represent various water-related words.





## OTHER ASIAN LANGUAGE FAMILIES

### Learning Outcome 5.1.3

Identify the names and distribution of the largest language families in addition to Indo-European and Sino-Tibetan.

In addition to Sino-Tibetan, several other language families spoken by large numbers of people can be found in East and Southeast Asia. If you look at their distribution in Figure 5-5, you can see a physical reason for their independent development: These language families are clustered on either islands or peninsulas.

**AUSTRONESIAN.** Austronesian languages are spoken by about 6 percent of the world's people, who are mostly in Indonesia, the world's fourth-most-populous country. With its inhabitants dispersed among thousands of islands, Indonesia has an extremely large number of distinct languages and dialects; *Ethnologue* identifies 722 actively used languages in Indonesia. Indonesia's most widely used first language is Javanese, spoken by 85 million people, mostly on the island of Java, where two-thirds of the country's population is clustered. As Figures 5-1, 5-3, and 5-5 show, Malagasy also belongs to the Austronesian family because of migration from Indonesia to Madagascar 2,000 years ago.

**AUSTRO-ASIATIC.** Spoken by about 2 percent of the world's population, Austro-Asiatic is based in Southeast Asia. Vietnamese, the most-spoken tongue of the Austro-Asiatic language family, is written with our familiar Roman alphabet, with the addition of a large number of diacritical marks above the vowels. The Vietnamese alphabet was devised in the seventeenth century by Roman Catholic missionaries.

**TAI KADAI.** The Tai Kadai family was once classified as a branch of Sino-Tibetan. The principal languages of this family are spoken in Thailand and neighboring portions of China. Similarities with the Austronesian family have led some linguistic scholars to speculate that people speaking these languages may have migrated from the Philippines.

**JAPANESE.** Written in part with Chinese logograms, Japanese also uses two systems of phonetic symbols, like Western languages, used either in place of the logograms or alongside them. Chinese cultural traits have diffused into Japanese society, including the original form of writing the Japanese language. But the structures of the two languages differ. Foreign terms may be written with one of these sets of phonetic symbols.

**KOREAN.** Unlike Sino-Tibetan languages and Japanese, Korean is written not with logograms but in a system known as hankul (also called hangul or onmun). In this system, each letter represents a sound, as in Western languages. More than half of the Korean vocabulary

derives from Chinese words. In fact, Chinese and Japanese words are the principal sources for creating new words to describe new technology and concepts.

### Pause and Reflect 5.1.3

If you are trying to recall where in the world language families are distributed, keep in mind that most of them are named for regions or countries. Based on their names, how would you expect the language families Austronesian and Austro-Asiatic to differ in their distribution?

## LANGUAGES OF SOUTHWEST ASIA & NORTH AFRICA AND CENTRAL ASIA

The two largest language families in Southwest Asia & North Africa and Central Asia are Afro-Asiatic and Altaic. Uralic languages were once classified with Altaic.

**AFRO-ASIATIC.** Arabic is the major language of the Afro-Asiatic family, an official language in two dozen countries of Southwest Asia & North Africa, and one of six official languages of the United Nations. In addition to the 200-million-plus native speakers of Arabic, a large percentage of the world's Muslims have at least some knowledge of Arabic because Islam's holiest book, the Quran (Koran), was written in that language in the seventh century. The Afro-Asiatic family also includes Hebrew, the language of the Bible.

**ALTAIC.** Altaic languages are thought to have originated in the steppes bordering the Qilian Shan and Altai mountains between Tibet and China. Present distribution covers an 8,000-kilometer (5,000-mile) band of Asia. The Altaic language with by far the most speakers is Turkish (Figure 5-7).

When the Soviet Union governed most of the Altaic-speaking region of Central Asia, use of Altaic languages was suppressed to create a homogeneous national culture. With the dissolution of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s, Altaic languages became official in several newly independent countries, including Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan.

**URALIC.** Every European country is dominated by Indo-European speakers, except for three—Estonia, Finland, and Hungary. The Estonians, Finns, and Hungarians speak languages that belong to the Uralic family.

The Altaic and Uralic language families were once thought to be linked as one family, but recent studies point to geographically distinct origins. Uralic languages are traceable back to a common language, Proto-Uralic, first used 7,000 years ago by people living in the Ural Mountains of present-day Russia, north of the Kurgan homeland. Migrants carried the Uralic languages to Europe, carving out homelands for themselves in the midst of Germanic- and Slavic-speaking peoples and retaining their language as a major element of cultural identity.

## AFRICAN LANGUAGE FAMILIES

No one knows the precise number of languages spoken in Africa, and scholars disagree on classifying those known into families. In the 1800s, European missionaries and colonial officers began to record African languages using the Roman or Arabic alphabet. More than 1,000 distinct languages and several thousand named dialects have been documented. Most lack a written tradition.

**NIGER-CONGO.** More than 95 percent of the people in sub-Saharan Africa speak languages of the Niger-Congo family (Figure 5-8). One of these languages—Swahili—is the first language of only 800,000 people and an official language in only one country (Tanzania), but it is spoken as a second language by approximately 30 million Africans.

Especially in rural areas, the local language is used to communicate with others from the same village, and Swahili is used to communicate with outsiders. Swahili originally developed through interaction among African groups and Arab traders, so its vocabulary has strong Arabic influences. Also, Swahili is one of the few African languages with an extensive literature.

**NILO-SAHARAN.** Languages of the Nilo-Saharan family are spoken by a few million people in north-central Africa, immediately north of the Niger-Congo language region.

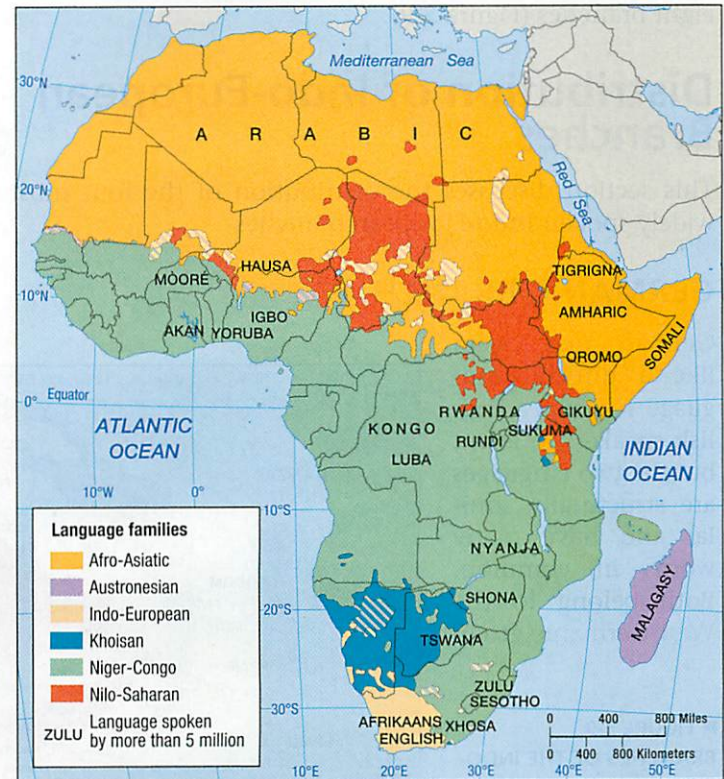
▼ **FIGURE 5-7 TURKISH** In 1928, Turkey's leader Kemal Ataturk ordered Turks to write Turkish with Roman letters instead of Arabic. Ataturk believed that using Roman letters would help modernize Turkey's economy and culture through increased communications with European countries. This painting depicts Ataturk writing with Roman letters.



Divisions within the Nilo-Saharan family exemplify the problem of classifying African languages. Despite having relatively few speakers, the Nilo-Saharan family is divided into six branches, plus numerous groups and subgroups. The total number of speakers of each individual Nilo-Saharan language is extremely small.

**KHOISAN.** A distinctive characteristic of the Khoisan languages is the use of clicking sounds. Upon hearing this, whites in southern Africa derisively and onomatopoeically named the most important Khoisan language Hottentot.

▼ **FIGURE 5-8 AFRICA'S LANGUAGE FAMILIES** More than 1,000 languages have been identified in Africa, and experts do not agree on how to classify them into families, especially languages in central Africa. Languages with more than 5 million speakers are named on the map. The great number of languages results from at least 5,000 years of minimal interaction among the thousands of cultural groups inhabiting the African continent. Each group developed its own language, religion, and other cultural traditions in isolation from other groups.



### CHECK-IN: KEY ISSUE 1

#### Where Are Languages Distributed?

- ✓ Languages can be classified into families and branches.
- ✓ The two largest families are Indo-European, which is found primarily in Europe, North America, Latin America, and South Asia, and Sino-Tibetan, which is clustered primarily in East Asia.

## KEY ISSUE 2

# Why Is English Related to Other Languages?

- Distribution of Indo-European Branches
- Origin and Diffusion of Language Families

### Learning Outcome 5.2.1

Learn the distribution of the Germanic and Indo-Iranian branches of Indo-European.

English belongs to Indo-European, the world's most widely spoken language family. Indo-European is divided into eight branches (Figure 5-9).

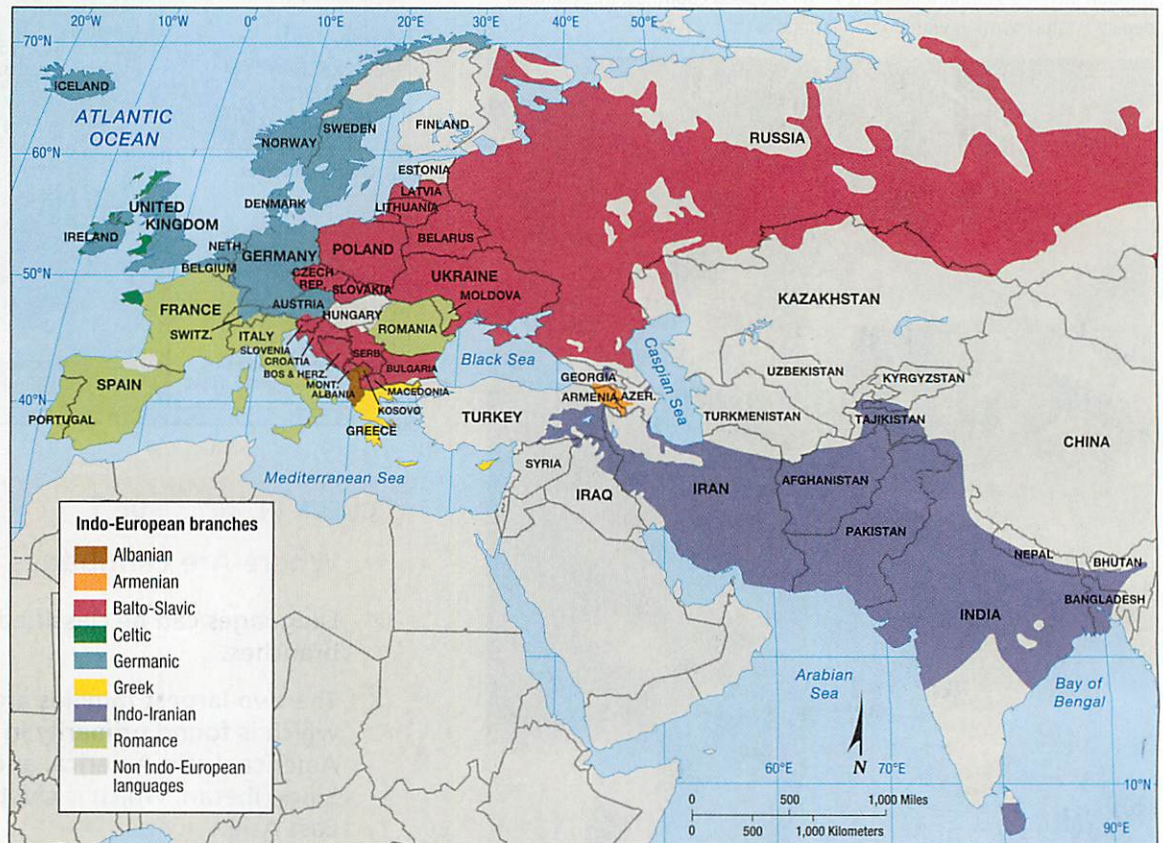
## Distribution of Indo-European Branches

This section discusses the distribution of the four most widely spoken Indo-European branches.

### GERMANIC BRANCH

German may seem like a difficult language for many English speakers to learn, but the two languages are structurally similar and have many words in common. Both belong to the West Germanic group.

► **FIGURE 5-9**  
**BRANCHES OF THE INDO-EUROPEAN LANGUAGE FAMILY** Most Europeans speak languages from the Indo-European language family. In Europe, the three most widely used branches are Germanic (north and west), Romance (south and west), and Slavic (east). The fourth major branch, Indo-Iranian, clustered in southern and western Asia, has more than 1 billion speakers, the greatest number of any Indo-European branch.



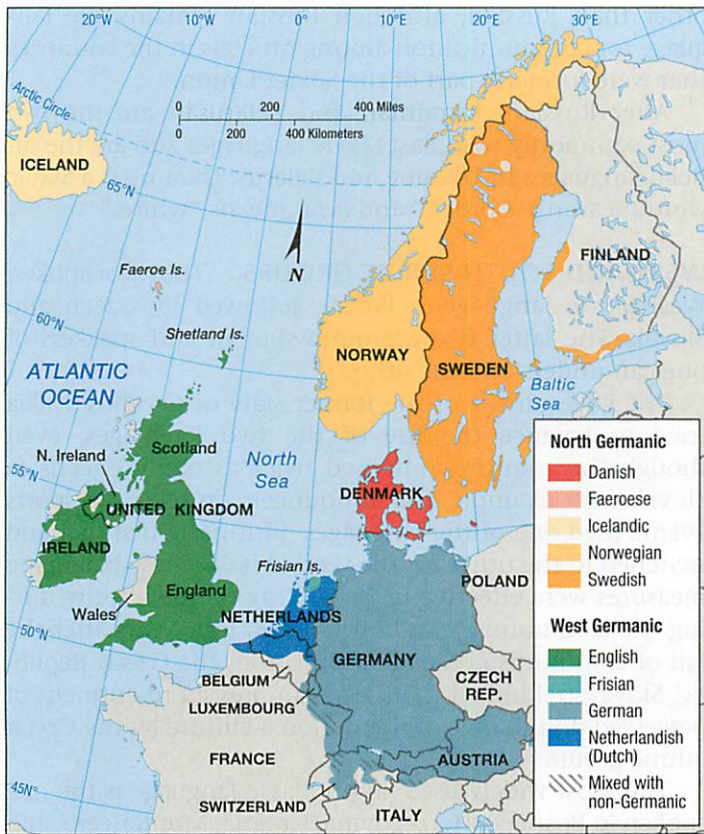
of the Germanic language branch of the Indo-European family (Figure 5-10).

West Germanic is further divided into High Germanic and Low Germanic subgroups, so named because they are found in high and low elevations within present-day Germany. High German, spoken in the southern mountains of Germany, is the basis for the modern standard German language. English is classified in the Low Germanic subgroup of the West Germanic group. Other Low Germanic languages include Dutch, which is spoken in the Netherlands, as well as Flemish, which is generally considered a dialect of Dutch spoken in northern Belgium. Afrikaans, a language of South Africa, is similar to Dutch because Dutch settlers migrated to South Africa 300 years ago. Frisian is spoken by a few residents in northeastern Netherlands. A dialect of German spoken in the northern lowlands of Germany is also classified as Low Germanic.

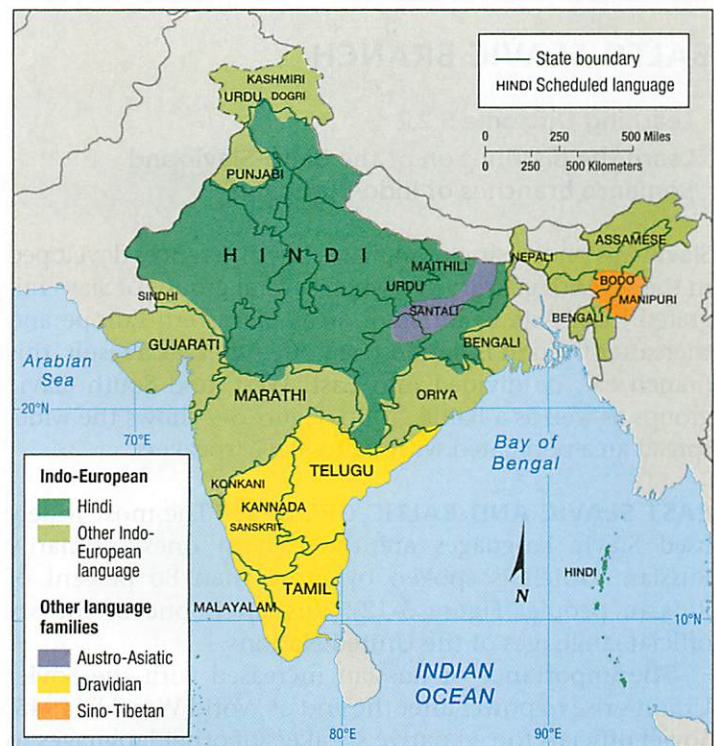
The Germanic language branch also includes North Germanic languages, spoken in Scandinavia. The four Scandinavian languages—Swedish, Danish, Norwegian, and Icelandic—all derive from Old Norse, which was the principal language spoken throughout Scandinavia before A.D. 1000. Four distinct languages emerged after that time because of migration and the political organization of the region into four independent and isolated countries.

### INDO-IRANIAN BRANCH

The branch of the Indo-European language family with the most speakers is Indo-Iranian. This branch includes more



▲ FIGURE 5-10 LANGUAGE GROUPS OF THE GERMANIC BRANCH Germanic languages predominate in Northern and Western Europe.



▲ FIGURE 5-11 LANGUAGE FAMILIES IN INDIA India's principal official language is Hindi, which has many dialects. The country has 22 scheduled languages that the government is required to protect.

than 100 individual languages. The branch is divided into an eastern group (Indic) and a western group (Iranian).

**INDIC (EASTERN) GROUP.** One of the main elements of cultural diversity among the 1 billion plus residents of India is language (Figure 5-11). *Ethnologue* identifies 438 languages currently spoken in India, including 29 languages spoken by at least 1 million people. The most widely used languages in India, as well as in the neighboring countries of Pakistan and Bangladesh, belong to the Indo-European language family and, more specifically, to the Indic group of the Indo-Iranian branch of Indo-European.

The official language of India is Hindi, which is an Indo-European language. Originally a variety of Hindustani spoken in the area of New Delhi, Hindi grew into a national language in the nineteenth century, when the British encouraged its use in government.

After India became an independent state in 1947, Hindi was proposed as the official language, but speakers of other languages strongly objected. Consequently, English—the language of the British colonial rulers—has been retained as a secondary official language. Speakers of different Indian languages who wish to communicate with each other sometimes are forced to use English as a common language.

India also recognizes 22 so-called scheduled languages, including 15 Indo-European (Assamese, Bengali, Dogri,

Gujarati, Hindi, Kashmiri, Konkani, Maithili, Marathi, Nepali, Oriya, Panjabi, Sanskrit, Sindhi, and Urdu), 4 Dravidian (Kannada, Malayalam, Tamil, and Telugu), 2 Sino-Tibetan (Bodo and Manipuri), and 1 Austro-Asiatic (Santali). The government of India is obligated to encourage the use of these languages.

Hindi is spoken many different ways—and therefore could be regarded as a collection of many individual languages. But there is only one official way to write Hindi, using a script called Devanagari, which has been used in India since the seventh century A.D. For example, the word for sun is written in Hindi as सूरज and pronounced “surya.”

Adding to the complexity, Urdu is spoken very much like Hindi, but it is recognized as a distinct language. Urdu is written with the Arabic alphabet, a legacy of the fact that most of its speakers are Muslims and their holiest book (the Quran) is written in Arabic.

**IRANIAN (WESTERN) GROUP.** Indo-Iranian languages are spoken in Iran and neighboring countries in Central Asia. These form a separate group from Indic within the Indo-Iranian branch of the Indo-European family. The major Iranian group languages include Persian (sometimes called Farsi) in Iran, Pashto in eastern Afghanistan and western Pakistan, and Kurdish, used by the Kurds of western Iran, northern Iraq, and eastern Turkey. These languages are written in the Arabic alphabet.

## BALTO-SLAVIC BRANCH

### Learning Outcome 5.2.2

Learn the distribution of the Balto-Slavic and Romance branches of Indo-European.

Slavic was once a single language, but differences developed in the seventh century A.D. when several groups of Slavs migrated from Asia to different areas of Eastern Europe and thereafter lived in isolation from one another. As a result, this branch can be divided into East, West, and South Slavic groups as well as a Baltic group. Figure 5-9 shows the widespread area populated with Balto-Slavic speakers.

**EAST SLAVIC AND BALTIC GROUPS.** The most widely used Slavic languages are the eastern ones, primarily Russian, which is spoken by more than 80 percent of Russian people (Figure 5-12). Russian is one of the six official languages of the United Nations.

The importance of Russian increased with the Soviet Union's rise to power after the end of World War II in 1945. Soviet officials forced native speakers of other languages to learn Russian as a way of fostering cultural unity among the country's diverse peoples. In Eastern European countries that were dominated politically and economically by the Soviet Union, Russian was taught as the second language. The presence of so many non-Russian speakers was a measure of cultural diversity in the Soviet Union, and the desire to use languages other than Russian was a major drive in its breakup. With the demise of the Soviet Union, the newly independent republics adopted official languages

▼ **FIGURE 5-12 RUSSIAN** New York City's Brighton Beach neighborhood is home to many Russian immigrants, including this bookseller. The red words say "Christian Library," with the text below announcing Saturday services at the Russian Evangelical Baptist Church.



other than Russian, although Russian remains the language for communication among officials in the countries that were formerly part of the Soviet Union.

After Russian, Ukrainian and Belarusian are the two most commonly used East Slavic languages and are the official languages in Ukraine and Belarus. Ukraine is a Slavic word meaning "border," and *bela-* means "white."

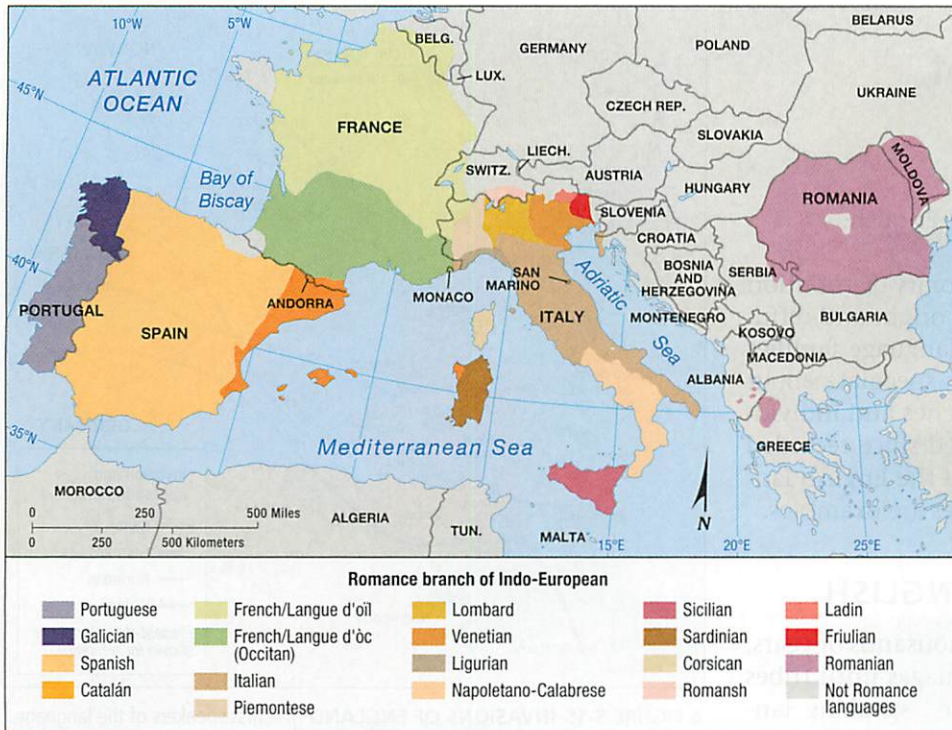
**WEST AND SOUTH SLAVIC GROUPS.** The most spoken West Slavic language is Polish, followed by Czech and Slovak. The latter two are quite similar, and speakers of one can understand the other.

The government of the former state of Czechoslovakia tried to balance the use of the two languages, even though the country contained twice as many Czechs as Slovaks. For example, the announcers on televised sports events used one of the languages during the first half and switched to the other for the second half. These balancing measures were effective in promoting national unity during the Communist era, but in 1993, four years after the fall of communism, Slovakia split from the Czech Republic. Slovaks rekindled their long-suppressed resentment of perceived dominance of the national culture by the Czech ethnic group.

The most widely used South Slavic language is the one spoken in Bosnia & Herzegovina, Croatia, Montenegro, and Serbia. When Bosnia & Herzegovina, Croatia, Montenegro, and Serbia were all part of Yugoslavia, the language was called Serbo-Croatian. This name now offends Bosnians and Croats because it recalls when they were once in a country that was dominated by Serbs. Instead, the names Bosnian, Croatian, and Serbian are preferred by people in these countries, to demonstrate that each language is unique, even though linguists consider them one. Bosnians and Croats write the language in the Roman alphabet (what you are reading now), whereas Montenegrans and Serbs use the Cyrillic alphabet (for example, Serbia is written Србија).

Differences have crept into the South Slavic languages. Bosnian Muslims have introduced Arabic words used in their religion, and Croats have replaced words regarded as having a Serbian origin with words considered to be purely Croatian. For example, the Serbo-Croatian word for martyr or hero—*junak*—has been changed to *heroj* by Croats and *shahid* by Bosnian Muslims. In the future, after a generation of isolation and hostility among Bosnians, Croats, and Serbs, the languages spoken by the three may be sufficiently different to justify their classification as distinct languages.

In general, differences among all of the Slavic languages are relatively small. A Czech, for example, can understand most of what is said or written in Slovak and could become fluent without much difficulty. However, because language is a major element in a people's cultural identity, relatively small differences among Slavic as well as other languages are being preserved and even accentuated in recent independence movements.



▲ FIGURE 5-13 ROMANCE BRANCH OF THE INDO-EUROPEAN LANGUAGE FAMILY Romance branch languages predominate in southwestern Europe.

### Pause and Reflect 5.2.2

On the map of Europe, which branch predominates to the north, which to the south, and which to the east?

## ROMANCE BRANCH

The Romance language branch evolved from the Latin language spoken by the Romans 2,000 years ago. The four most widely used contemporary Romance languages are Spanish, Portuguese, French, and Italian (Figure 5-13). Spanish and French are two of the six official languages of the United Nations.

The European regions in which these four languages are spoken correspond somewhat to the boundaries of the modern states of Spain, Portugal, France, and Italy. Rugged mountains serve as boundaries among these four countries. France is separated from Italy by the Alps and from Spain by the Pyrenees, and several mountain ranges mark the border between Spain and Portugal. Physical boundaries such as mountains are strong intervening obstacles, creating barriers to communication between people living on opposite sides.

The fifth most widely used Romance language, Romanian, is the principal language of Romania and Moldova. It is separated from the other Romance-speaking European countries by Slavic-speaking peoples.

The distribution of Romance languages shows the difficulty in trying to establish the number of distinct

languages in the world. In addition to the five languages already mentioned, two other official Romance languages are Romansh and Catalán. Romansh is one of four official languages of Switzerland, although it is spoken by only 40,000 people. Catalán is the official language of Andorra, a tiny country of 70,000 inhabitants situated in the Pyrenees Mountains between Spain and France. Catalán is also spoken by 6 million people in eastern Spain and is the official language of Spain's highly autonomous Catalonia province, centered on the city of Barcelona (Figure 5-14). A third Romance language, Sardinian—a mixture of Italian, Spanish, and Arabic—was once the official language of the Mediterranean island of Sardinia.

In addition to these official languages, several other Romance languages have individual literary traditions. In Italy, Ladin (not Latin) is spoken by 30,000 people living in the South Tyrol, and Friulian is spoken by 800,000 people in the northeast. Ladin and Friulian (along with the official Romansh) are dialects of Rhaeto-Romantic.

A Romance tongue called Ladino—a mixture of Spanish, Greek, Turkish, and Hebrew—is spoken by 100,000 Sephardic Jews, most of whom now live in Israel. None of these languages have an official status in any country, although they are used in literature.



▲ FIGURE 5-14 CATALÁN The sign says "Passage is restricted to workers." The sign is in front of Sagrada Familia church, designed by Antoni Gaudí, in Barcelona, Spain.

## Origin and Diffusion of Language Families

### Learning Outcome 5.2.3

Understand the origin and diffusion of English.

Like other cultural elements, the contemporary distribution of languages exists because of patterns of origin and diffusion. The origin and initial diffusion of language families predate recorded history, so we can only speculate about them. On the other hand, language branches and individual languages have originated and diffused since recorded history began. The origin and diffusion of the English language and the Romance language branches are examples.

### ORIGIN AND DIFFUSION OF ENGLISH

The British Isles had been inhabited for thousands of years, but we know nothing of their early languages until tribes called the Celts arrived around 2000 B.C., speaking languages we call Celtic. Around A.D. 450, tribes from mainland Europe invaded, pushing the Celts into the remote northern and western parts of Britain, including Cornwall and the highlands of Scotland and Wales.

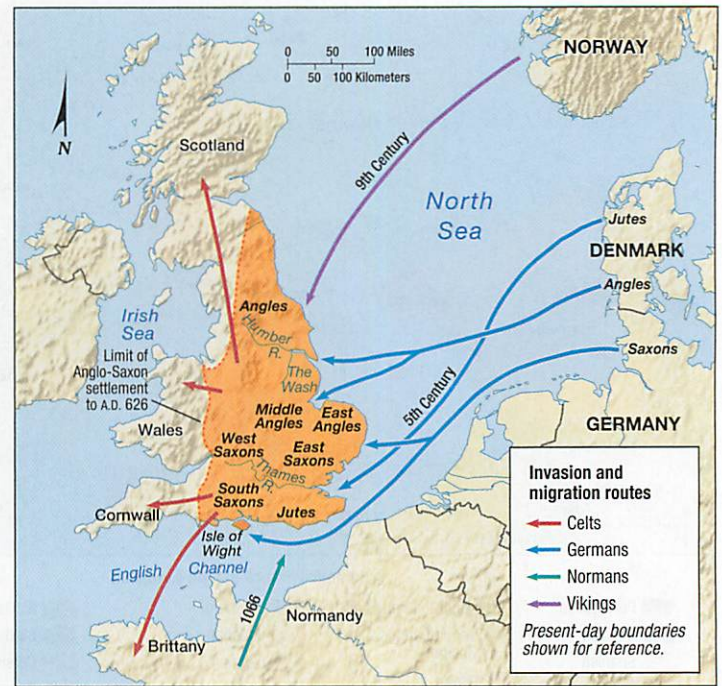
**GERMAN INVASION.** The tribes invading the British Isles were known as the Angles, Jutes, and Saxons. All three were Germanic tribes—the Jutes from northern Denmark, the Angles from southern Denmark, and the Saxons from northwestern Germany (Figure 5-15). Modern English has evolved primarily from the language spoken by the Angles, Jutes, and Saxons.

The three tribes who brought the beginnings of English to the British Isles shared a language similar to that of other peoples in the region from which they came. Today, English people and others who trace their cultural heritage back to England are often called Anglo-Saxons, after the two larger tribes.

The name England comes from *Angles' land*. In Old English, *Angles* was spelled *Engles*, and the Angles' language was known as *englisc*. The Angles came from a corner, or *angle*, of Germany known as Schleswig-Holstein.

At some time in history, all Germanic people spoke a common language, but that time predates written records. The common origin of English with other Germanic languages can be reconstructed by analyzing language differences that emerged after Germanic groups migrated to separate territories and lived in isolation from each other, allowing their languages to continue evolving independently.

Other peoples subsequently invaded England and added their languages to the basic English. Vikings from present-day Norway landed on the northeastern coast of England in the ninth century. Although defeated in their effort to conquer the islands, many Vikings remained in the country and enriched the language with new words.



**▲ FIGURE 5-15 INVASIONS OF ENGLAND** The first speakers of the language that became known as English were tribes that lived in present-day Germany and Denmark. They invaded England in the fifth century. The Jutes settled primarily in southeastern England, the Saxons in the south and west, and the Angles in the north, eventually giving the country its name—Angles' Land, or England. Invasions by Vikings in the ninth century and Normans in the eleventh century brought new words to the language spoken in the British Isles. The Normans were the last successful invaders of England.

**NORMAN INVASION.** English is quite different from German today primarily because England was conquered by the Normans in 1066. The Normans, who came from present-day Normandy in France, spoke French, which they established as England's official language for the next 300 years. The leaders of England, including the royal family, nobles, judges, and clergy, therefore spoke French. However, the majority of the people, who had little education, did not know French, so they continued to speak English to each other.

England lost control of Normandy in 1204, during the reign of King John, and entered a long period of conflict with France. As a result, fewer people in England wished to speak French, and English again became the country's unchallenged dominant language. Recognizing that nearly everyone in England was speaking English, Parliament enacted the Statute of Pleading in 1362 to change the official language of court business from French to English. However, Parliament continued to conduct business in French until 1489.

During the 300-year period that French was the official language of England, the Germanic language used by the common people and the French used by the leaders mingled to form a new language. Modern English owes its simpler, straightforward words, such as *sky*, *horse*, *man*, and *woman*, to its Germanic roots, and fancy, more elegant words, such as *celestial*, *equestrian*, *masculine*, and *feminine*, to its French invaders.

The contemporary distribution of English speakers around the world exists because the people of England migrated with their language when they established colonies during over the course of four centuries.

### Pause and Reflect 5.2.3

**School and university: which word is Germanic and which is Romance?**

**DIFFUSION TO NORTH AMERICA.** English first diffused west from England to North America in the seventeenth century. The first successful English colonies were built in North America, beginning with Jamestown, Virginia, in 1607, and Plymouth, Massachusetts, in 1620. After England defeated France in a battle to dominate the North American colonies during the eighteenth century, the position of English as the principal language of North America was assured.

Similarly, the British took control of Ireland in the seventeenth century, South Asia in the mid-eighteenth century, the South Pacific in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, and southern Africa in the late nineteenth century. In each case, English became an official language, even if only the colonial rulers and a handful of elite local residents could speak it.

More recently, the United States has been responsible for diffusing English to several places, most notably the Philippines, which Spain ceded to the United States in 1899, a year after losing the Spanish-American War. After gaining full independence in 1946, the Philippines retained English as one of its official languages, along with Filipino.

## ORIGIN AND DIFFUSION OF ROMANCE LANGUAGES

The Romance languages, including Spanish, Portuguese, French, Italian, and Romanian, are part of the same branch because they all developed from Latin, the “Romans’ language.” The rise in the importance of the city of Rome 2,000 years ago brought a diffusion of its Latin language.

At its height in the second century A.D., the Roman Empire extended from the Atlantic Ocean on the west to the Black Sea on the east and encompassed all lands bordering the Mediterranean Sea. (The empire’s boundary is shown in Figure 8-11.) As the conquering Roman armies occupied the provinces of this vast empire, they brought the Latin language with them. In the process, the languages spoken by the natives of the provinces were either extinguished or suppressed in favor of the language of the conquerors.

Even during the period of the Roman Empire, Latin varied to some extent from one province to another. The empire grew over a period of several hundred years, so the

Latin used in each province was based on that spoken by the Roman army at the time of occupation. The Latin spoken in each province also integrated words from the language formerly spoken in the area.

The Latin that people in the provinces learned was not the standard literary form but a spoken form, known as **Vulgar Latin**, from the Latin word referring to “the masses” of the populace. Vulgar Latin was introduced to the provinces by the soldiers stationed throughout the empire. For example, the literary term for *horse* was *equus*, from which English has derived such words as *equine* and *equestrian*. The Vulgar term, used by the common people, was *caballus*, from which are derived the modern terms for *horse* in Italian (*cavallor*), Spanish (*caballo*), Portuguese (*cavalo*), French (*cheval*), and Romanian (*cal*).

Following the collapse of the Roman Empire in the fifth century, communication among the former provinces declined, creating still greater regional variation in spoken Latin. By the eighth century, regions of the former empire had been isolated from each other long enough for distinct languages to evolve. But Latin persisted in parts of the former empire (Figure 5-16). People in some areas reverted to former languages; others adopted the languages of conquering groups of people from the north and east who spoke Germanic and Slavic.

In the past, when migrants were unable to communicate with speakers of the same language back home, major differences emerged between the languages spoken in the old and new locations, leading to the emergence of distinct, separate languages. This was the case with the migration of Latin speakers 2,000 years ago.



▲ **FIGURE 5-16 PARIS LATIN QUARTER** The university area of Paris gets its name from the Latin language, which was the language of instruction when the universities were founded during the Middle Ages.



## Origin and Diffusion of Indo-European

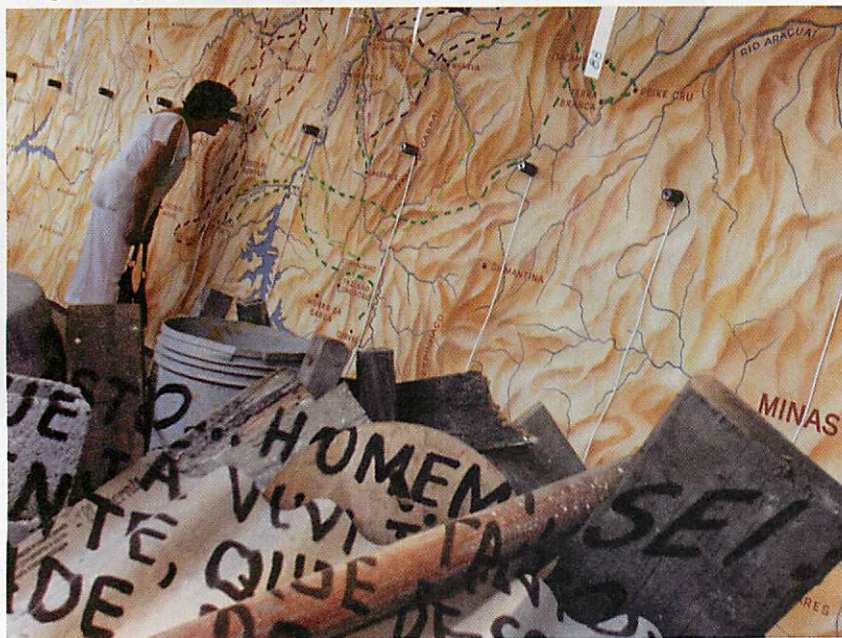
### Learning Outcome 5.2.4

Understand the two theories of the origin and diffusion of Indo-European.

If Germanic, Romance (Figure 5-17), Balto-Slavic, and Indo-Iranian languages are all part of the same Indo-European language family, then they must be descended from a single common ancestral language. Unfortunately, the existence of a single ancestor—which can be called Proto-Indo-European—cannot be proved with certainty because it would have existed thousands of years before the invention of writing or recorded history.

The evidence that Proto-Indo-European once existed is “internal,” derived from the physical attributes of words themselves in various Indo-European languages. For example, the words for some animals and trees in modern Indo-European languages have common roots, including beech, oak, bear, deer, pheasant, and bee. Because all Indo-European languages share these similar words, linguists believe the words must represent things experienced in the daily lives of the original Proto-Indo-European speakers. In contrast, words for other features, such as elephant, camel, rice, and bamboo, have different roots in the various Indo-European languages. Such words therefore cannot be traced back to a common Proto-Indo-European ancestor and must have been added later, after the root language split into many branches. Individual Indo-European languages share common root words for winter and

▼ **FIGURE 5-17 A ROMANCE LANGUAGE: PORTUGUESE** The Museum of Portuguese Language in São Paulo, Brazil, has exhibits related to the Portuguese language, such as authors who have written in Portuguese.



snow but not for ocean. Therefore, linguists conclude that original Proto-Indo-European speakers probably lived in a cold climate, or one that had a winter season, but did not come in contact with oceans.

Linguists and anthropologists generally accept that Proto-Indo-European must have existed, but they disagree on when and where the language originated and the process and routes by which it diffused. The debate over place of origin and paths of diffusion is significant; one theory argues that language diffused primarily through warfare and conquest, and another theory argues that the diffusion resulted from peaceful sharing of food. So where did Indo-European originate? Not surprisingly, scholars disagree on where and when the first speakers of Proto-Indo-European lived.

**NOMADIC WARRIOR HYPOTHESIS.** One influential hypothesis, espoused by Marija Gimbutas, is that the first Proto-Indo-European speakers were the Kurgan people, whose homeland was in the steppes near the border between present-day Russia and Kazakhstan. The earliest archaeological evidence of the Kurgans dates to around 4300 B.C.

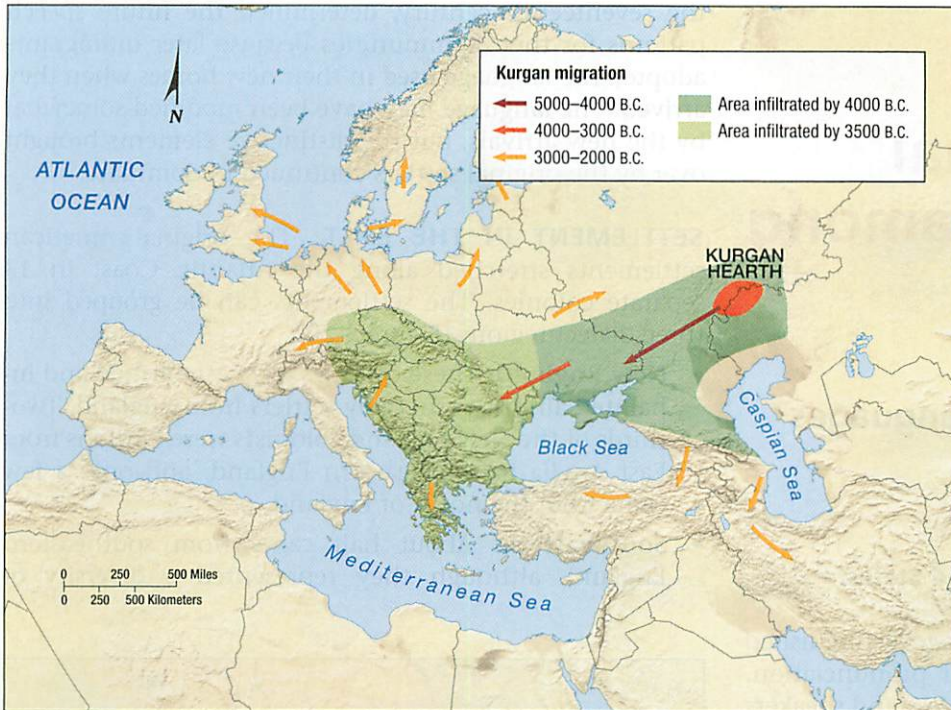
The Kurgans were nomadic herders. Among the first people to domesticate horses and cattle, they migrated in search of grasslands for their animals. This took them westward through Europe, eastward to Siberia, and southeastward to Iran and South Asia. Between 3500 and 2500 B.C., Kurgan warriors, using their domesticated horses as weapons, conquered much of Europe and South Asia (Figure 5-18).

**SEDENTARY FARMER HYPOTHESIS.** Archaeologist Colin Renfrew argues that the first speakers of Proto-Indo-European lived 2,000 years before the Kurgans, in eastern Anatolia, part of present-day Turkey (Figure 5-19). Biologist Russell D. Gray supports the Renfrew position but dates the first speakers even earlier, at around 6700 B.C.

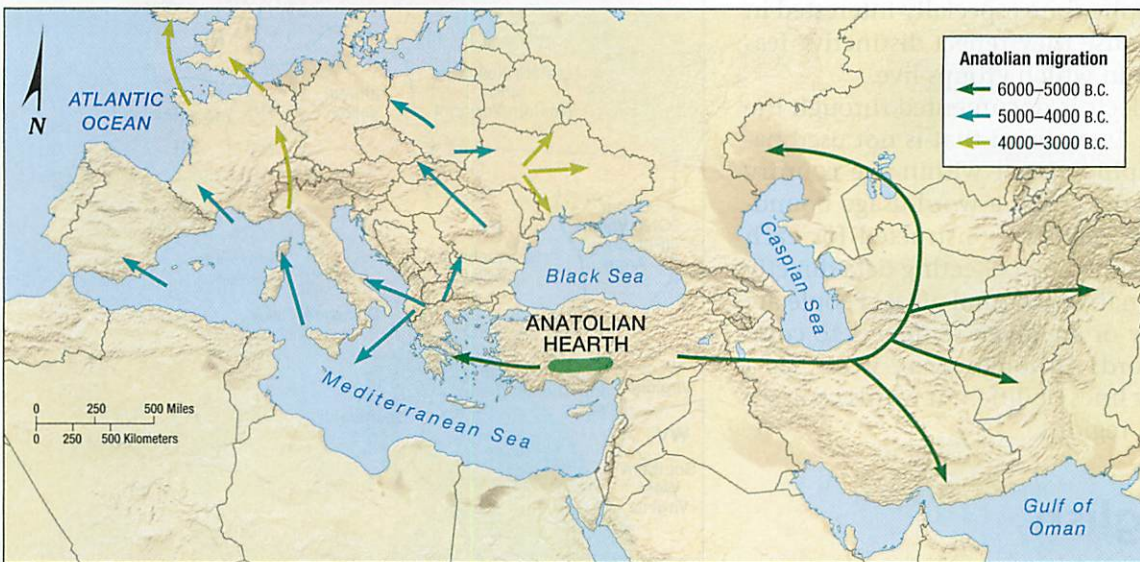
Renfrew believes they diffused from Anatolia westward to Greece (the origin of the Greek language branch) and from Greece westward toward Italy, Sicily, Corsica, the Mediterranean coast of France, Spain, and Portugal (the origin of the Romance language branch). From the Mediterranean coast, the speakers migrated northward toward central and northern France and on to the British Isles (perhaps the origin of the Celtic language branch).

Indo-European is also said to have diffused northward from Greece toward the Danube River (Romania) and westward to central Europe, according to Renfrew. From there the language diffused northward toward the Baltic Sea (the origin of the Germanic language branch) and eastward toward the Dnepr River near Ukraine (the origin of the Slavic language branch). From the Dnepr River, speakers migrated eastward to the Dnepr River (the homeland of the Kurgans).

The Indo-Iranian branch of the Indo-European language family originated either directly through migration from Anatolia along the



◀ **FIGURE 5-18 ORIGIN AND DIFFUSION OF INDO-EUROPEAN (NOMADIC WARRIOR THEORY)** The Kurgan homeland was north of the Caspian Sea, near the present-day border between Russia and Kazakhstan. According to this theory, the Kurgans may have infiltrated into Eastern Europe beginning around 4000 B.C. and into central Europe and Southwest Asia beginning around 2500 B.C.



◀ **FIGURE 5-19 ORIGIN AND DIFFUSION OF INDO-EUROPEAN (SEDENTARY FARMER THEORY)** Indo-European may have originated in present-day Turkey 2,000 years before the Kurgans. According to this theory, the language diffused along with agricultural innovations west into Europe and east into Asia.

south shores of the Black and Caspian seas by way of Iran and Pakistan, or indirectly by way of Russia north of the Black and Caspian seas.

Renfrew argues that Indo-European diffused into Europe and South Asia along with agricultural practices rather than by military conquest. The language triumphed because its speakers became more numerous and prosperous by growing their own food instead of relying on hunting.

Regardless of how Indo-European diffused, communication was poor among different peoples, whether warriors or farmers. After many generations of complete isolation, individual groups evolved increasingly distinct languages.

#### Pause and Reflect 5.2.4

Which hypothesis appeals more to you: the “war” or the “peace” hypothesis? Why?

### CHECK-IN: KEY ISSUE 2

#### Why Is English Related to Other Languages?

- ✓ The Indo-European family has four widely spoken branches.
- ✓ Individual languages, such as English and languages of the Romance branch, have documented places of origin and patterns of diffusion.
- ✓ The origin and early diffusion of language families such as Indo-European is speculative because these language families existed before recorded history.

## KEY ISSUE 3

# Why Do Individual Languages Vary among Places?

- **Dialects of English**
- **Distinguishing between Languages and Dialects**

### Learning Outcome 5.3.1

Describe the main dialects in the United States.

A **dialect** is a regional variation of a language distinguished by distinctive vocabulary, spelling, and pronunciation. Generally, speakers of one dialect can understand speakers of another dialect. Geographers are especially interested in differences in dialects because they reflect distinctive features of the environments in which groups live.

The distribution of dialects is documented through the study of particular words. Every word that is not used nationally has some geographic extent within the country and therefore has boundaries. Such a word-usage boundary, known as an **isogloss**, can be constructed for each word. Isoglosses are determined by collecting data directly from people, particularly natives of rural areas. People are shown pictures to identify or are given sentences to complete with a particular word. Although every word has a unique isogloss, boundary lines of different words coalesce in some locations to form regions.

## Dialects of English

When speakers of a language migrate to other locations, various dialects of that language may develop. This was the case with the migration of English speakers to North America several hundred years ago. Because of its large number of speakers and widespread distribution, English has an especially large number of dialects. North Americans are well aware that they speak English differently from the British, not to mention people living in India, Pakistan, Australia, and other English-speaking countries. Further, English varies by regions within individual countries. In both the United States and England, northerners sound different from southerners.

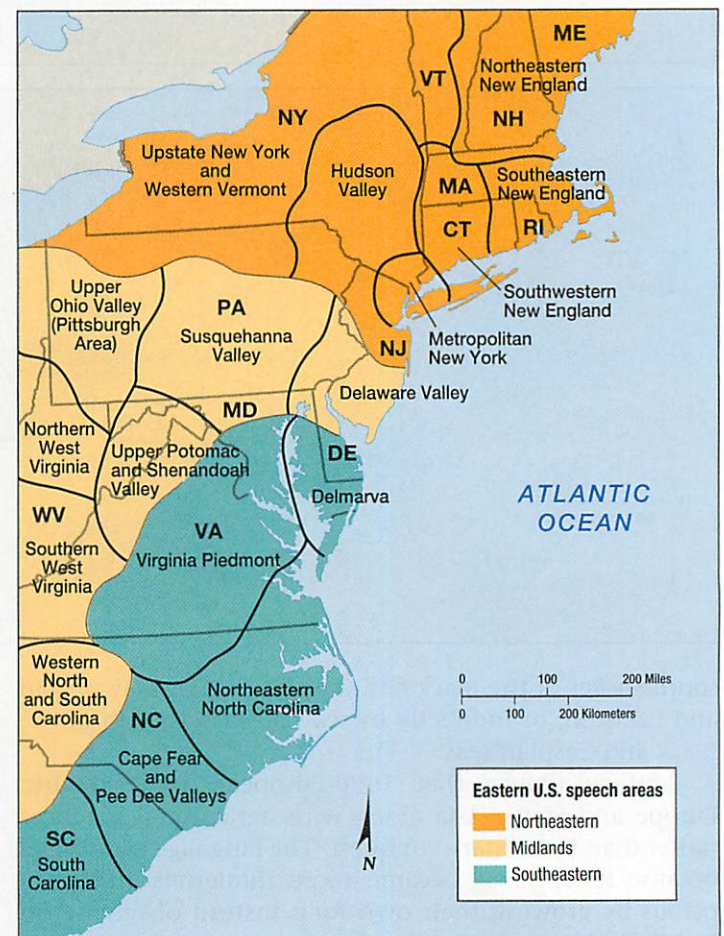
### DIALECTS IN THE UNITED STATES

Major differences in U.S. dialects originated because of differences in dialects among the original settlers. The English dialect spoken by the first colonists, who arrived in

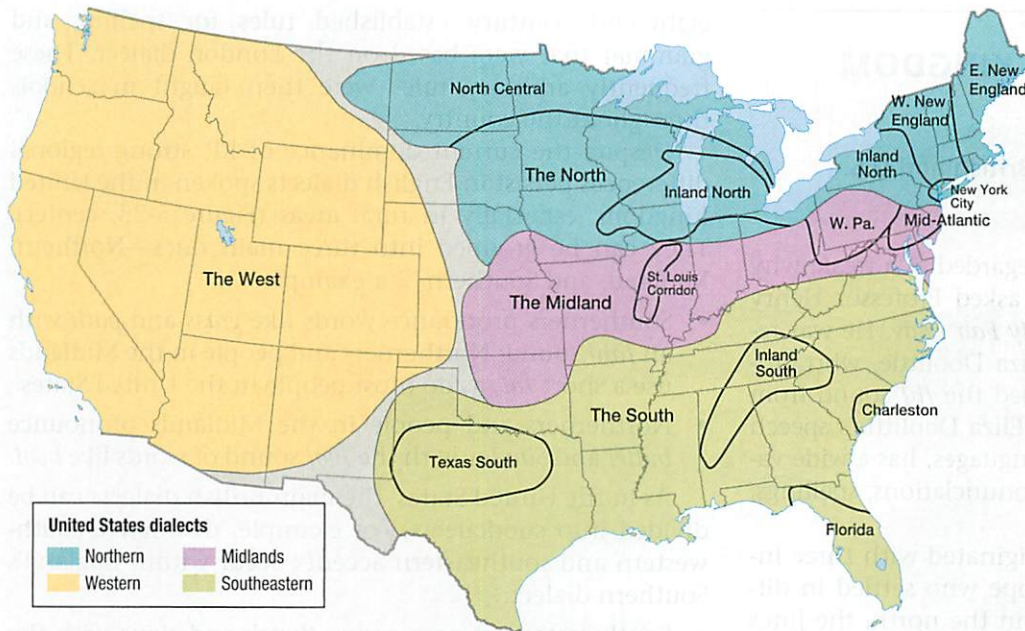
the seventeenth century, determined the future speech patterns for their communities because later immigrants adopted the language used in their new homes when they arrived. The language may have been modified somewhat by the new arrivals, but the distinctive elements brought over by the original settlers continued to dominate.

**SETTLEMENT IN THE EAST.** The original American settlements stretched along the Atlantic Coast in 13 separate colonies. The settlements can be grouped into three dialect regions (Figure 5-20):

- **New England.** These colonies were established and inhabited almost entirely by settlers from England. Two-thirds of the New England colonists were Puritans from East Anglia in southeastern England, and only a few came from the north of England.
- **Southeastern.** About half came from southeastern England, although they represented a diversity of



▲ **FIGURE 5-20 DIALECTS IN THE EASTERN UNITED STATES** The most comprehensive classification of dialects in the United States was made by Hans Kurath in 1949. He found the greatest diversity of dialects in the eastern part of the country, especially in vocabulary used on farms. Kurath divided the eastern United States into three major dialect regions—Northern, Midlands, and Southern—each of which contained a number of important subareas. Compare this to the map of source areas of U.S. house types (Figure 4-25). As Americans migrated west, they took with them distinctive house types as well as distinctive dialects.



▲ **FIGURE 5-21 U.S. DIALECTS AND SUBDIALECTS** The four major U.S. dialect regions are Northern, Southern, Midlands, and West.

social-class backgrounds, including deported prisoners, indentured servants, and political and religious refugees.

- Midlands. These immigrants were more diverse. The early settlers of Pennsylvania were predominantly Quakers from the north of England. Scots and Irish also went to Pennsylvania, as well as to New Jersey and Delaware. The Middle Atlantic colonies also attracted many German, Dutch, and Swedish immigrants who learned their English from the English-speaking settlers in the area.

The English dialects now spoken in the U.S. Southeast and New England are easily recognizable. The dialects spoken in the former Midland colonies differ significantly from those spoken farther north and south because most of the settlers came from the north rather than the south of England or from other countries.

**CURRENT DIALECT DIFFERENCES IN THE EAST.** Major dialect differences continue to exist within the United States. The three major East Coast dialect regions have been joined by a fourth that developed in the West (Figure 5-21).

Many words that were once regionally distinctive are now national in distribution. Mass media, especially television and radio, influence the adoption of the same words throughout the country. Nonetheless, regional dialect differences persist in the United States. For example, the word for *soft drink* varies. Most people in the Northeast and Southwest, as well as the St. Louis area, use *soda* to describe a soft drink. Most people in the Midwest, Great Plains, and Northwest prefer *pop*. Southerners refer to all soft drinks as *coke* (Figure 5-22).

**PRONUNCIATION DIFFERENCES.** Regional pronunciation differences are more familiar to us than word differences, although it is harder to draw precise isoglosses for them:

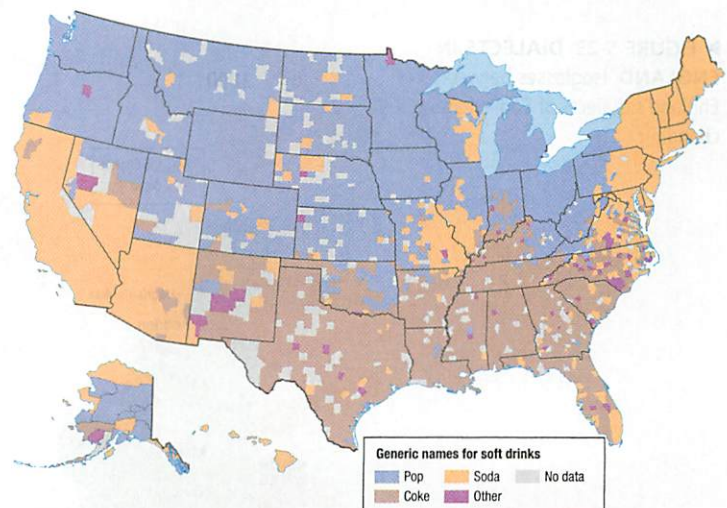
- The southeastern dialect includes making such words as *half* and *mine* into two syllables (“ha-af” and “mi-yen”).
- The northeastern dialect is well known for dropping the /r/ sound, so that *heart* and *lark* are pronounced “hot” and “lock.” This characteristic dropping of the /r/ sound is shared with speakers from the south of England and reflects the place of origin of most New England colonists.

It also reflects the relatively high degree of contact between the two groups. Residents of Boston, the Northeast’s main port city, maintained especially close ties to the important ports of southern England.

The diffusion of particular English dialects is a result of the westward movement of colonists from the three East Coast dialect regions. The northeastern and southeastern accents sound unusual to the majority of Americans because the standard pronunciation throughout the American West comes from the Midlands rather than the northeastern and southeastern regions. This pattern occurred because most western settlers came from the Midlands. The three eastern dialect regions can also be divided into several subdialects, several of which are shown in Figure 5-21.

### Pause and Reflect 5.3.1

Does your English fall into one of these dialects? Why or why not?



▲ **FIGURE 5-22 SOFT-DRINK DIALECTS** Soft drinks are called *soda* in the Northeast and Southwest, *pop* in the Midwest and Northwest, and *Coke* in the South. The map reflects voting at [www.popvsoda.com](http://www.popvsoda.com).

## DIALECTS IN THE UNITED KINGDOM

### Learning Outcome 5.3.2

Understand the main ways that British and U.S. English dialects vary.

“If you use proper English, you’re regarded as a freak; why can’t the English learn to speak?” asked Professor Henry Higgins in the Broadway musical *My Fair Lady*. He was referring to the Cockney-speaking Eliza Doolittle, who pronounced *rain* like “rine” and dropped the /h/ sound from the beginning of words like *happy*. Eliza Doolittle’s speech illustrates that English, like other languages, has a wide variety of dialects that use different pronunciations, spellings, and meanings for particular words.

As already discussed, English originated with three invading groups from Northern Europe who settled in different parts of Britain—the Angles in the north, the Jutes in the southeast, and the Saxons in the southwest. The language each spoke was the basis of distinct regional dialects of Old English—Kentish in the southeast, West Saxon in the southwest, Mercian in the center of the island, and Northumbrian in the north (Figure 5-23).

In a language with multiple dialects, one dialect may be recognized as the **standard language**, which is a dialect that is well established and widely recognized as the most acceptable for government, business, education, and mass communication. In the case of England, the standard language is known as **Received Pronunciation (RP)**. It is well known around the world as the dialect commonly used by politicians, broadcasters, and actors.

RP was the dialect used by upper-class residents in the capital city of London and the two important university cities of Cambridge and Oxford. The diffusion of the upper-class London and university dialects was encouraged by the introduction of the printing press to England in 1476. Grammar books and dictionaries printed in the

eighteenth century established rules for spelling and grammar that were based on the London dialect. These frequently arbitrary rules were then taught in schools throughout the country.

Despite the current dominance of RP, strong regional differences persist in English dialects spoken in the United Kingdom, especially in rural areas (Figure 5-23, center). They can be grouped into three main ones—Northern, Midland, and Southern. For example:

- Southerners pronounce words like *grass* and *path* with an /ah/ sound; Northerners and people in the Midlands use a short /a/, as do most people in the United States.
- Northerners and people in the Midlands pronounce *butter* and *Sunday* with the /oo/ sound of words like *boot*.

As in the United States, the main British dialects can be divided into subdialects. For example, distinctive southwestern and southeastern accents occur within England’s Southern dialect:

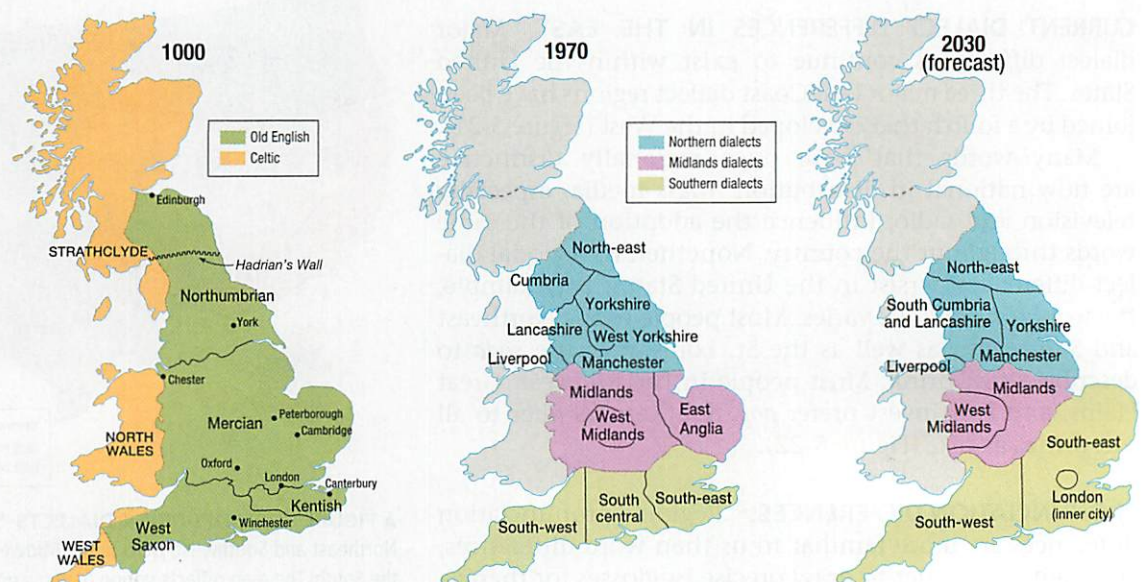
- Southwesterners pronounce *thatch* and *thing* with the /th/ sound of *then* rather than *thin*. *Fresh* and *eggs* have an /ai/ sound.
- Southeasterners pronounce the /a/ in *apple* and *cat* like the short /e/ in *bet*.

The isoglosses between English dialects have been moving (Figure 5-23, right). The changes reflect patterns of migration. The emergence of a subdialect in London reflects migration of people from other countries into the capital city, and the northern expansion of the southeastern subdialect reflects the outmigration of Londoners.

## BRITISH AND AMERICAN ENGLISH DIALECTS

Why don’t Americans speak RP? The English language was brought to the North American continent by colonists from England who settled along the Atlantic Coast beginning in the seventeenth century. The early colonists naturally spoke

► FIGURE 5-23 DIALECTS IN ENGLAND Isoglosses between England’s dialects of English are changing.



the language they had been using in England at the time.

Later immigrants from other countries found English already implanted here. Although they made significant contributions to American English, they became acculturated into a society that already spoke English. Therefore, the earliest colonists were most responsible for the dominant language patterns that exist today in the English-speaking part of the Western Hemisphere.

Why is the English language in the United States so different from that in England? As is so often the case with languages, the answer is isolation. Separated by the Atlantic Ocean, English in the United States and in England evolved independently during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, with little influence on one another. Few residents of one country could visit the other, and the means to transmit the human voice over long distances would not become available until the twentieth century.

U.S. English differs from the English of England in three significant ways—vocabulary, spelling, and pronunciation.

**VOCABULARY.** The vocabulary of U.S. English differs from the English of England largely because settlers in America encountered many new objects and experiences. The new continent contained physical features, such as large forests and mountains, that had to be given new names.

New animals were encountered, including the moose, raccoon, and chipmunk, all of which were given names borrowed from Native Americans. Indigenous American “Indians” also enriched American English with names for objects such as canoe, moccasin, and squash.

As new inventions appeared, they acquired different names on either side of the Atlantic. For example, the elevator is called a *lift* in England, and the flashlight is known as a *torch*. The British call the hood of a car the *bonnet* and the trunk the *boot* (Figure 5-24).

**SPELLING.** American spelling diverged from the British standard because of a strong national feeling in the United States for an independent identity. Noah Webster, the creator of the first comprehensive American dictionary and grammar books, was not just a documenter of usage; he had an agenda.

Webster was determined to develop a uniquely American dialect of English. He either ignored or was unaware of recently created rules of grammar and spelling developed in England. Webster argued that spelling and grammar reforms would help establish a national language, reduce cultural dependence on England, and inspire national pride. The spelling differences between British and American English, such as the elimination of the *u* from the British spelling of words such as *honour* and *colour* and the substitution of *s* for *c* in *defence*, are due primarily to the diffusion of Webster’s ideas inside the United States.



#### BRITISH American

PETROL Gas	WINDSCREEN Windshield	CAT’S EYE RAISED Pavement Marker
LORRY Truck	BOOT Trunk	CARAVAN/CAMPERVAN RV
SLEEPING POLICEMAN Speed Bump	REVERSING LIGHTS Back-up Lights	PAVEMENT Sidewalk
CAR PARK Parking Lot	EXHAUST PIPE Tail Pipe	ESTATE CAR Station Wagon
CAR JOURNEY Road Trip	DUAL CARRIAGEWAY Divided Highway	MANUAL CAR Stickshift Car
ZEBRA CROSSING Crosswalk	MOTORWAY Freeway	GEAR STICK Stick
SALOON Sedan	NUMBER PLATE License Plate	INDICATORS Turn Signal
PETROL STATION Gas Station	FLYOVER Overpass	TRAFFIC LIGHTS Stoplight
BONNET Hood	MULTI-STOREY CAR PARK Parking Garage	AMBER LIGHT (TRAFFIC LIGHTS) Yellow Light

▲ FIGURE 5-24 DIFFERENCES BETWEEN BRITISH AND AMERICAN ENGLISH Numerous features related to a car are identified by different words in American and British English dialects.

**PRONUNCIATION.** From the time of their arrival in North America, colonists began to pronounce words differently from the British. Such divergence is normal, for interaction between the two groups was largely confined to exchange of letters and other printed matter rather than direct speech.

Such words as *fast*, *path*, and *half* are pronounced in England like the /ah/ in *father* rather than the /a/ in *man*. The British also eliminate the *r* sound from pronunciation except before vowels. Thus *lord* in British pronunciation sounds like *laud*.

Americans pronounce unaccented syllables with more clarity than do British English speakers. The words *secretary* and *necessary* have four syllables in American English but only three in British (*secret’ry* and *necess’ry*).

Surprisingly, pronunciation has changed more in England than in the United States. The letters *a* and *r* are pronounced in the United States closer to the way they were pronounced in Britain in the seventeenth century, when the first colonists arrived. A single dialect of Southern English did not emerge as the British national standard until the late eighteenth century, after the American colonies had declared independence and were politically as well as physically isolated from England. Thus people in the United States do not speak “proper” English because when the colonists left England, “proper” English was not what it is today. Furthermore, few colonists were drawn from the English upper classes.

#### Pause and Reflect 5.3.2

In British English dialect, *circus* has a second meaning in addition to a carnival with clowns. What is it?

## Distinguishing between Languages and Dialects

### Learning Outcome 5.3.3

Understand why it is sometimes difficult to distinguish between a language and a dialect.

Dialects are not confined to English; other languages, such as those in the Romance branch, have dialects. The Romance branch also demonstrates difficulties in distinguishing between dialects and distinct languages.

### ROMANCE BRANCH DIALECTS

Distinct Romance languages did not suddenly appear in the former Roman Empire. As with other languages, they evolved over time. Numerous dialects existed within each province, and many of them are still spoken today. The creation of standard national languages, such as French and Spanish, occurred relatively recently.

**SPANISH AND PORTUGUESE.** Spain, like France, contained many dialects during the Middle Ages. One dialect, known as Castilian, arose during the ninth century in Old Castile, located in the north-central part of the country. The dialect spread southward over the next several hundred years, as independent kingdoms were unified into one large country.

Spain grew to its approximate present boundaries in the fifteenth century, when the Kingdom of Castile and León merged with the Kingdom of Aragón. At that time, Castilian became the official language for the entire country. Regional dialects, such as Aragón, Navarre, León, Asturias, and Santander, survived only in secluded rural areas. The official language of Spain is now called Spanish, although the term Castilian is still used in Latin America. Portuguese developed as a separate language because of Portugal's relative isolation on the west coast of the Iberian peninsula, especially after the fall of the Roman Empire.

Spanish and Portuguese have achieved worldwide importance because of the colonial activities of their European speakers. Approximately 90 percent of the speakers of these two languages live outside Europe, mainly in Central and South America. Spanish is the official language of 18 Latin American states, and Portuguese is spoken in Brazil, which has as many people as all the other South American countries combined and 18 times more people than Portugal itself.

These two Romance languages were diffused to the Americas by Spanish and Portuguese explorers. The division of Central and South America into Portuguese- and Spanish-speaking regions resulted from a 1493 decision by Pope Alexander VI to give the western portion of the New World to Spain and the eastern part to Portugal. The Treaty of Tordesillas, signed a year later, carried out the papal decision.

The Portuguese and Spanish languages spoken in the Western Hemisphere differ somewhat from their European versions, as is the case with English. The members of the Spanish Royal Academy meet every week in a mansion in Madrid to clarify rules for the vocabulary, spelling, and pronunciation of the Spanish language around the world. The academy's official dictionary, published in 1992, has added hundreds of "Spanish" words that originated either in the regional dialects of Spain or the Indian languages of Latin America.

Brazil, Portugal, and several Portuguese-speaking countries in Africa agreed in 1994 to standardize the way their common language is written. Many people in Portugal are upset that the new standard language more closely resembles the Brazilian version, which eliminates some of the accent marks—such as tildes (as in São Paulo), cedillas (as in Alcobça), circumflexes (as in Estância), and hyphens—and the agreement recognizes as standard thousands of words that Brazilians have added to the language, such as flowers, animals, and other features of the natural environment found in Brazil but not in Portugal.

The standardization of Portuguese is a reflection of the level of interaction that is possible in the modern world between groups of people who live tens of thousands of kilometers apart. Books and television programs produced in one country diffuse rapidly to other countries where the same language is used. Refer to Figure 5-17, which shows an exhibit at the Museum of Portuguese Language in São Paulo, Brazil.

### Pause and Reflect 5.3.3

Five hundred years from now, why might Spanish tourists in Peru not be easily understood by Peruvians if they speak their own version of Spanish?

### DIALECT OR LANGUAGE?

Difficulties arise in determining whether two languages are distinct or whether they are two dialects of the same language. Here are several examples from Romance languages.

**LANGUAGES OF ITALY.** Several languages in Italy that have been traditionally classified as dialects of Italian are now viewed by *Ethnologue* as sufficiently different to merit consideration as languages distinct from Italian (number of speakers in parentheses):

- Emiliano-Romagnolo (2 million)
- Liguria (2 million)
- Lombard (9 million)
- Neapolitano-Calabrese (7 million)
- Piemontese (3 million)
- Sicilian (5 million)
- Venetian (2 million)

Refer to Figure 5-13 for the distribution of these languages (or dialects) within Italy.



▲ FIGURE 5-25 CATALÁN This sign warning that this is private property was written in Spanish. The graffiti is in Catalán.

**CATALÁN-VALENCIAN-BALEAR.** Catalán was once regarded as a dialect of Spanish, but linguists now agree that it is a separate Romance language (refer to Figure 5-13). Like other Romance languages, Catalán can be traced to Vulgar Latin, and it developed as a separate language after the collapse of the Roman Empire (Figure 5-25).

As the status of Catalán as a separate language is settled, linguists are identifying its principal dialects. Linguists agree that Balear is a dialect of Catalán that is spoken in the Balearic Islands, which include Ibiza and Majorca. More controversial is the status of Valencian, which is spoken mostly in and around the city of Valencia. Most linguists consider Valencian a dialect of Catalán. However, many in Valencia, including the Valencian Language Institute, consider Valencian a separate language, because it contains words derived from people who lived in the region before the Roman conquest. *Ethnologue* now calls the language Catalán -Valencian-Balear.

**GALICIAN.** Whether Galician, which is spoken in northwestern Spain and northeastern Portugal, is a dialect of Portuguese or a distinct language is debated among speakers of Galician. The Academy of Galician Language considers it a separate language and a symbol of cultural independence. The Galician Association of the Language prefers to consider it a dialect because as a separate language, it would be relegated to a minor and obscure status, whereas as a dialect of Portuguese it can help to influence one of the world's most widely used languages.

**MOLDOVAN.** Generally classified as a dialect of Romanian, Moldovan is the official language of Moldova. Moldovan is

written, like Russian, in Cyrillic letters, a legacy of Moldova being a part of the Soviet Union, whereas Romanian is written in Roman letters.

**CREOLE LANGUAGES.** Romance languages spoken in some former colonies can also be classified as separate languages because they differ substantially from the original introduced by European colonizers. Examples include French Creole in Haiti, Papiamentu (creolized Spanish) in Netherlands Antilles (West Indies), and Portuguese Creole in the Cape Verde Islands off the African coast. A **creole**, or **creolized language**, is defined as a language that results from the mixing of the colonizer's language with the indigenous language of the people being dominated (Figure 5-26). A creolized language forms when the colonized group adopts the language of the dominant group but makes some changes, such as simplifying the grammar and adding words from the former language.

### CHECK-IN: KEY ISSUE 3

#### Why Do Individual Languages Vary among Places?

- ✓ A dialect is a regional variation of a language; the United States has several major dialects.
- ✓ Dialects vary based on vocabulary, spelling, and pronunciation.
- ✓ The distinction between a dialect and an entirely different language is not always clear-cut.

▼ FIGURE 5-26 CREOLE LANGUAGE This note, written in French Creole in Haiti, shortly after a devastating earthquake killed 40,000 in January 2010, is the beginning of 2 Timothy 3:16, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God."





## 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.

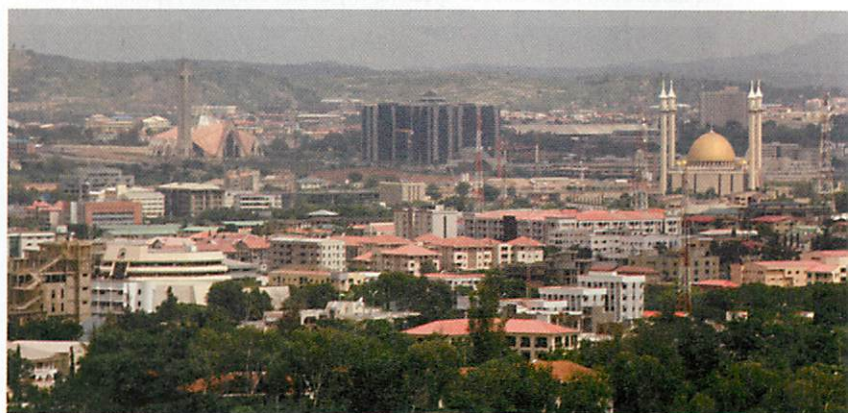
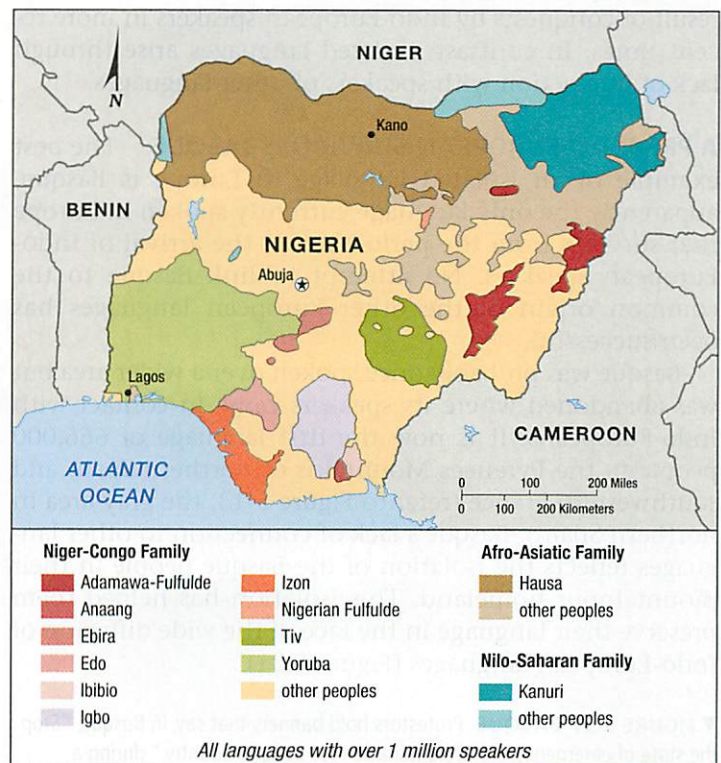
**NIGERIA.** Africa's most populous country, Nigeria, displays problems that can arise from the presence of many speakers of many languages. Nigeria has 527 distinct languages, according to *Ethnologue*, only three of which have widespread use—Hausa, Yoruba, and Igbo, each spoken by one-eighth of the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

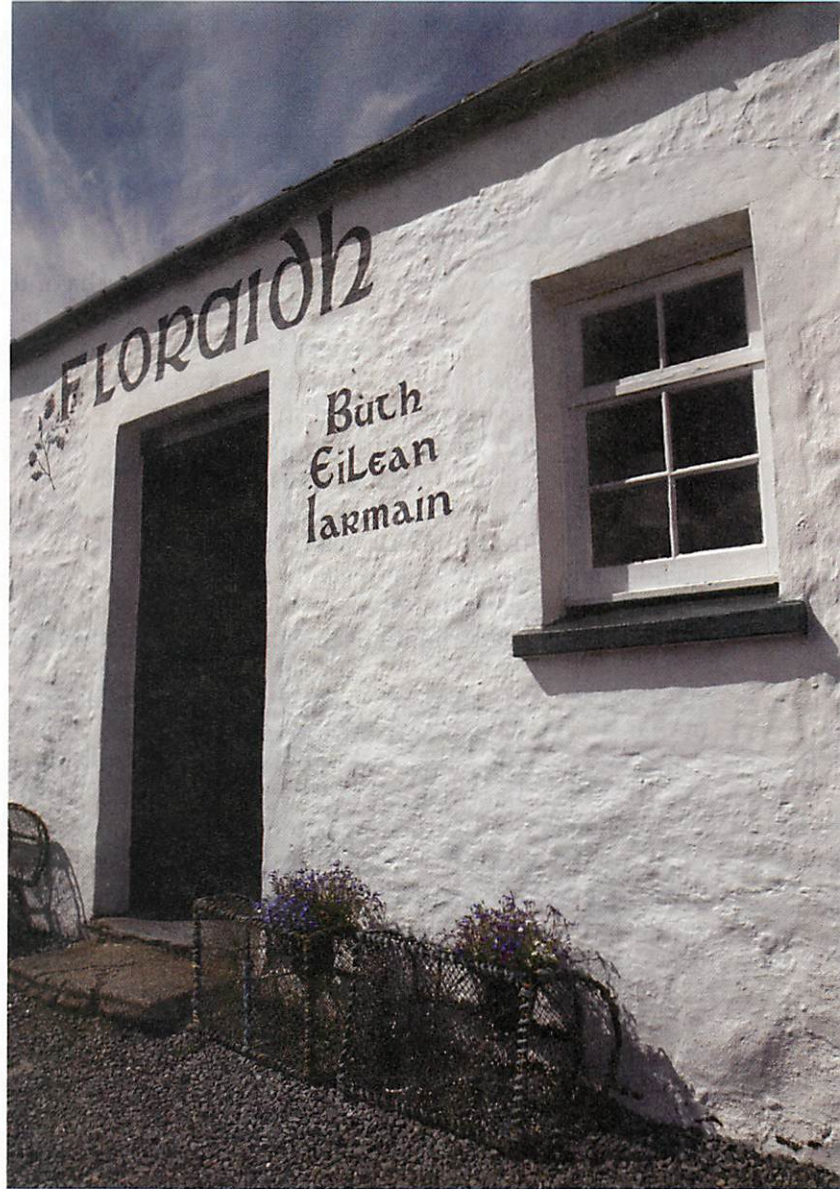
#### Pause and Reflect 5.4.3

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*

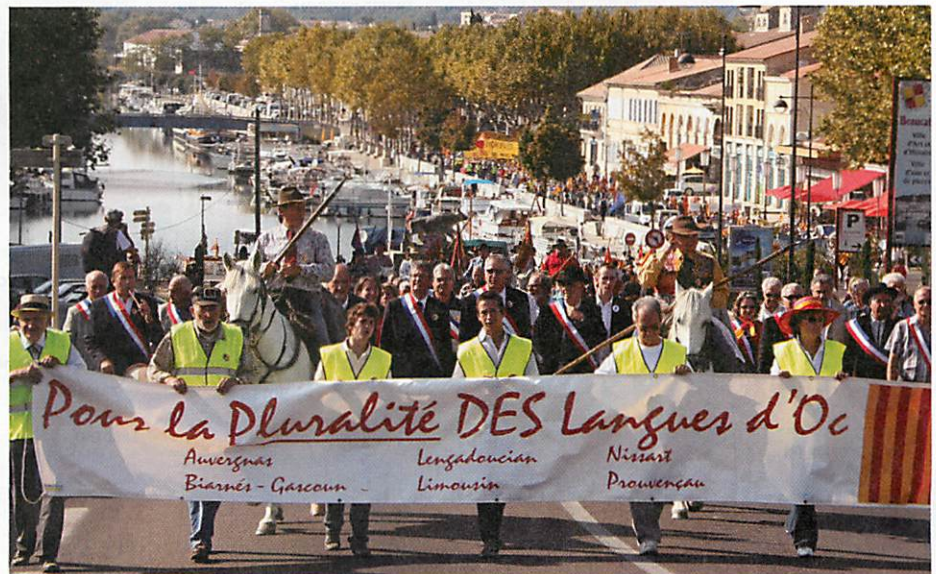
*Iaith Gymraeg* are expected to carry the responsibility of preserving lesser-used languages.

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*.







▲ 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

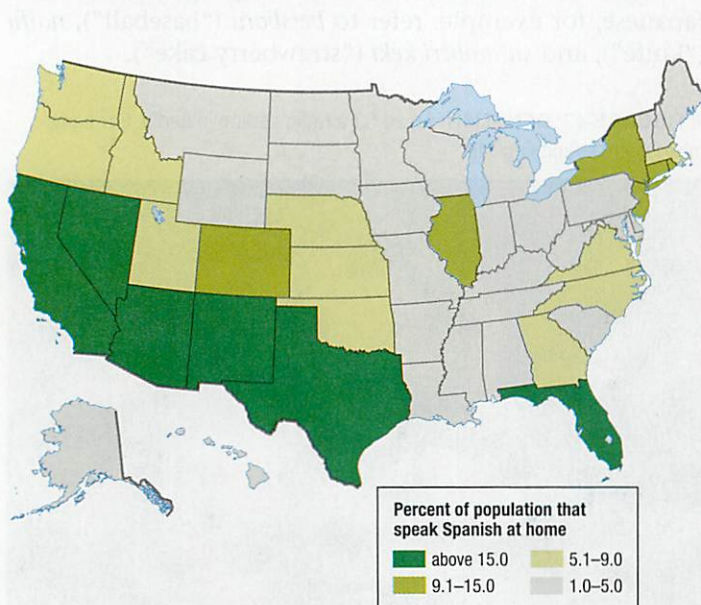
Understand the role of Spanish and French in North America.

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.

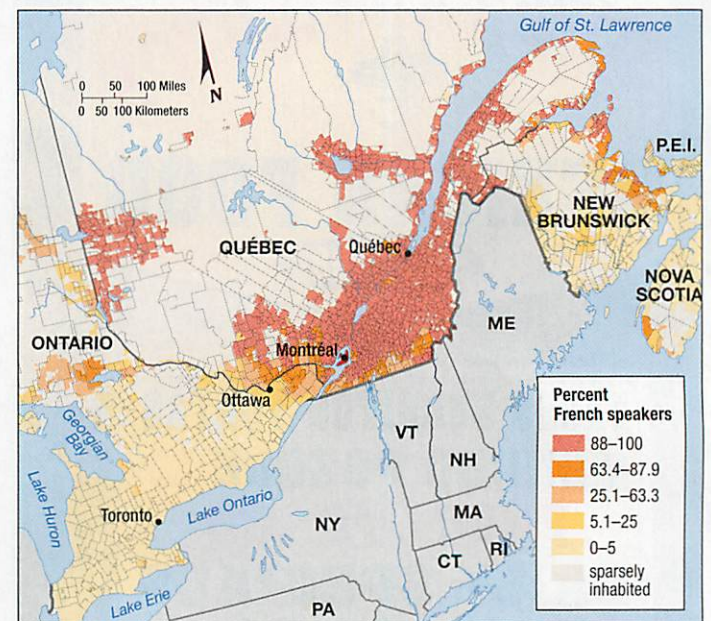
time, the increasing use of other languages in the United States is a reminder of the importance that groups place on preserving cultural identity and the central role that language plays in maintaining that identity.

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.

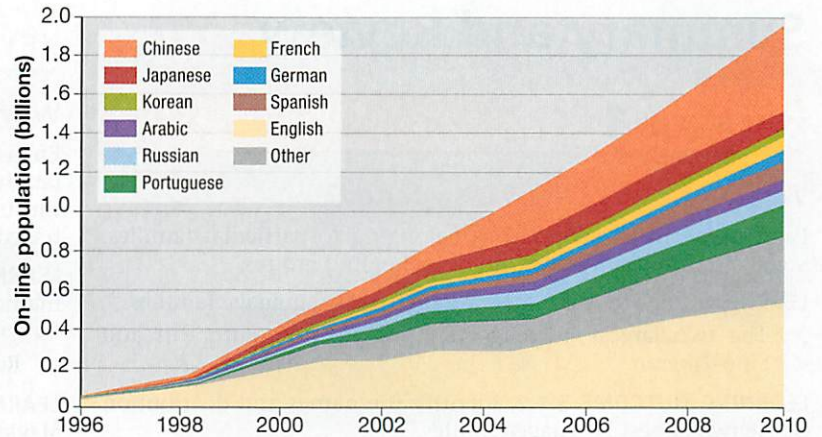
Although French dominates over English, Québec faces a fresh challenge of integrating a large number of immigrants from Europe, Asia, and Latin America who don't speak French. Many immigrants would prefer to use English rather than French as their lingua franca but are prohibited from doing so by the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

# Summary and Review

## KEY ISSUE 1

### Where Are Languages Distributed?

Languages can be classified as belonging to particular families. Some families are divided into branches and groups.

**LEARNING OUTCOME 5.1.1** Name the largest language families.

- The two largest language families are Indo-European and Sino-Tibetan.

**LEARNING OUTCOME 5.1.2:** Identify the names and distribution of the two largest language families.

- Indo-European is the predominant language family of Europe, Latin America, North America, South Asia, and South Pacific. Sino-Tibetan is the predominant language family of East Asia.

**LEARNING OUTCOME 5.1.3:** Identify the names and distribution of the largest language families in addition to Indo-European and Sino-Tibetan.

- In addition to Indo-European and Sino-Tibetan, most of the world's remaining major language families are centered in Asia.

**THINKING GEOGRAPHICALLY 5.1:** What features of the Sino-Tibetan family make it especially difficult to learn to speak and to write the languages?

**GOOGLE EARTH 5.1:** Asakusa Shin-Nakamise is a shopping area in Tokyo. What are examples of English-language signs in the area?



## Key Terms

**Creole, or creolized language** (p. 163) A language that results from the mixing of a colonizer's language with the indigenous language of the people being dominated.

**Denglish** (p. 175) A combination of German and English.

**Dialect** (p. 158) A regional variety of a language distinguished by vocabulary, spelling, and pronunciation.

**Ebonics** (p. 174) A dialect spoken by some African Americans.

**Extinct language** (p. 166) A language that was once used by people in daily activities but is no longer used.

**Français** (p. 174) A term used by the French for English words that have entered the French language; a combination of *français* and *anglais*, the French words for *French* and *English*, respectively.

**Isogloss** (p. 158) A boundary that separates regions in which different language usages predominate.

**Isolated language** (p. 166) A language that is unrelated to any other languages and therefore not attached to any language family.

**Language** (p. 143) A system of communication through the use of speech, a collection of sounds understood by a group of people to have the same meaning.

## KEY ISSUE 2

### Why Is English Related To Other Languages?

English is in the Germanic branch of the Indo-European language family. Nearly one-half of humans currently speak a language in the Indo-European family. All Indo-European languages can be traced to a common ancestor.

**LEARNING OUTCOME 5.2.1:** Learn the distribution of the Germanic and Indo-Iranian branches of Indo-European.

- The four largest branches of Indo-European are Indo-Iranian, Romance, Germanic, and Balto-Slavic.

**LEARNING OUTCOME 5.2.2:** Learn the distribution of the Balto-Slavic and Romance branches of Indo-European.

- Balto-Slavic predominates in Eastern Europe, Romance in Southern Europe and Latin America, Germanic in Northern Europe and North America, and Indo-Iranian in South Asia and Central Asia.

**LEARNING OUTCOME 5.2.3:** Understand the origin and diffusion of English.

- English is a Germanic branch language because German-speaking tribes invaded England more than 1,500 years ago. Romance branch words entered English after French-speaking Normans invaded England nearly 1,000 years ago.

**LEARNING OUTCOME 5.2.4:** Understand the two theories of the origin and diffusion of Indo-European.

- Indo-European originated before recorded history; two competing theories disagree on whether origin and diffusion occurred primarily because of conquest or agriculture.

**THINKING GEOGRAPHICALLY 5.2:** Should the United States make English the official language? Why or why not? Should more than one language be made official? If so, which ones?

**GOOGLE EARTH 5.2:** Fly to Kutuluk, Russia, near the northern shore of the Caspian Sea and switch to ground-level view. Does the ancient homeland of the Kurgan warriors appear flat or mountainous? Grasslands or forests?



**Language branch** (p. 143) A collection of languages related through a common ancestor that existed several thousand years ago. Differences are not as extensive or as old as with language families, and archaeological evidence can confirm that the branches derived from the same family.

**Language family** (p. 143) A collection of languages related to each other through a common ancestor long before recorded history.

**Language group** (p. 143) A collection of languages within a branch that share a common origin in the relatively recent past and display relatively few differences in grammar and vocabulary.

**Lingua franca** (p. 172) A language mutually understood and commonly used in trade by people who have different native languages.

**Literary tradition** (p. 143) A language that is written as well as spoken.

**Logogram** (p. 146) A symbol that represents a word rather than a sound.

## KEY ISSUE 3

### Why Do Individual Languages Vary Among Places?

A dialect is a regional variation of a language.

**LEARNING OUTCOME 5.3.1:** Describe the main dialects in the United States.

- U.S. English is divided into four main dialects. Differences can be traced to patterns of migration to the American colonies from various parts of England.

**LEARNING OUTCOME 5.3.2:** Understand the main ways that British and U.S. English dialects vary

- British and American dialects vary by vocabulary, spelling, and pronunciation.

**LEARNING OUTCOME 5.3.3:** Understand why it is sometimes difficult to distinguish between a language and a dialect.

- The distinction is often based on political decisions rather than the actual characteristics of the languages or dialects.

**THINKING GEOGRAPHICALLY 5.3:** Based on a comparison of Figure 5-23 center and right, which dialects are forecast to expand, and which are expected to contract by 2030? What geographic factor would account for this changing distribution?

**GOOGLE EARTH 5.3:** *Circus*, such as Piccadilly Circus in London, is an example of a British word that differs from American usage. The name *Piccadilly* can be traced to a house by that name built around 1612 by Robert Baker, a tailor who had a shop that sold stiff collars known as *piccadills*. Based on the feature visible here in the middle of Piccadilly Circus what would be the American equivalent of a *circus*?



**Official language** (p. 143) The language adopted for use by the government for the conduct of business and publication of documents.

**Pidgin language** (p. 173) A form of speech that adopts a simplified grammar and limited vocabulary of a lingua franca; used for communications among speakers of two different languages.

**Received Pronunciation (RP)** (p. 160) The dialect of English associated with upper-class Britons living in London and now considered standard in the United Kingdom.

**Spanglish** (p. 174) A combination of Spanish and English spoken by Hispanic Americans.

**Standard language** (p. 160) The form of a language used for official government business, education, and mass communications.

**Vulgar Latin** (p. 155) A form of Latin used in daily conversation by ancient Romans, as opposed to the standard dialect, which was used for official documents.

## KEY ISSUE 4

### Why Do People Preserve Local Languages?

English has become the most important language for international communication in culture and business.

**LEARNING OUTCOME 5.4.1:** Understand how several countries peacefully embrace more than one language.

- Switzerland, Belgium, and Nigeria have varying approaches to multilingual societies.

**LEARNING OUTCOME 5.4.2:** Understand what is meant by an isolated language and an extinct language.

- Thousands of languages once in use are now extinct. Some isolated languages survive that are unrelated to any other.

**LEARNING OUTCOME 5.4.3:** Understand why the number of Celtic speakers has declined and how the languages are being preserved.

- Celtic languages are being preserved through the efforts of advocacy groups and government agencies.

**LEARNING OUTCOME 5.4.4:** Understand the concept of a lingua franca.

- A lingua franca is a language of international communication.
- English is currently the world's most widely used lingua franca.

**LEARNING OUTCOME 5.4.5:** Understand how English has diffused to other languages.

- English is being combined with other languages, such as French and Spanish.

**LEARNING OUTCOME 5.4.6:** Understand the role of Spanish and French in North America.

- French is widely used in Canada, especially in Québec. Spanish is widely used in the United States.

**THINKING GEOGRAPHICALLY 5.4:** Because of Québec's French language and culture, some in the province have advocated Québec's separating from Canada and becoming an independent nation. Is a monolingual nation preferable to a bilingual one? State your argument for or against Québec's independence.

**GOOGLE EARTH 5.4:** Fly to 47 Mostyn St, Llandudno, Wales. In what language are most of the shop signs? In what language are most of the street signs and the sign in front of the church?



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