The Geography of Language

La Geografía del Idioma

Die Geographie der Sprache

La Géographie de Langue

La Geografia di Lingua

Guinness

ni féidir an duí a cur ina báín air
Language Defined

Organized system of spoken words by which people communicate with one another with mutual comprehension (Getis, 1985).

• Languages subtly gradate one to another. **Dialects** and other regional differences may eventually lead to incomprehensibility - a new language.

• **Migration** and **Isolation** explain how a single language can later become two or more.
Geographer’s Perspective on Language

• Language is an essential element of culture, possibly the most important medium by which culture is transmitted.

• Languages even structure the perceptions of their speakers. Attitudes, understandings, and responses are partly determined by the words available.

• Languages are a hallmark of cultural diversity with distinctive regional distributions.
Language Distribution indicates

- History and conquest
- Isolation or integration of cultures
- Migration of peoples
- Economic Domination of certain cultures
- Influence of wealth and technology
- Political Divisions (country boundaries)
- Physical geography barriers (mts., deserts)
How to Write Down a Language?
How to Write Down a Language?

Ideograms
- Sumerian; Chinese; Egyptian; Japanese

From basic characters:
- Sun
- Person
- White, clear (Sun peeping out)
- Big (person with arms extended)
- Heaven (above the biggest person)
- White person
- Daytime (clear and heaven)
- Daytime (clear and Sun)
How to Write Down a Language?

Phonetic

- Most languages, including Romance languages

Symbols (letters) represent sounds, not ideas. A phonetic alphabet is the key innovation.
Languages and Language Families
Language Divisions

• Language Families
• Language Branches
• Language Groups
• Languages
• Dialects
• Accents
Language Families

- A collection of individual languages with a common ancestor

A family may be divided into several divisions or branches.
Language Branches

• a group of languages that share a common origin but have evolved into different languages

• example: Romance Branch - Indo-European Family
  – French, Spanish, Portuguese, Romanch
Language Groups

• Several individual languages within a language branch
  – share a common origin in recent past
  – few differences in grammar and vocabulary
Indo-European Language Branches

Non-Indo-European Language Families and Branches
Language Divisions for English

- Language Families
  - Indo-European
- Language Branches
  - Germanic
- Language Groups
  - West Germanic
- Languages
  - English
- Dialects
  - Northeastern
- Accents
  - Boston (Pak da ka o-fa dere, pleese!)
## Which languages share a common ancestor?

### Some Indo-European Shared Words

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English</th>
<th>Sanskrit</th>
<th>Greek</th>
<th>Latin</th>
<th>Armenian</th>
<th>Old Irish</th>
<th>Lithuanian</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>me</td>
<td>mam</td>
<td>eme</td>
<td>me</td>
<td>is</td>
<td></td>
<td>mane</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>father</td>
<td>pitar</td>
<td>pater</td>
<td>pater</td>
<td>hayr</td>
<td>athair</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mother</td>
<td>matar</td>
<td>mater</td>
<td>mater</td>
<td>mayr</td>
<td>mathair</td>
<td>motina</td>
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<tr>
<td>brother</td>
<td>bhratar</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>frater</td>
<td>elbayr</td>
<td>brathair</td>
<td>brolis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>daughter</td>
<td>duhitar</td>
<td>thugater-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>dustr</td>
<td></td>
<td>dukter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cow</td>
<td>gav-</td>
<td>bous</td>
<td>bos</td>
<td>kov</td>
<td>bo</td>
<td>guovs(Latv)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>eoh (OE)</td>
<td>asvas</td>
<td>hippos</td>
<td>equus</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>ech</td>
<td>asva, mare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hound</td>
<td>svan</td>
<td>kuon</td>
<td>canis</td>
<td>sun</td>
<td>con</td>
<td>sun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>foot</td>
<td>pad</td>
<td>pod-</td>
<td>ped-</td>
<td>otn</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>new</td>
<td>navas</td>
<td>ne(w)os</td>
<td>novus</td>
<td>nor</td>
<td>nue</td>
<td>naujas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bears</td>
<td>bharati</td>
<td>pherei</td>
<td>fert</td>
<td>bere</td>
<td>berid</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>two</td>
<td>duva</td>
<td>duo</td>
<td>duo</td>
<td>erku</td>
<td>do</td>
<td>du</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>three</td>
<td>trayas</td>
<td>treis</td>
<td>tres</td>
<td>erek</td>
<td>tri</td>
<td>trys</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Many Indo-European languages have common words for snow, winter, spring; for dog, horse, cow, sheep bear but not camel, lion, elephant, or tiger; for beech, oak, pine, willow, but not palm or banyan tree.
Indo-European Language Family (50% of World)

Main Branches:

- **Germanic**
  - Dutch, German

- **Romance**
  - Spanish, French

- **Baltic-Slavic**
  - Russian

- **Indo-Iranian**
  - Hindu, Bengali
Indo-European Language Family - Germanic Branch

West Germanic
- English (514 million)
- German (128)
- Dutch (21)

East Germanic
- Danish (5)
- Norwegian (5)
- Swedish (9)
Germanic Branch - English

Diffused throughout the world by hundreds of years of British colonialism. Brought to New World by British colonies in 1600s. Has become an important global *lingua franca*.
Development of English

Germanic Tribes (Germany/Denmark)
- Jutes
- Angles
- Saxons

Vikings (Norway)
- 9th - 11th Centuries

Normans (French)
- Battle of Hastings, 1066
- French was official language for 150 years.
Development of English - Adopted Words

Germanic Tribes (Germany/Denmark)
- kindergarten, angst, noodle, pretzel

Vikings (Norway)
- take, they, reindeer, window

Normans (French)
- renaissance, mansion, village, guardian
Like English these languages have been spread by Colonialism.

- Spanish (425 million)
- Portuguese (194) - most in Brazil
- French (129)
- Italian (62)
- Romanian (26)
Literature was all written in Latin until the 13th and 14th centuries.

• Dante Alighieri’s 1314 *Inferno* written in *vulgar latin* (Florentine).
Sino-Tibetan Language Family (20%)

Branches:

• Sinitic
  - Mandarin (1075), Cantonese (71),
• Austro-Thai (77)
  - Thai, Hmong
• Tibeto-Burman
  - Burmese (32)

Chinese languages based on 420 one syllable words with meaning inferred from context and tone.
Language Families of Africa

Fig. 5-14: The 1,000 or more languages of Africa are divided among five main language families, including Austronesian languages in Madagascar.
Afro-Asiatic Language Family

Main Branch:

Semitic

• Arabic (256)
  
  Language of the Koran; spread by Islamic Faith and Islamic (Ottoman) Empires

• Hebrew (5)
  
  Language of the old Testament (with Aramaic); completely revived from extinction in Israel, 1948.
proto-Bantu peoples originated in Cameroon-Nigeria

- They spread throughout southern Africa AD 1 - 1000

- Bantu peoples were agriculturalists who used metal tools

- Khoisan peoples were hunter-gatherers and were no match for the Bantu.

- Pygmies adopted Bantu tongue and retreated to forest

- Hottentots and Bushmen retained the clicks of Khoisan languages
In Nigeria ethnic conflict between southern Ibos and western Yoruba led the government to move the capital to a more neutral central location (Abuja). Many other ethnic battles rage continuously.

In Switzerland, four official languages, a history of peace and tolerance, and a political system that puts power in the hands of local leaders ensure peace.

Nigeria has more than 200 individual languages!
PIDGIN - a form of speech that adopts simplified grammar and limited vocabulary from a lingua franca, used for communication between speakers of two different languages.

Examples include Hawaiian Pidgin and the creoles of West Africa that resulted from the slave trade.

“No eat da candy, Bruddah, it's pilau. Da thing wen fall on da ground.”
Give us da food we need fo today an every day. Hemmo our shame, an let us go. Fo all da kine bad stuff we do to you, Jalike us guys let da odda guys go awready, And we no stay huhu wit dem. Fo all da kine bad stuff dey do to us. No let us get chance fo do bad kine stuff, But take us outa dea, so da Bad Guy no can hurt us. Cuz you our King. You get da real power, An you stay awesome foeva. Dass it!”

Matthew 6:9-13 “The Lord’s Prayer”
- Taken from Da Jesus Book, a twelve year effort by 6 linguists to translate the New Testament into Hawaiian Pidgin, published 2001
Key Terms

CREOLE - a language that results from the mixing of a colonizer’s language with an indigenous language. Often they are pidgins.

Can you guess which colonizing language is the base for each of the following creole examples?

a. mo pe aste sa banan
   I am buying the banana
b. de bin alde luk dat big tri
   they always looked for a big tree
c. a waka go a wosu
   he walked home
d. olmaan i kas-im chek
   the old man is cashing a check
e. li pote sa bay mo
   he brought that for me
f. ja fruher wir bleiben
   Yes at first we remained
g. dis smol swain i bin go fo maket
   this little pig went to market
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French based Seychelles Creole  
English based Roper River Creole  
English based Saran  
English based Cape York Creole  
French based Guyanais  
German based Papua New Guinea Pidgin  
German English based Cameroon Pidgin
Key Terms

**DIALECT** - a regional variety of a language distinguished by pronunciation, spelling, and vocabulary.

**Social Dialects** - can denote social class and standing.

**Vernacular Dialects** - the common, slang, speech of a region.

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**Sounds Familiar** - English Dialects Website

**Common American Slang**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Is he fair dinkum?</td>
<td>Is he real or genuine?</td>
<td>Australia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why I declare!</td>
<td>That’s remarkable!</td>
<td>Deep South (U.S.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Down by the crick</td>
<td>Down by the stream (creek)</td>
<td>Middle Atlantic States</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bludger</td>
<td>freelancer; welfare</td>
<td>Australia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mosquito hawk</td>
<td>dragon fly</td>
<td>South (U.S.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nappies</td>
<td>diapers</td>
<td>Britain; Brit. Colonies</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ISOLATED LANGUAGE - a language that is not related to any other languages and thus not connected to any language families. Examples include Basque and Korean.
Language and the Environment
(Linguistic Ecology)

**TOPONYM** - a place name. These are language on the land, reflecting past inhabitants and their relation to the land.
Endangered Languages

As recently as 3,000 years ago, there were 10,000 to 15,000 languages in the world.

Now: about 6000 left.

Of those, 1/2 will be gone by the year 2100 and all but 500 of the rest will be endangered.

More than 90 percent of the languages in existence today will be extinct or threatened in little more than a century if current trends continue.
Endangered Languages

Why are they disappearing?

Globalization
  Migration (Urbanization)
  Economic Development
    - Lingua Francas
Media
  Internet (Requires Arabic Character Set)

Lingua Franca - a language used for trade by two people who speak different native tongues.
World’s Top 10 Languages

- Mandarin Chinese: 726 Million
- English: 427 Million
- Spanish: 266 Million
- Hindi: 182 Million
- Arabic: 181 Million
- Portuguese: 165 Million
- Bengali: 162 Million
- Russian: 158 Million
- Japanese: 124 Million
- German: 121 Million
English Speaking Countries
Interesting Facts about the English Language

• English is spoken as a first language by 427 million
• English is spoken as a second language by another 350 million
• English is the most widely taught language in over 100 countries
• In 70 countries English has official status:
  – more than any other language
Fig. 5-1-1: A large proportion of the world’s internet users and hosts are in the developed countries of North America and western Europe.
Fig 5-1-1a: The large majority of internet hosts in 1999 used English, Chinese, Japanese, or European languages.
Key Points

• Language is a fundamental element of cultural identity.

• Languages diverge via migration and isolation.

• Small languages are disappearing as a result of globalization.

• Languages that share a common ancestor belong to the same family.

• Language diversity is a source of political conflict in the world.

McDonald’s, Israel