Chapter 5

Languages

KEY ISSUE 1

Where Are Languages Distributed?

This chapter discusses language which, together with religion and ethnicity, is one of the three traits that best distinguishes cultural values. The chapter looks at where languages are spoken and why they have distinctive distributions. As well as addressing the globalization of English, the chapter also examines attempts to preserve local languages. The global distribution of languages results from a combination of interaction and isolation.

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.

The English language became a distinct language in England as a result of westward Celtic migration, as well as the Germanic and Norman invasions. Modern English evolved mainly from the languages spoken by the German conquerors of Britain, the Angles, Saxons, and the Jutes (the word England comes from the Angles ‘land’), and changed again with the arrival of the Normans in 1066. Modern Eng-
lish emerged from a mingling of French and Germanic. English diffused around the world during Britain’s era of colonialism.

Different dialects of a language develop through isolation from other speakers of the same language as well as by interaction with other speakers of that language. English has many dialects but British Received Pronunciation (BRP), the dialect associated with upper-class Britons, is recognized as the standard language which is the most accepted dialect for mass communication. In France the Parisian dialect became the standard form of French.

There are major dialect differences in English within Britain and the United States. Words that are associated with a dialect, such as the word that is used by children in Britain in a game of tag to signal that they have touched another participant, are spoken in a specific geographic region and thus have boundaries. This word-usage boundary is known as an isogloss.

**Key Issues Revisited**

5.1. Where are languages distributed?

- English can be traced to the invasions of England by Germanic tribes in the Dark Ages
- English diffused around the world from England as a result of colonialism
- Americans and English speak different dialects of English

**Review Questions**

5.1.1. The official language of China and Taiwan is

A. Han Chinese.
B. Tibetan Chinese.
C. Mandarin Chinese.
D. Manchurian Chinese.
E. English.

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5.1.2. About 95% of the people in sub-Saharan Africa speak languages from which family?

A. Sino-Tibetan
B. Nilo-Saharan
C. Niger-Congo
D. Uralic
E. Indo-European

KEY ISSUE 2

Why Is English Related to Other Languages?

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.


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 (war) or peace (agriculture). The diffusion of Romance languages 2,000 years ago is well documented through the spread of the Roman Empire.

Language is one of the oldest and most geographically diverse cultural traits on Earth. It is a system of communication through speech. Many languages have a literary tradition, although some have only an oral tradition.

All languages belong to a language family which is a collection of many languages that were
originally related through a common ancestor. The **Indo-European family** is the world’s most spoken language family. A **language branch** is a collection of languages related through a common ancestor within a language family, although not as old. Germanic is one of the branches of the Indo-European language family. A **language group** is a set of languages within a branch that share a relatively recent common origin. English is a language in the West Germanic group of the Germanic group of the Indo-European family. **Dialects** are regionally distinct versions of a single language that are distinguished by vocabulary, spelling, and pronunciation. **Ebonics** is an African-American dialect in the United States. British and American English are examples of different dialects of English. Countries designate at least one language as their **official language**, which is used for all government business. A **monolingual state** will only have one official language that is used in this capacity. **Multilingual states**, such as Kenya (Swahili and English) and Switzerland (German, French, Italian and Romansh), have more than one official language. Belgium is a multilingual state because French and Flemish (a dialect of the Germanic language of Dutch) are both official languages, but the country has had more difficulty reconciling the interests of the different language speakers. **English** is known as a **lingua franca** because it is a language of international communication.

Languages of the Indo-European family are spoken on all continents but are dominant in Europe and the Americas. There are eight branches of the Indo-European family. Large numbers of people speak a language of one of the following four branches: Indo-Iranian, Romance, Germanic, and Balto-Slavic.

German and English are both part of the Germanic branch of Indo-European. The branch of Indo-European with the most speakers is Indo-Iranian, which is divided into an eastern group (Indic), and a western group (Iranian). Hindi is the most spoken of the eastern group and Pakistan’s principal language, Urdu, is essentially the same but written in the Arabic alphabet. The major Iranian group languages include Persian, Pashto, and Kurdish.

The Balto-Slavic languages are largely those of Eastern Europe, especially Russian. The Romance languages, including Spanish, Portuguese, French, Italian, and Romanian, all developed from the Latin language of the Romans. Provincial people in the Roman Empire spoke a common form of Latin.
known as Vulgar Latin. Latin diffused with the expansion of the Roman republic and empire, and much later, during the era of Spanish and Portuguese imperialism in the Americas.

There are two theories about the origin and diffusion of Indo-European. The Nomadic Warrior Thesis or theory of Kurgan origin states that the first Indo-European speakers were Kurgans who lived near present-day Russia and Kazakhstan. They migrated westward into Europe, southward to Iran and South Asia, and eastward into Siberia, largely by military conquest. The theory of Anatolian origin states that the first speakers of Proto-Indo-European lived in eastern Anatolia two thousand years before the Kurgans, and that they migrated west into Europe and east into Asia with their agricultural practices, rather than by military conquest. Regardless of how Indo-European diffused, communication was poor and the result was isolation. Ultimately distinct languages evolved from distinct groups.

Key Issues Revisited

5.2. Why is English related to other languages?

- English is part of the Germanic branch of the Indo-European language family
- Nearly one-half of the worlds speak a language in the Indo-European family
- Indo-European languages developed from a single ancestor through migration, followed by isolation of one group from others

Review Questions

5.2.1. Which language is derived from Old Norse?

A. Swedish
B. Danish
C. Norwegian
D. Icelandic
E. All of these
5.2.2. Devanagari is the script in which what language is written?

A. Tamil
B. Sindhi
C. Hindi
D. Oryia
E. Marathi

**KEY ISSUE 3**

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

**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. 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.

The second largest language family is **Sino-Tibetan**, spoken by nearly twenty percent of the world’s population. It includes most of Southeast Asia and China, which is the world’s most populous state. The languages of China, of which Mandarin is the most important and widely spoken, generally belong to the Sinitic branch of the Sino-Tibetan family. Unlike Indo-European languages, Chinese languages are based on one-syllable words and have thousands of characters. Most of these characters are **logograms**, which represent ideas or concepts rather than specific pronunciations. Other East and Southeast Asian language families include Japanese, Korean, Austro-Asiatic, and Austronesian. TaiKadai, once classified as a branch of the Sino-Tibetan family, is also an Asian language family, spoken in Thailand.
and neighboring portions of China. The major language families of the Middle East and Central Asia include Afro-Asiatic, Altaic, and Uralic (which was once classified with Altaic). More than 95% of the people in sub-Saharan Africa speak languages of the Niger-Congo, especially Swahili. Other African language families include Nilo-Saharan and Khoisan.

**Key Issues Revisited**

5.3. Why do individual languages vary among places?

- Nearly one-fourth of the world speaks a language in the Sino-Tibetan family
- A half-dozen other language families encompass another one-fourth of the world
- Each language has a distinctive distribution, which is a result of a combination of migration and isolation

**Review Questions**

5.3.1. An isogloss is used by geographers to

A. determine climate zones.
B. determine global warming.
C. determine word choices.
D. identify polar melting rates.
E. identify isolated groups.

5.3.2. Why is the English spoken in American so different than that spoken in Britain?

A. The colonists rebelled and refused to speak the same way.
B. People in America did not know how to spell so changes happened.
C. The Native Indians changed the words.
D. Isolation from Britain created the change.
E. George Washington passed an executive order to create the changes.
KEY ISSUE 4

Why Do People Preserve Local Languages?

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 were widely spoken in the British Isles before the Germanic invasions. These 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, especially in the Southwest.

Thousands of languages are extinct languages, once in existence but no longer in use today. The European language of Gothic is such an example. Languages can become extinct through the loss of an entire people or through linguistic evolution over time. However the pressures of economic and social acculturation, the assimilation of cultural traits such as language by one group under the influence of another, are responsible for most of today’s losses. Many African languages have become extinct because of the linguistic effects of European colonialism. Globalization today threatens many languages in the world.
Hebrew is a rare example of an extinct language that has been revived. The revival of this language is associated with the Zionist movement and the creation of the state of Israel in 1948. It is one symbol of Israeli nationalism.

**Endangered languages**, such as those belonging to the Celtic branch of Indo-European, are experiencing resurgence today. The revival of Irish Gaelic, Scottish Gaelic, and Brythonic (Welsh) is linked to nationalistic movements in these parts of the British Isles. Other Celtic languages include Cornish and Breton.

When two groups of people with different languages meet, a new language with some characteristics of each may result so that they can communicate. This is called a **pidgin language**. Where the linguistic traditions of indigenous peoples and colonizers have blended, a **Creole language** will result. This has occurred in Louisiana and is one symbol of the distinctive culture that has developed in this region of the United States.

Languages develop and change as a result of diffusion and interaction among people. The widespread use of English in the French language is called **Francot»ais**, and the diffusion of English into the Spanish language is called **Spanglish**. **Denglish** is a combination of German and English. However some languages lack interaction with speakers of other languages. An **isolated language**, such as Basque in the Pyrenees Mountains, is one that is unrelated to any other language family.

**Key Issues Revisited**

5.4. Why do people preserve local languages?

- English has become the most important language for international communication
- As a result of the global dominance of a lingua franca such as English, less widely used languages can become endangered or extinct
- Some local languages are being preserved and revived because they are an important element of cultural identity
AP Human Geography
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Languages—Chapter 5
5.1-5.4 Review Questions
(Use of the textbook may be necessary to answer some questions)

1. What are the THREE traits that best distinguish cultural values?
   a. 
   b. 
   c. 

2. The global distribution of languages results from a combination of _________ & _________.

3. The English language became a distinct language in England as a result of _________ migration as well as the _________ and _________ invasions.

4. List THREE Germanic conquerors of Britain:

5. When did the Normans invade England and what language did they bring with them?

6. When did English diffuse around the world?

7. How do different dialects of a language develop? (2 ways)
   a. 
   b. 

8. Which dialect of English is recognized as the standard language which is the most accepted dialect for mass communication?

9. Define: **isogloss** —

10. Review Question 5.1.1. The official language of China and Taiwan is
    A. Han Chinese
    B. Tibetan Chinese
    C. Mandarin Chinese
    D. Manchurian Chinese
    E. English
11. Review Question 5.1.2. About 95% of the people in sub-Saharan Africa speak languages from which family?
   A. Sino-Tibetan
   B. Nilo-Saharan
   C. Niger-Congo
   D. Uralic
   E. Indo-European

12. Define: **Language** –

13. Define: **Literary Tradition** –

14. What is a **language family**?

15. What is the world’s most spoken language family?

16. What is a **language branch**?

17. What example is given as a branch of the Indo-European language family?

18. What is a **language group**?

19. What example is given as a language in the West Germanic group of the Germanic group of the Indo-European family?

20. Define: **Dialects** –

21. What is an example of a dialect in the United States?

22. What is an official language used for?

23. What is a monolingual state?

24. What is a multilingual state?

25. List the three examples in the reading of states which are multilingual and list their languages.
   a. 
   b. 
   c.
26. Define: **Lingua Franca** –

27. What are the **FOUR** largest branches of the Indo-European family?

28. What **TWO** groups is Indo-Iranian split into? What are the major group languages for each?
   
   a.
   
   b.

29. Russian is a _______________ language.

30. What are the **FOUR** primary Romance languages? Where did they derive from?

31. Define: **Vulgar Latin** –

32. Explain the **TWO** theories about the origin and diffusion of Indo-European: (Anatolian origin is the same as the sedentary farmer theory)
   
   a.
   
   b.

33. Review Question 5.2.1. Which language is derived from Old Norse
   
   A. Swedish
   
   B. Danish
   
   C. Norwegian
   
   D. Icelandic
   
   E. All of these

34. Review Question 5.2.2. Devanagari is the script in which what language is written?
   
   A. Tamil
   
   B. Sindhi
   
   C. Hindi
   
   D. Oryia
   
   E. Marathi

35. Which family is the second largest and what areas/states does it include?
36. Define: **Logograms** –

37. What FOUR other languages are included in the East and SE families?

38. List the THREE major language families of the Middle East and Central Asia:

39. List THREE major language families of sub-Saharan Africa:

40. Review Question 5.3.1. An isogloss is used by geographers to
   A. determine climate zones
   B. determine global warming
   C. determine word choices
   D. identify polar melting rates
   E. identify isolated groups

41. Review Question 5.3.2. Why is English spoken in America so different than that spoken in Britain?
   A. The colonists rebelled and refused to speak the same way
   B. People in America did not know how to spell so changes happened
   C. The Native Indians changed the words
   D. Isolation from Britain created the change
   E. George Washington passed an executive order to create the changes

42. What are extinct languages?

43. What are TWO ways languages can become extinct?

44. Define: **Acculturation** –

45. Many African languages have become extinct because of the linguistic effects of

46. What is a rare example of an extinct language that has been revived?

47. What THREE Celtic branch endangered languages are experiencing a resurgence today?

48. Define: **Pidgin Language** –

49. Define: **Creole Language** –
50. Languages develop and change as a result of ________________ and ________________ among people.

51. What is an isolated language? Provide an example of an isolated language.

52. Explain the following:
   Franglais —
   Spanglish —
   Denglish —

53. Review Question 5.4.1. An example of a multilingual state would be
   A. Belgium
   B. Costa Rica
   C. Portugal
   D. Mexico
   E. Ireland

54. Review Question 5.4.2. An example of an isolated language is
   A. English
   B. Hebrew
   C. Gaelic
   D. Basque
   E. Gothic