Language and Cultural Identity
Language and Culture

“No one was allowed to speak the language – the Dena’ina language. They [the American government] didn’t allow it in the schools, and a lot of the women had married non-native men, and the men said, ‘You’re American now so you can’t speak the language.’ So, we became invisible in the community. Invisible to each other. And, then, because we couldn’t speak the language – what happens when you can’t speak your own language is you have to think with someone else’s words, and that’s a dreadful kind of isolation.”

- Clare Swan, elder, Kenaitze band, Dena’ina Indians
Percent of People 5 Years and Older Who Speak a Language other than English at Home
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>28,101,052</td>
<td>59.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>2,022,143</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French</td>
<td>1,643,838</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>German</td>
<td>1,382,613</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tagalog</td>
<td>1,224,241</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vietnamese</td>
<td>1,009,627</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italian</td>
<td>1,008,370</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korean</td>
<td>894,063</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russian</td>
<td>706,242</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polish</td>
<td>667,414</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.1
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Dialect:
variants of a standard language along regional or ethnic lines

- vocabulary
- syntax
- pronunciation
- cadence
- pace of speech

Examples?
Isogloss

A geographic boundary within which a particular linguistic feature occurs
Language families – have a shared, but fairly distant origin (Indo-European)

Subfamilies – commonality is more definite (Romance)

Groups – sets of individual languages (Spanish)
World Language Families
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language Family</th>
<th>Major Language</th>
<th>Numbers (in millions)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Indo-European</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>445</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hindi</td>
<td>366</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>340</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sino-Tibetan</td>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>1,211</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Burmese</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japanese-Korean</td>
<td>Japanese</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Korean</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Afro-Asiatic</td>
<td>Arabic</td>
<td>211</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malay-Polynesian</td>
<td>Indonesian</td>
<td>154</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dravidian (India)</td>
<td>Telugu</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Altaic</td>
<td>Turkish</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
How are Languages Formed?

• Can find linkages among languages by examining **sound shifts** – a slight change in a word across languages over time.

  ie: Milk = lacte in Latin
  latta in Italian
  leche in Spanish
  lait in French

  (other ie:= eight & father)
Backward Reconstruction

Deep Reconstruction – used to find vocabulary of an extinct language

William Jones (>200 yrs. ago) – Sanskrit similar to Greek and Latin

Jakob Grimm – related languages have similar, but not identical consonants; e.g. vater (Ger) ... vader (Dut), father (Eng) – softening over time

4 Tasks: Reconstruct the ancient language, find the hearth, routes of diffusion, and peoples’ ways of life
**Divergence** – differentiation over time and space; languages branch into dialects, become isolated, then new languages

**Convergence** – linked to human mobility (relocation diffusion); complicates rules of reconstruction

**Replacement** – modification of a language by stronger cultures (acculturation); e.g. Hungarian surrounded by Ind-Eur, Basque?

**Physical Clues:** Linguists look for environmental vocabulary (landforms, vegetation,...)
The Language Tree & the Mother Tongue

(only IE Branch is displayed)

Backward reconstruction process:

• Indo-European language family
• Proto-Indo-European language
• Nostratic Language
How do Languages Diffuse?

- human interaction
- print distribution
- migration
- trade
- rise of nation-states
- colonialism
Conquest Theory: Hearth is Ukraine (>5,000 yrs. ago); people used horses, wheel, and trade, spread language westward

Agriculture Theory: Hearth is Anatolia (Turkey - >10,000 yrs. ago); Ukraine relied on pastoralism, not farming

--Farming people of Anatolia moved N & W
--Distance decay from source area; some non-farming people held out (Basque in Spain)
--Drawbacks: Anatolia not ideal for farming, some evidence states Proto-Indo-European language spread eastward first

3 Maps Illustrating Possible Routes of Language Diffusion as Stated by the Agriculture Theory
Language and National Identity

- **Monolingual states**
  - Japan, Venezuela, Iceland, Portugal, Poland, Lesotho,

- **Multilingual states** – all others

- **Official Language**
  - The language of courts and governments.

- **Standard Language**
  - a language that is published, widely distributed, and purposefully taught.
  - Government usually plays a big role in standardizing a language.
Language and Political Conflict

Belgium:
Flanders (Flemish/Dutch)
Wallonia (French)

Brussels officially bilingual
Quebec vs. Canada

- Federal level:
  - officially bilingual

- Provinces:
  - Quebec -
    - officially French
  - New Brunswick –
    - only province officially bilingual
  - Other provinces
    - officially English

Quebec vs. Canada
Germanic Branch - English

Diffused throughout the world by hundreds of years of British colonialism. Brought to New World by British colonies in 1600s. Has become an important global *lingua franca*. 
Europe – dominated by Indo-European

Germanic: English, German, Swedish, …

Romance: French, Spanish, Italian, …

Slavic: Russian, Polish, Czech, …

Celtic: Welsh, Breton, Gaelic
Major Indo-European Branches

- Germanic
- Romance
- Slavic

Other Indo-European

- Celtic
- Baltic
- Hellenic
- Thracian/Ilyrian

Other Families

- Finno-Ugric
- Samoyedic
- Altaic
- Other - Basque
Development of English - Adopted Words

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

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

Normans (French)
- renaissance, mansion, village, guardian
India

- Of the 5 language families – only Indo-European & Dravidian have a significant number of speakers.
• Africa
  • N. Africa. – mostly Afro-Asiatic
  • Sub-saharan - 4 main language families: largest is Niger-Congo
  • Language mosaic is intensely fragmented
  • More than 1,000 languages, most are unwritten
Nigeria

more than 500 different languages.
Ethnolinguistic Groups in the Caucasus Region

Caucasian Peoples
- Abkhaz
- Circassian
- Georgian
- Dagestani

Indo-European Peoples
- Armenian
- Greek
- Iranian
- Slavic

Altaic Peoples
- Turkic
- Mongol

Other
- Kalmyk
- Kalmik
- Others

Russia
- Georgia
- Azerbaijan
- Armenia
- Turkey
- Iran

Republic, oblast, or kray boundary

Map showing the distribution of ethnolinguistic groups in the Caucasus Region.
Greenberg Hypothesis
Spread of Pacific Languages
How are Languages Formed?

- **Divergence** — differentiation over time and space; languages branch into dialects, become isolated, then new languages

- **Convergence** — linked to human mobility (relocation diffusion); complicates rules of reconstruction
The Euskera language

The Basque speak Euskera, which is in no way related to any other language family in Europe.

How did Euskera survive?
Spatial Interaction helps create:

• **Lingua franca** –
  A language *used* among speakers of different languages for the purposes of trade and commerce.

• **Pidgin language** –
  a language *created* when people combine parts of two or more languages into a *simplified* structure and vocabulary.

• **Creole language** –
  a *pidgin* language that has developed a more *complex* structure and vocabulary and has become the *native* language of a group of people.
Three African Lingua Franca
• One Global Language?
• Esperanto Experiment
  – occurred in early 1900s
  – based on Latin & other Eur. languages
  – failed – not a global tongue (Indo-Eur.), lacked practical utility
• English – becoming a lingua franca of the world (commerce and science)
Language in the Cultural Landscape

• Place –
  • The uniqueness of a location, what people do in a location, what they create, how they impart a certain character, a certain imprint on the location by making it unique.

• Toponym – a place name
  • Imparts a certain character on a place
  • Reflects the social processes in a place
  • Can give us a glimpse of the history of a place
Changing Toponyms

• When people change the toponym of a place, they have the power to "wipe out the past and call forth the new."

  - Yi-Fu Tuan
Changing Toponyms

• Major reasons people change toponyms:
  – After decolonization
  – After a political revolution
  – To memorialize people or events
  – To commodify or brand a place

Ex:
Leningrad – St. Petersburg
Bombay – Mumbai
Martin Luther King, Jr. Streets

Geographer Derek Alderman asks:

* Where are MLK streets?
* Why are they where they are?
* What controversies surround memorializing MLK with a street name?
Where are MLK Streets in the US?