Language

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

KEY ISSUES

1 Where Are English-Language Speakers Distributed?
2 Why Is English Related to Other Languages?
3 Where Are Other Language Families Distributed?
4 Why Do People Preserve Local Languages?
States. For example, two-thirds of 10-year-olds in the United Kingdom are learning a foreign language in school.

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 (SIL International, 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. 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 153 languages are spoken by at least 3 million people, including the 11 largest ones. The remaining 6,756 languages are spoken by fewer than 3 million people. 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.
CASE STUDY / French and Spanish in the United States and Canada

The Tremblay family lives in a suburb of Montréal, Québec. The parents and two young children speak French at home, work, school, and shops. The Lopez family—also two parents and two children—lives in San Antonio, Texas, and speaks Spanish in their household.

The Tremblay and Lopez families share a common condition: They live in countries with an English-speaking majority, but English is not their native language. The French-speaking inhabitants of Canada and the Spanish-speaking residents of the United States continue to speak their languages, although English dominates the political, economic, and cultural life of their countries.

The two families use languages other than English because they believe that language is important in retaining and enhancing their cultural heritage. At the same time, both families recognize that knowledge of English is essential for career advancement and economic success.

French is one of Canada’s two official languages, along with English. French speakers comprise one-fourth of the country population. Most French-speaking Canadians are clustered in Québec, where they comprise more than three-fourths of the province’s speakers. Colonized by the French in the seventeenth century, Québec was captured by the British in 1763 and in 1867 became one of the provinces in the Confederation of Canada.

In the United States, 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 newspaper 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 34 million Spanish-speaking people live.

The two introductory case study examples—French-speaking residents of Canada and Spanish-speaking residents of the United States—illustrate the “where” and “why” questions that concern geographers who study languages. Where are different languages spoken? English, French, Spanish, and other languages are spoken in distinct locations around the world, and geographers can document the distribution of this important element of cultural identity.

Why in some cases are two different languages spoken in two locations, whereas in other cases the same language is spoken in two locations? The geography of language displays especially clearly this book’s overall theme of the interaction of forces of globalization and local diversity.

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

Language is 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 the three traits that best 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.

Consistent with this book’s where and why approach, this chapter will look at where different languages are used and how these languages can be logically grouped in space. The second and third key issues examine why languages have distinctive distributions. The study of language follows logically from migration, because the contemporary distribution of languages around the world results largely from past migrations of peoples.

Language is like luggage: People carry it with them wherever they move from place to place. They incorporate new words into their own language when they reach new places, and the words they have brought with them in the existing language become part of 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 the 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 culture identity and a major feature of a region’s uniqueness. Language is a 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.

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The global distribution of languages results from a combination of two geographic processes—interaction and isolation. 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 language spoken by each 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 to explain regions of individual languages and entire language families. The difference is that individual languages emerged in the recent past as a result of historically documented events, whereas language families emerged several thousand years before recorded history.

### KEY ISSUE 1

Where Are English-Language Speakers Distributed?

- Origin and Diffusion of English
- Dialects of English

The location of English-language speakers serves as a case study for understanding the process by which any language is distributed around the world. A language originates at a particular place and diffuses to other locations through the migration of its speakers.

### Origin and Diffusion of English

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

### English Colonies

The contemporary distribution of English speakers around the world exists because the people of England migrated with their language when they established colonies during the past four centuries. Compare Figure 5-2 with Figure 8-8, which shows the location of former British colonies. English is an official language in most of the former British colonies.

English first diffused west from England to North America in the seventeenth century. The first 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, even after the United States and Canada became independent countries.

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 of English in England

The global distribution of English may be a function primarily of migration from England since the seventeenth century but that does not explain how English came to be the principal language of the British Isles in the first place, or why English is classified as a Germanic language.

The British Isles had been inhabited for thousands of years, but we know nothing of their early languages until tribes called the Celts arrived aroun
2000 B.C., speaking languages we call Celtic. Then, 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 invading tribes were 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 5-3). 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. Modern English has evolved primarily from the language spoken by the Angles, Jutes, and Saxons. The name England comes from Angles’ land. In Old English, Angles was spelled Engles, and the Angles’ language was known as anglic. 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 northeast coast of England in the ninth century. Although defeated in their effort to conquer the islands, many Vikings remained in the country to enrich the language with new words.

**NORMAN INVASION.** English is a good bit 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.
every word has a unique isogloss, boundary lines of different words coalesce in some locations to form regions.

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.

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. One particular dialect of English, the one associated with upper-class Britons living in the London area, is recognized in much of the English-speaking world as the standard form of British speech. This speech, known as British Received Pronunciation (BRP), is well known because it is commonly used by politicians, broadcasters, and actors. Why don't Americans or, for that matter, other British people speak that way?

**Dialects in England**

"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* (Figure 5-1). He was referring to the Cockney-speaking Eliza Doolittle, who pronounced rain like "rine" and dropped the /n/ 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 south and west. 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 5-5, left).

French replaced English as the language of the government and aristocracy following the Norman invasion of 1066. After several hundred years of living in isolation in rural settlements under the control of a French-speaking government, five major regional dialects had emerged—Northern, East
Midland, West Midland, Southwestern, and Southeastern or Kentish (Figure 5-5, right).

From a collection of local dialects, one often emerges as the standard language for writing and speech. In the case of England, it 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 BRP, strong regional differences persist in English dialects spoken in the United Kingdom, especially in rural areas. They can be grouped into three main ones—Northern, Midland, and Southern. For example,

- Southerners pronounce words like grass and path with an /æ/ 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.

The main dialects can be subdivided. For example, distinctive southwestern and southeastern accents occur within the Southern dialect.

- Southwesterners pronounce thatch and thing with the /æ/ sound of thin. Fresh and eggs have an /æ/ sound.
- Southeasterners pronounce the /æ/ in apple and cat like the short /æ/ in bet.

Local dialects can be further distinguished. Some words have distinctive pronunciations and meanings in each country of the United Kingdom.

**Differences Between British and American English**

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 the language used in England at the time and established seventeenth-century English as the dominant form of European speech in colonial America.

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 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 that of England in three significant ways:

- **Vocabulary.** The vocabulary is different largely because settlers in America encountered many new objects and experiences (Figure 5-6). 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.

- **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 like 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.

- 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 /ʌt/ in father rather than the /æt/ in man. The British also eliminate the r sound from pronunciation except before vowels. Thus lord in British pronunciation sounds like lard.

Americans pronounce unaccented syllables with more clarity. The words secretary and necessary have four syllables in American English but only three in British (secret'ry and neces'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.

**FIGURE 5-6** Differences between British and American. In Britain, a circus is a place where several roads come together. The station sign is over an entrance to what Americans call the "subway" and Britons the "underground" or the "tube."
Dialects in the United States

Major differences in U.S. dialects originated because of differences in dialects among the original settlers (Figure 5-7). 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 areas:

- **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 southeast England, although they represented a diversity of social-class backgrounds, including deported prisoners, indentured servants, and political and religious refugees.
- **Middle Atlantic.** 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. Current distinctions result from the establishment of independent and isolated colonies in the seventeenth century. The dialect spoken in the Middle Atlantic colonies differs 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, primarily on the East Coast, although some distinctions can be found elsewhere in the country. Two important isoglosses separate the eastern United States into three major dialect regions, known as Northern, Midlands, and Southern (Figure 5-7). Some words are commonly used within one of the three major dialect areas but rarely in the other two. In most instances, these words relate to rural life, food, and objects from daily activities. Language differences tend to be greater in rural areas than in cities, because farmers are relatively isolated from interaction with people from other dialect regions.

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 (Figure 5-8). 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.

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

- **The Southern dialect includes making such words as half and nine into two syllables ("ha-lf" and "mi-nine"), pronouncing poor as "poor," and pronouncing Tuesday and due with a /ɔː/ sound ("Tyuesday" and "dyu-e").**
- **The New England dialect is well known for dropping the /r/ sound, so that heart and dark are pronounced "hot" and "lack." Also, ear and care are pronounced with /ɑː/ substituted for the /r/ endings. This characteristic dropping of the /r/ sound is shared with speakers from the south of England.**

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**FIGURE 5-7** Dialects in 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 to the map of source areas of U.S. house types (Figure 4-12). As Americans migrated west they took with them distinctive house types as well as distinctive dialects.
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, New England's main port city, maintained especially close ties to the important ports of southern England, such as London, Plymouth, and Bristol. Compared to other colonists, New Englanders received more exposure to changes in pronunciation that occurred in Britain during the eighteenth century.

The New England and southern accents sound unusual to the majority of Americans because the standard pronunciation throughout the American West comes from the Middle Atlantic states rather than the New England and Southern regions. This pattern occurred because most western settlers came from the Middle Atlantic states.

The diffusion of particular English dialects into the middle and western parts of the United States is a result of the westward movement of colonists from the three dialect regions of the East. The area of the Midwest south of the Ohio River was settled first by colonists from Virginia and the other southern areas. The Middle Atlantic colonies sent most of the early settlers north of the Ohio River, although some New Englanders moved to the Great Lakes area. The pattern by which dialects diffused westward resembles the diffusion of East Coast house types discussed in Chapter 4 (compare Figure 5-7 with Figure 4-12).

As more of the West was opened to settlement during the nineteenth century, people migrated from all parts of the East Coast. The California gold rush attracted people from throughout the East, many of whom subsequently moved to other parts of the West. The mobility of Americans has been a major reason for the relatively uniform language that exists throughout much of the West.

KEY ISSUE 2
Why Is English Related to Other Languages?

Indo-European Branches

English is part of the Indo-European language family. A language family is a collection of languages related through a common ancestral language that existed long before recorded history. Indo-European is the world's most extensively spoken language family by a wide margin.

Indo-European Branches

Within a language family, a language branch is a collection of languages related through a common ancestral language 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.

Indo-European is divided into eight branches (Figure 5-9). Four of the branches—Indo-Iranian, Romance, Germanic, and Balto-Slavic—are spoken by large numbers of people. Indo-Iranian languages are clustered in South Asia, Romance languages in southwestern Europe and Latin America, Germanic languages in northwestern Europe and North America, and Balto-Slavic languages in Eastern Europe. The four less extensively used Indo-European language branches are Albanian, Armenian, Greek, and Celtic.
Germanic Branch of Indo-European

German may seem a difficult language for many English speakers to learn, but the two languages are actually closely related. Both belong to the Germanic language branch of Indo-European. English is part of the Germanic branch of the Indo-European family due to the language spoken by the Germanic tribes that invaded England 1,500 years ago.

A **language group** is 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. West Germanic is the group within the Germanic branch of Indo-European to which English belongs. Although they sound very different, English and German are both languages in the West Germanic group because they are structurally similar and have many words in common (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 German.

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 of Indo-European

The branch of the Indo-European language family with the most speakers is Indo-Iranian. This branch includes more than 100 individual languages. The branch is divided into an eastern group (Indic) and a western group (Iranian).
INDIC (EASTERN) GROUP OF INDO-IRANIAN LANGUAGE BRANCH. The most widely used languages in India, as well as in the neighboring countries of Pakistan and Bangladesh, belong to the Indic-European language family and, more specifically, to the Indic group of the Indo-Iranian branch of Indo-European.

One of the main elements of cultural diversity among the 1 billion plus residents of India is language (Figure 5-11). Ethnolinguists identify 438 languages currently spoken in India, including 29 by at least one million people.

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 an official language. Speakers of different Indian languages who wish to communicate with each other sometimes are forced to turn to 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), four Dravidian (Kannada, Malayalam, Tamil, and Telugu), two Sino-Tibetan (Bodo and Manipuri), and one 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 सूर्य pronounced "surya." Local differences arose in the spoken forms of Hindi but not in the written form because until recently few speakers of that language could read or write it.

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 OF INDO-IRANIAN LANGUAGE BRANCH. Indo-Iranian languages are also spoken in Iran and neighboring countries in southwestern 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 of Indo-European**

The other Indo-European language branch with large numbers of speakers is Balto-Slavic. 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 7–30 shows the widespread area populated with Balto-Slavic speakers.

**EAST SLAVIC AND BALTIC GROUPS OF THE BALTO-SLAVIC LANGUAGE BRANCH.** The most widely used Slavic languages are the eastern ones, primarily Russian, which is spoken by more than 80 percent of Russian people. 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 other than Russian, although Russian remains the language for communications among officials in the countries that were formerly part of the Soviet Union.

After Russian, Ukrainian and Belarusian are the two most important East Slavic languages and are the official languages in Ukraine and Belarus. **Ukraine** is a Slavic word meaning “border,” and **Belarus** is translated as “white.”

**WEST AND SOUTH SLAVIC GROUPS OF THE BALTO-SLAVIC LANGUAGE BRANCH.** 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 1993, four years after the fall of communism, Slovakia’s from the Czech Republic. Slovaks rekindled their long-simmered resentment of perceived dominance of the national culture by the Czech ethnic group.

The most important South Slavic language is the one spoken in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Montenegro, and Serbia. 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, Yugoslavia is writеn ЈУГОСЛАВИЈА).

When Bosnia and 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 a time 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, which demonstrate that each language is unique, even though experts consider them one.

Differences have crept into the language of the South Slavs. Bosnian Muslims have introduced Arabic words used in their religion, and Croats have replaced words regarded as havir Serbian origin with words considered to be purely Croati. For example, the Serbo-Croatian word for martyr or heror, *junak*—has been changed to *herof* by Croats and *shahid* by Bosnian Muslims. In the future, after a generation of isolation and hostility among Bosnians, Croats, and Serbs, the language spoken by the three may be sufficiently different to justify a 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 with much difficulty. However, because language is a major component in people’s cultural identity, relatively small differences among Slavic as well as other languages are being preserved and even accentuated in recent independence movements.

**Romance Branch of Indo-European**

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 5-12). Spanish and French are two of the six official languages of the United Nations.

The European regions in which these four languages 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 strong intervening obstacles, creating barriers to communication between people living on opposite sides.

The fifth most important Romance language, Romanian, is the principal language of Romania and Moldova. It is separa
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. 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-Romance.

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.

**ORIGIN AND DIFFUSION OF ROMANCE LANGUAGE**

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 importance of the city of Rome 2,000 years ago brought 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 6-9). The conquering Roman armies occupied the provinces of the vast empire, they brought the Latin language with them. In process, the languages spoken by the natives of the provin 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, over a period of several hundred years, so the Latin used in each province was based on that spoken by the Roman army; 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 a 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 soldiers stationed throughout the empire. For example,
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. 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.

ROMANCE LANGUAGE 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, many of which are still spoken today. The creation of standard national languages, such as French and Spanish, was relatively recent.

The dialect of the Île-de-France region, known as Francien, became the standard form of French because the region included Paris, which became the capital and largest city of the country. 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 longtime dominance over French political, economic, and social life.

The most important surviving dialect difference within France is between the north and the south (refer to Figure 5-11). The northern dialect is known as langue d’oil and the southern as langue d’oc. It is worth exploring these names, for they provide insight into how languages evolve.

These terms 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 oc, 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.

A province where the southern dialect is spoken in southwestern France is known as Languedoc. The southern French dialect is now sometimes called Occitan, derived from the French region of Aquitaine, which in French has a similar pronunciation to Occitan. About 2 million people in southern France speak one of a number of Occitan dialects, including Auvergnat, Gascon, and Provençal.

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 Léon merged with the Kingdom of Aragón. At that time, Castilian became the official language for the entire country. Regional dialects, such as Aragón, Navarre, Léon, Asturias, and Cantabria, 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.

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 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 is the result of 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 most of the accent marks—such as tildes (São Paulo), cedillas (Alcobacca), circumflexes (Estáncio), and hyphens—and the agreement recognizes as standard thousands of words that Brazilians have added to the language.

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.
DISTINGUISHING BETWEEN DIALECTS AND LANGUAGES. Difficulties arise in determining whether two languages are distinct or whether they are merely two dialects of the same language:

- Galician, spoken in northwestern Spain and northeastern Portugal, is as distinct from Portuguese as, say, Catalan is from Spanish. However, Catalan is generally classified as a distinct language, and Galician is classified as a dialect of Portuguese.
- Moldovan is the official language of Moldova yet is generally classified as a dialect of Romanian.
- Flemish, the official language of northern Belgium, is generally considered a dialect of Dutch.

Several languages of Italy are viewed as different enough to merit consideration as languages distinct from Italian according to Ethnologue. In southern Italy, the most widespread of those possible distinct languages are Napoletano-Caleprie, spoken by 7 million people, and Sicilian, spoken by 5 million. In the north, the most widespread are Lombard, spoken by 9 million people; Piemontese, spoken by 3 million; and Emilia-Romagnolo, Liguria, and Venetian, spoken by 2 million each. Distinguishing individual languages from dialects is difficult, because many speakers choose to regard their languages as distinct.

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, Papiamento (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 5-13). 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 their former language. The word creole derives from a word in several Romance languages for a slave who is born in the master's house.

Origin and Diffusion of Indo-European

If Germanic, Romance, 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 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, because one theory argues that language diffused primarily through warfare and conquest, and the other 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 Thesis.** 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 to domesticate horses and cattle, they migrated in search of grasslands for their animals. This took them westward through Europe, eastward to Siberia, and south eastward 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 5-14).

- **Sedentary Farmer Thesis.** 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 5-15). 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 (Rumania) 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 Dniestr River near Ukraine (the origin of the Slavic language branch). From the Dniestr River, speakers migrated eastward to the Dnieper 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 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.

KEY ISSUE 3
Where Are Other Language Families Distributed?

- Classification of Languages
- Distribution of Language Families

This section describes where different languages are found around the world. 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.

Classification of Languages

Figure 5-16 shows the world's language families:

- A language in the Indo-European family, such as English, is spoken by 46 percent of the world's people.
- A language in the Sino-Tibetan family, such as Mandarin, is spoken by 21 percent of the world, mostly in China.
- A language in the Afro-Asiatic family, including Arabic, is spoken by 6 percent, mostly in the Middle East.
- A language in the Austronesian family is spoken by 6 percent, mostly in Southeast Asia.
- A language in the Niger-Congo family is spoken by 6 percent, mostly in Africa.
- A language in the Dravidian family is spoken by 4 percent, mostly in India.
- A language in the Altaic family is spoken by 2 percent, mostly in Asia.
- A language in the Austro-Asiatic family is spoken by 2 percent, mostly in Southeast Asia.
- Japanese, a separate language family, is spoken by 2 percent.
- The remaining 5 percent of the world's people speak a language belonging to one of 100 smaller families.

Figure 5-17 attempts to depict differences among language families, branches, and groups. Language families form the trunks of the trees, whereas individual languages are displayed as leaves. The larger the trunks and leaves are, the greater the number of speakers of those families and languages. Some trunks divide into several branches, which logically represent language branches. The branches representing Germanic, Balto-Slavic, and Indo-Iranian in Figure 5-17 divide a second time into language groups.

Figure 5-17 displays each language family as a separate tree at ground level because differences among families predate recorded history. Linguists speculate that language families were joined together as a half-dozen superfamilies tens of thousands of years ago. Superfamilies are shown as roots below the surface because their existence is highly controversial and speculative.

Distribution of Language Families

Nearly one-half the people in the world speak an Indo-European language. The second-largest family is Sino-Tibetan, spoken by one-fifth of the world. Another half-dozen families account for most of the remainder.

Sino-Tibetan Family

The Sino-Tibetan family encompasses languages spoken in the People's Republic of China—the world's most populous state at more than 1 billion—as well as 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 important is Mandarin (or, as the Chinese call it, pu tong hua—"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, as well as one of the six official languages of the United Nations. Other Sinitic branch languages are spoken by tens of millions of people in China, mostly in the southern and eastern parts of the country—Wu, Yue (also known as Cantonese), Min, Jinju, 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 (Figure 5-18). They are based on 420 one-syllable words. This number far exceeds the possible one-syllable sounds that humans can make, so Chinese languages use each sound to denote more than one thing. The sound shi, for example, may mean "lion," "corps," "house," "poetry," "ten," "spear," or "die." The sound juan has more than 20 meanings, including "to see." The listener must infer the meaning from the context in the sentence and the intonation the speaker uses. In addition, two one-syllable words can be combined into two syllables, forming a new word. For example, the two-syllable word "Shanghai" is a
FIGURE 5-16 Language families. Most languages can be classified into one of a handful of language families. The pie chart shows the percentage of people who speak a language from each major family. Languages that have more than 50 million speakers are identified on the map.

**Language Families**

[Percentage of people speaking each]

- Indo-European 45.7
- Sino-Tibetan 21.1
- Afro-Asiatic 6.0
- Austro-Asiatic 1.7
- Dravidian 0.9
- Altaic 2.3
- Japanese 2.1
- Niger-Congo 6.4
- Others 5.0

**Languages with more than 100 million speakers**
- French
- Spanish

**Other East and Southeast Asian Language Families**

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 5-16, you can see a physical reason for their independent development: These language families are clustered either on islands or peninsulas.

- **Austronesian.** Spoken by about 6 percent of the world's people, speakers of Austronesian languages 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; 722 actively used languages are identified by Ethnologue. 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.

Language maps show a striking oddity: The people of Madagascar, the large island off the east coast of Africa, speak Malagasy, which belongs to the Austronesian family, even though the island is 3,000 kilometers (1,900 miles) distant from any other Austronesian-speaking country. This is strong evidence of migration to Madagascar from present-day Indonesia. Malayo-Polynesian people apparently sailed in small boats across the Indian Ocean to reach Madagascar approximately 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 seventh century by Roman Catholic missionaries.

- **Tai Kadai.** 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 lead some linguistic scholars to speculate that people speaking these languages may have migrated from the Philippines.

- **Japanese.** Written in part with Chinese ideograms, Japanese also uses two systems of phonetic symbols, like
Western languages, used either in place of the ideograms 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.** Usually classified as a separate language family, Korean may be related to the Altaic languages of Central Asia or to Japanese. Unlike Sino-Tibetan languages and Japanese, Korean is written not with ideograms but in a system known as hankul (also called hangul and 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.

**Languages of the Middle East and Central Asia**

Major language families in the Middle East and Central Asia include Afro-Asiatic and Altaic. Uralic languages were once classified with Altaic.

- **Afro-Asiatic.** Arabic is the major language of this family, an official language in two dozen countries of the Middle East, and one of six official languages of the United Nations. In addition to the 230-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. This family also includes Hebrew, the language of the Judaeo-Christian Bible.

- **Altaic.** These 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.

  Turkish was once written with Arabic letters. But in 1928 the Turkish government, led by Kemal Ataturk, ordered that the language be written with the Roman alphabet instead. Ataturk believed that switching to Roman letters would help modernize the economy and culture of Turkey through increased communications with European countries.

  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. One element of Soviet policy was to force everyone to write with the Russian Cyrillic alphabet, even though some had traditionally employed Arabic letters. 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. People in these countries are no longer forced to learn Russian and write with Cyrillic letters.

**FIGURE 5.17** Language family tree. Language families are divided into branches and groups. Shown here are language families and individual languages that have more than 5 million speakers. Numbers on the tree are in millions of speakers. Below ground level, the language trees "roots" are shown. However, the theory that several language families 'had common origins tens of thousands of years ago is a highly controversial speculation advocated by some linguists and rejected by others.
- **Uralic.** Every European country is dominated by Indo-European speakers, except for three—Estonia, Finland, and Hungary (refer to Figure 5-9). 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.
From basic characters:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Character</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>☀</td>
<td>Sun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>🧧</td>
<td>Person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>🌓</td>
<td>White, clear (Sun peeping out)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>🤖</td>
<td>Big (person with arms extended)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>🙇</td>
<td>Heaven (above the biggest person)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>🤖</td>
<td>White person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☀</td>
<td>Daytime (clear and heaven)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☀</td>
<td>Daytime (clear and Sun)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

FIGURE 5-18 Chinese language ideograms. The Chinese languages are written with ideograms, most of which represent ideas or concepts rather than sounds.

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.

Figure 5-19 shows the broad view of African language families, and Figure 5-20 hints at the complex pattern of multiple tongues of Nigeria. This 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.

In northern Africa the language pattern is relatively clear, because Arabic, an Afro-Asiatic language, dominates, although in a variety of dialects. In sub-Saharan Africa, however, languages grow far more complex.

- Niger-Congo. More than 95 percent of the people in sub-Saharan Africa speak languages of the Niger-Congo family. 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 this family are spoken by a few million people in north-central Africa, immediately north of the Niger-Congo language region. Divisions within the Nilo-Saharan family exemplify the problem of classifying African languages. Despite fewer 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.

KEY ISSUE 4
Why Do People Preserve Local Languages?

- Preserving Language Diversity
- Global Dominance of English

The distribution of a language is a measure of the fate of an ethnic group. English has diffused around the world from a small island in northwestern Europe because of the cultural 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.

Preserving Language Diversity

Thousands of languages are extinct languages once in use—even in the recent past—but no longer spoken or read in daily activities by anyone in the world. Ethnologue considers 473 languages as nearly extinct because only a few older speakers are
indigenous languages are disappearing in Peru as speakers switch to Spanish.

Some endangered languages are being preserved. The European Union has 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. 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.

Hebrew: Reviving Extinct Languages

Hebrew is a rare case of an extinct language that has been revived (Figure 5-21). Most of the Jewish Bible (Christian Old Testament) was written in Hebrew (a small part of it was written in another Afro-Asiatic language, Amharic). 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.

Celtic: Preserving Endangered Languages

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 remoter parts of Scotland, Wales, and Ireland and on the Brittany peninsula of France (Figure 5-22).

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 Britanic) fled westward during the Germanic invasions to Wales, southwestward to Cornwall, or southward across the English Channel to the Brittany peninsula of France.

- **Irish Gaelic.** 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.
- **Scottish Gaelic.** In Scotland 59,000, or 1 percent of the people, speak Scottish Gaelic. 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.
- **Brythonic (Welsh).** 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.

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**FIGURE 5-20** Nigeria’s main languages. Africa’s most populous country, Nigeria, displays problems that can arise from the presence of many speakers of many languages. Nigeria has 514 distinct languages, according to Ethnologue, only a few of which have widespread use. National unity is severely strained by the lack of a common language that a large percentage of the population can understand. Groups living in different regions of Nigeria have often battled. To reduce these regional tensions, the government moved the capital from Lagos in the Yoruba-dominated southwest to Abuja in the center of Nigeria. This central and “neutral” location was selected to avoid existing concentrations of the major rival cultural groups. 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 on a local scale. Speakers of one language are unlikely to understand any of the others in the same family, let alone languages from other families.

**FIGURE 5-21** Revival of Hebrew. Hebrew and Arabic are both official languages in Israel. A third-grade class in Jerusalem is taught simultaneously in Arabic (in blue) and Hebrew (in red) by Arab and Jewish teachers.
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 recorded 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!”

Breton. In Brittany—like Cornwall, an isolated peninsula that juts out into the Atlantic Ocean—around 250,000 speak Breton regularly. Breton differs from the other Celtic languages in that it has more French words.

The survival 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. 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 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. Most remaining Celtic speakers also know the language of their English or French conquerors.

Recent efforts have prevented the disappearance of Celtic languages. In Wales, the 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. Knowledge of Welsh is now required for many jobs, especially in public service, media, culture, and sports.

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.

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. EBLULU granted Cornish minority language status in 2002. 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 identity.

Multilingual States

Difficulties can arise at the boundary between two languages. 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 a dialect of the Germanic language, Dutch, called Flemish (Figure 5-23). The language boundary sharply divides the
country into two regions. Antagonism between the Flemings and Walloons is aggravated by economic and political differences. Historically, the Walloons dominated Belgium's economy and politics, and French was the official state language.

Motorists in Belgium clearly see the language boundary on expressways. Heading north, the highway signs suddenly change from French to Flemish at the boundary between Wallonia and Flanders. Brussels, the capital city, is an exception. Although located in Flanders Brussels is officially bilingual and signs are in both French and Flemish. As an example, some stations on the subway map of Brussels are identified by two names—one French and one Flemish (for instance, Porte de Hal and Halle Poort—see Figure 13-28).

In response to pressure from Flemish speakers, Belgium has been divided into two independent 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.

In contrast with Belgium, Switzerland peacefully exists with multiple languages. The key is a 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 5-24, 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 speakers of other languages, have institutionalized cultural diversity by creating a form of government that places considerable power in small communities.

Isolated Languages
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.
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.

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's language requirement is more stringent: Immigrants must already be fluent in English, although free English lessons are available to immigrants. More remote from Asian landmasses, New Zealand has attracted fewer Asian immigrants.

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 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 (Figure 5-25).

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.

In New Zealand, more than 10 percent of the population is Maori, descendants of Polynesian people who migrated there around 1,000 years ago. In contrast with Australia, New Zealand has adopted policies to preserve the Maori language. Most notably, Maori has became 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.

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 5-12, 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.

**AN UNCHANGING LANGUAGE: ICELANDIC.** Icelandic is related to other languages in the North Germanic group of the Germanic branch of the Indo-European family. Icelandic's significance is that over the past thousand years it has changed less than any other 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.

**Global Dominance of English**

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

**English: An Example of a Lingua Franca**

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

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, while 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.

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

Foreign students increasingly seek admission to universities in countries that teach in English rather than in 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 a global economy and participate in a global culture.

**Expansion Diffusion of English**

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, and 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. First, English is changing through diffusion of new vocabulary, spelling, and pronunciation. Second, English words are fusing with other languages. For a language to remain vibrant, new words and usage must always 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.

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 *Ebonics*, a combination of *ebony* and *phonics*. The American Speech, Language and Hearing Association classified Ebonics 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
English was the dominant language of the Internet during the 1990s. In 1998, 71 percent of people online were using English (Figure 5-26). 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 4-19).

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 71 percent in 1998 to 29 percent in 2009. Chinese (Mandarin) language online users increased from 2 percent of the world total in 1998 to 20 percent in 2008. English may be less dominant as the language of the Internet in the twenty-first century. But the United States remains the Internet leader in key respects—and with it the English language.

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.”

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.

U.S.-based companies provide the principal search engines for Internet users everywhere. In 2007, 67 percent of all searches worldwide used Google. Second place was another U.S.-based company, Yahoo, with 13 percent. These companies offer search engines in languages other than English. Google was heavily criticized when its Mandarin-language Google.cn was designed to block websites deemed unsuitable by China’s government.

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.

![Figure 5-26 Languages of online speakers 1996-2008. English remains the most widely used language on the Internet, but Chinese is growing more rapidly.](image)

as “I ain’t going there no more,” and such sentences as “She be at home” instead of “She is usually at home.”

Natives of Appalachian communities, such as in rural West Virginia, also have a distinctive dialect, pronouncing hollow as “holer,” 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.

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

Similarly, 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 Français, a combination of français and anglais, the French words for French and English.

Since 1635, the French Academy has been the supreme arbiter of the French language. In modern times, it has promulgated the use of French terms in France, such as stationnement rather than parking, fin du semaine rather than le 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 français were illegal.

Protection of the French language is even more extreme in Quebec, which is completely surrounded by English-speaking provinces and U.S. states (Figure 5-27). Quebecois are committed to preserving their distinctive French-language culture and to do so, they may secede from Canada.

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. In Miami's large Cuban-American community, Spanglish is sometimes called Cubonics, a combination of Cuban and phonetics.

As with français, 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 (sants) becomes chores, and vacuum cleaner becomes baciuliner. In other cases, awkward Spanish words or phrases are dropped in favor of English words. For example, parquín is used rather than estacionamiento for parking, and talpeir is used instead of escribir a maquina 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, hipiar is a verb derived from the English beeper that means "beep someone on a pager," and l-melhar is a verb that means "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 an enriching of 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 languages.

DENGISH. The diffusion of English words into German is called Denglish, with the "D" for Deutsch, the German word for German. For many Germans, wishing someone "happy birthday" sounds more melodic than the German Herzlichen Glückwunsch zum Geburtstag.

The German telephone company Deutsche Telecom, 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"), naitsu ("knife"), and sutorebert keki ("strawberry cake").
SUMMARY

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.

Some e-mail systems and interactive Internet programs do not accept accent marks used in other languages such as French. Languages that are not written in Latin letters, such as Japanese and Russian, are extremely cumbersome if not impossible to type on the Web.

The dominance of English as an international language has facilitated the diffusion of popular culture and science and the growth of international trade. In Germany, for example, airlines, car dealers, and telephone companies use English slogans in advertising. However, people who forsake their native language must weigh the benefits of using English against the cost of losing a fundamental element of local cultural identity.

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

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.

Here again are the key issues raised by the geography of languages:

1. Where Are English-Language Speakers Distributed? English can be traced to invasions of England by Germanic tribes 1,500 years ago. From England, the language diffused around the world when English speakers established colonies. Americans and British speak different dialects of English because of the relative isolation of the two groups.

2. Why Is English Related to Other Languages? English is in the Germanic branch of the Indo-European language family. Nearly one-half of the world speaks a language in the Indo-European family. All Indo-European languages can be traced to a common ancestor. Individual languages developed from this single ancestor through migration, followed by the isolation of one group from others who formerly spoke the same language.

3. Where Are Other Language Families Distributed? One-fifth of the world speaks a language in the Sino-Tibetan family. Seven other language families encompass most of the remainder. Each has a distinctive distribution, as with Indo-European, which is a result of a combination of migration and isolation.

4. Why Do People Preserve Local Languages? English has become the most important language for international communication in popular arts, science, and business. In the face of the global dominance of a lingua franca such as English, less widely used languages can face extinction, but recent efforts have been made to preserve and revive local languages because of the importance of language as an element of cultural identity.

CASE STUDY REVISITED / The Future of French and Spanish in Anglo-America

The French-speaking people of Canada and the Spanish-speaking people of the United States both live on a continent dominated by English speakers. Both languages will continue to play important roles in the region.

French Canada

Until recently, Quebec 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 (Figure 5-28).

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

The Quebec government has made the use of French mandatory in many daily activities. Quebec's Commissioner 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 (ruled unconstitutional by the Canadian Supreme Court).

Confrontation during the 1970s and 1980s has been replaced in Quebec by increased cooperation between French and English speakers. The neighborhoods of Montreal, Quebec's largest city, were once highly segregated between French-speaking residents in the east and English-speaking residents on the west, but in recent years they have become more linguistically mixed. One-third of Quebec'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, Quebec 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 Quebec government. Even immigrants who learn to speak French charge that they face discrimination because of their accents.

Hispanic America

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.

(Continued)