Language is the road map of a culture. It tells you where its people come from and where they are going. –Rita Mae Brown
Language Overview

- Geographer’s Perspective on Language
- Linguistic Diversity
- Roots of Language
- Key Terms
- Language Divisions
- Spatial Distribution of Key Languages
Language Defined

- an organized system of spoken words by which people communicate with one another with mutual comprehension (Getis, 1985)

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

- Migration and isolation explain how a single language can later become two or more languages.
Geographer’s Perspective on Language

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

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

• Languages are a hallmark of cultural diversity with distinctive regional distributions.
About 50% of the planet speaks 1 of 12 out of the estimated 6,000 languages worldwide.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Native speakers</th>
<th>Total speakers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mandarin</td>
<td>885</td>
<td>1,075</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hindi</td>
<td>375</td>
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<tr>
<td>Spanish</td>
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<td>Russian</td>
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<tr>
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<td>German</td>
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<td>French</td>
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<td>129</td>
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<tr>
<td>Malay-Indonesian</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>176</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: A native speaker is one for whom the language is his or her first language.*

Source: U.S. Department of State
World’s Leading Languages
Language and Perception: Eskimo Words for Snow

**Inuit - 10 Words or more**

- ice *sikko*
- bare ice *tingenek*
- snow in general *aput*
- snow like salt *pukak*
- soft deep snow *mauja*
- snowdrift *tipvigut*
- soft snow *massak*
- watery snow *mangokpok*
- snow filled with water *massalerauvok*
- soft snow *akkilokipok*
Eskimo Words for Snow

West Greenlandic - 49 Words

'sea-ice' siku (in plural = drift ice) 'pack-ice/large expanses of ice in motion' sikursuit, pl. (compacted drift ice/ice field = sikut iqimaniri) 'new ice' sikuliaq/sikurlaaq (solid ice cover = nutaaq.) 'thin ice' sikuaq (in plural = thin ice floes) 'rotten (melting) ice floe' sikurluk 'iceberg' iluliaq (ilulisap itsirnga = part of iceberg below waterline) '(piece of) fresh-water ice' nilak 'lumps of ice stranded on the beach' issinnirit, pl. 'glacier' (also ice forming on objects) sirmiq (sirmirsuaq = Inland Ice) 'snow blown in (e.g. doorway)' sullarniq 'rime/hoar-frost' qaqrnuk/kanirniq 'frost (on inner surface of e.g. window)' iluq 'icy mist' pujurak/pujuq 'kanirnartuq 'hail' nataqqurnat 'snow (on ground)' aput (aput sisurtuq = avalanche) 'slush (on ground)' aput masannartuq 'snow in air/falling' qaniit (qanik = snowflake) 'air thick with snow' nittaalaq (nittaallat, pl. = snowflakes; nittaalaq nalliutiiqattaartuq = flurries) 'hard grains of snow' nittaalaqqaat, pl. 'feathery clumps of falling snow' qanipalaat 'new fallen snow' apirituq 'snow crust' pukak 'snowy weather' qannirsuq/nittaatsuq 'snowstorm' pirsuq/pirsirsursuaq 'large ice floe' iluitsuq 'snowdrift' apusiniq 'ice floe' puttaaq 'hummocked ice/pressure ridges in pack ice' manirak (stretch of snow-free ice = quasaliaq) 'lump of old ice frozen into new ice' tuaq 'new ice formed in crack in old ice' nutarniq 'bits of floating naggutit, pl. 'drifting lump of ice' kassuq (dirty lump of glacier-calved ice = anarluk) 'ice-foot (left adhering to shore)' qaannuq 'icicle' kusugaq 'opening in sea ice' imarnirsqaq/ammaniq (open water amidst ice = imaviaq) 'lead (navigable fissure) in sea ice' quppaq 'rotten snow/slush on sea' qinuq 'wet snow falling' imalik 'rotten ice with streams forming' aakkarniq 'snow patch (on mountain, etc.)' aputitaq 'wet snow on top of ice' putsinniq/puvvinniq 'smooth stretch of ice' manirak (stretch of snow-free ice = quasaliaq) 'lump of old ice frozen into new ice' tuaq 'new ice formed in crack in old ice' nutarniq 'bits of floating naggutit, pl. 'hard snow' mangiggal/mangikaajaaq 'small ice floe (not large enough to stand on)' masaaraq 'ice swelling over partially frozen river, etc. from water seeping up to the surface' siirsinniq 'piled-up ice-floes frozen together' tiggunnirit 'mountain peak sticking up through inland ice' nunataq 'calved ice (from end of glacier)' uukkarnit 'edge of the (sea) ice' sinaaq
Language as an Element of Cultural Diversity

- 6,000+ languages spoken today, not including dialects
- 1,500+ spoken in Sub-Saharan Africa alone
- 400+ in New Guinea alone
- 100+ in Europe
- However, this *diversity is diminishing*.
- 2,000+ threatened or endangered languages
Roots of Language

- **Spoken Languages**
  - origins? evidence?
  - competitive value for culture?

- **Written Languages**
  - value for culture?
  - Sumerian 3000 BC, Mesopotamia (Iraq)
  - soon also the Assyrians, Babylonians, Hittites
  - libraries established by 2500 BC (More than 200,000 of the tablets have been preserved.)
  - connection to Neolithic Revolution?
Roots of Language

How to Write Down a Language
Roots of Language

ideograms - Sumerian, Chinese, Egyptian, Japanese
phonetic - most languages

From basic characters:
- Sun
- Person

White, clear (Sun peeping out)
Big (person with arms extended)
Heaven (above the biggest person)
White person
Daytime (clear and heaven)
Daytime (clear and Sun)
Language Divisions

- language families
- language branches
- language groups
- languages
- dialects
- accents
Language Divisions for English

- language family -- Indo-European
- language branch -- Germanic
- language group -- West Germanic
- language -- English
- dialect -- Northeastern
- accent -- Boston (Pak da ka o-fa dere, pleese!)
Some Indo-European Shared Words

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

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

Main Branches:

- **Germanic** - Dutch, German
- **Romance** - Spanish, French
- **Baltic-Slavic** - Russian
- **Indo-Iranian** - Hindu, Bengali
Indo-European Language Family: Germanic Branch

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

**East Germanic**
- Danish (5)
- Norwegian (5)
- Swedish (9)
Iceland colonized by Norwegians in 874 AD.

- Largely unchanged because of isolation. Ancient sagas can be read by modern Icelandic speakers.
- Highly developed literary tradition.
Germanic Branch: English

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

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

**Vikings** (Norway)
- 9th-11th centuries

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

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

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

**Normans** (French)
- renaissance, mansion, village, guardian
Indo-European Language Family: Romance Branch

Like English these languages have been spread by colonialism.

- Spanish (425 million)
- Portuguese (194)
- French (129)
- Italian (62)
- Romanian (26)

largest number in Brazil
Indo-European Family: Romance Branch

The Roman Empire, at its height in the 2nd century AD, eliminated many local languages. After the fall of Rome in the 5th century, local languages flourished again.

All literature was written in Latin until the 13th and 14th centuries. Dante Alighieri 1314 *Inferno* was written in vulgar latin (Florentine).
Sino-Tibetan Language Family (20%)

Branches:

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

Chinese languages based on 420 one-syllable words with meaning inferred from context and tone.
The 1,000 or more languages of Africa are divided among 5 main language families, including Austronesian languages in Madagascar.
Afro-Asiatic Language Family

Main Branch: Semitic

- **Arabic** (256)
  Language of the Koran, spread by Islamic faith and Islamic (Ottoman) empires

- **Hebrew** (5)
  Language of the Old Testament (with Aramaic), completely revived from extinction in Israel, 1948
Proto-Bantu peoples originated in Cameroon-Nigeria.

They spread throughout south Africa AD 1-1000.

Bantu peoples were agriculturalists who used metal tools.

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

Pygmies adopted Bantu tongue and retreated to forest.

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

In Switzerland, four official languages, a history of peace and tolerance, and a political system that puts power in the hands of local leaders ensure peace.
A large proportion of the world’s internet users and hosts are in the developed states of North America and Western Europe.
The large majority of internet hosts in 1999 used English, Chinese, Japanese or European languages.
Key Terms

**pidgin** - a form of speech that adopts simplified grammar and limited vocabulary from a lingua franca, used for communication between speakers of two different languages.

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

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

Matthew 6:9-13 “The Lord’s Prayer”

Taken from Da Jesus Book, a 12-year effort by 6 linguists to translate the New Testament into Hawaiian Pidgin, published 2001
Key Terms

creole - a language that results from the mixing of a colonizer’s language with an indigenous language, often they are pidgins

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

New Orleans’ French Quarter

a. mo pe aste sa banan  
   I am buying the banana
b. de bin alde luk dat big tri  
   they always looked for a big tree
c. a waka go a wosu  
   he walked home
d. olmaan i kas-im chek  
   the old man is cashing a check
e. li pote sa bay mo  
   he brought that for me
f. ja fruher wir bleiben  
   yes at first we remained
g. dis smol swain i bin go fo maket  
   this little pig went to market
Key Terms

**creole** - a language that results from the mixing of a colonizer’s language with an indigenous language, often they are pidgins.

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

a. mo pe aste sa banan  
French-based Seychelles Creole

b. de bin alde luk dat big tri  
English-based Roper River Creole

c. a waka go a wosu  
English-based Saran

d. olmaan i kas-im chek  
English-based Cape York Creole

e. li pote sa bay mo  
French-based Guyanais

f. ja fruher wir bleiben  
German-based Papua New Guinea

g. dis smol swain i bin go fo maket  
English-based Cameroon Pidgin
Key Terms

dialect - a regional variety of a language distinguished by pronunciation, spelling and vocabulary

Social Dialects - can denote social class and standing

Vernacular Dialects - the common speech (slang) of a region

Accents – check out this cool webpage where you can listen to English accents: http://classweb.gmu.edu/accent/

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Is he fair dinkum?</td>
<td>Is he real or genuine?</td>
<td>Australia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why I declare!</td>
<td>That’s remarkable!</td>
<td>Deep South (US)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fishin’ in the crick</td>
<td>Fishing in the creek</td>
<td>Middle Atlantic States</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>snap peas</td>
<td>beans eaten in the pod</td>
<td>South (US)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mosquito hawk</td>
<td>dragon fly</td>
<td>South (US)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>darning needle</td>
<td>dragon fly</td>
<td>Northern (US)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Key Terms

isolated language - a language that is not related to any other languages and thus not connected to any language families

examples: Basque and Icelandic.
toponym - a place name reflects past inhabitants and their relation to the land

Devil’s Tower, WY

Mt Cook, New Zealand

Cook Islands, Polynesia

Badwater, Death Valley
Spanish Words for Mountains and Hills

candelas  “candles” - collection of needlelike hills
cerrillo  small cero, or hill
cerro  a single eminence between hill and mountain
cordillera  a mass of mountains
cumbre  highest peak in a sierra or cordillera
eminencia  mountainous or hilly protuberance
loma  a hill in the midst of a plain
mesa  literally “table”; a flat-topped feature
montana  equivalent to English “mountain”
pelado  a barren, treeless mountain
pena  a needlelike eminence
sierra  elongated mass with a serrated crest
teta  a solitary, conical mount
Ethnolinguistic Groups in the Caucasus Region
Endangered Languages

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

Now, about 6,000 are left.

Of those, ½ will be gone by the year 2100 and all but 500 of the rest will be endangered.

More than 90% of the languages in existence today will be extinct or threatened in little more than a century if current trends continue.
Extinct or Endangered Languages: Cameroon (11)

Bikya
Bishuo Bung
Busuu
Duli Gey
Luo
Nagumi
Ndai
Ngong
Yeni
Zumaya
Extinct Languages: USA (93)

Endangered Languages

Why are they disappearing?

- globalization
- migration (urbanization)
- economic development
- **lingua francas** - languages used for trade by two people who speak different native tongues
- media
- internet
Language is a fundamental element of cultural identity.

Languages diverge via migration and isolation.

Small languages are disappearing as a result of globalization.

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

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