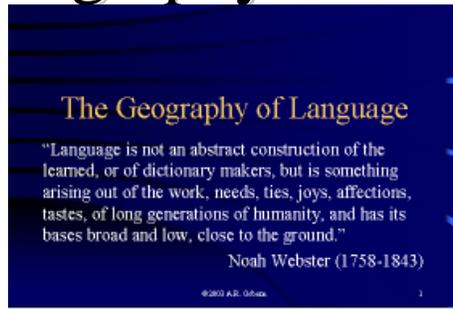


The Geography of Language



Language Origins

- ❖ The Danish linguist Otto Jespersen (1860-1943) classified theories of language origin into five groups:
 - “Bow-Wow”
 - People imitate sounds from their environment
 - “Pooh-Pooh”
 - People make instinctive sounds related to emotions, body functions, pain
 - “Ding-Dong”
 - People make “oral gestures”
 - “Yo-He-Ho”
 - People work together and produce rhythmic sounds
 - “La-La”
 - People make sounds associated with love, play and singing

Language is...

- ❖ Language is **universal**
 - No human group anywhere has ever been found that does not have a spoken language.
 - There are, of course, many languages that do not have a written form.
 - There are occasional physically normal individuals, “wolf children,” who have no language at all.
- ❖ Language is **fundamental**
 - Language is crucial for social interaction, and to express complex emotions and ideas.
 - Language lets us deal with – and even try to control – the world around us:
 - Naming
 - Faith, magic and the supernatural
 - Language is fundamental to who we are – our identity.

Languages come in families

- ❖ A language family is a group of languages which are descended from a single common earlier language (just as brothers and sisters are descended from common parents).
- ❖ How many languages are there? Not an easy question to answer.
 - Living and Dead Languages (Italian vs. Latin)
 - Revivals (Hebrew – from living to dead to living again)
 - New Discoveries (Amazon, Papua New Guinea, Africa, etc.)
 - “Languages” and “Dialects” (see below – hard to define!)
 - Maybe 4,000 Languages are spoken today? Or more? Or less?
- ❖ How many language families are there?
 - Families are constructed on the basis of similarities in vocabulary, phonology and grammar.
 - Lots of disputes about what is and what isn’t significant – and lots of variation in the numbers.
 - Maybe as many as 100 families? Or...?

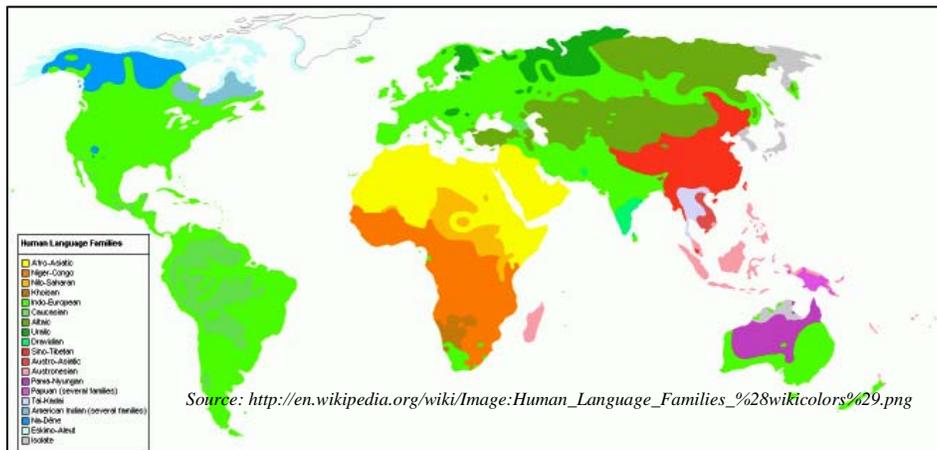
Language families have...

- ❖ Branches
 - “a collection of languages related through a common ancestor several thousand years ago. Differences are not as extensive or as old as with language families.”
 - Example: Indo-European family has eight (surviving) branches:
 - Germanic (ex. German, Danish, English)
 - Romance (ex. Italian, French, Romanian)
 - Balto-Slavic (ex. Lithuanian, Russian, Polish)
 - Indo-Iranian (ex. Farsi, Kurdish)
 - Greek (ex. Greek!)
 - Albanian (ex. Albanian!)
 - Armenian (ex. Armenian!)
 - Celtic (ex. Irish, Breton, Welsh)
- ❖ Groups
 - “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”
 - For example, both English and Danish are in the Germanic branch, but English is in the West Germanic Group, while Danish is in the North Germanic Group.

Indo-European: mutual comprehension?

- ❖ Consider all of the following:
 - English: “Our Father, who art in heaven ...”
 - Dutch: “Onze Vader, die in de hemelen zijt ...”
 - Spanish: “Padre nuestro, qe estás en los cielos ...”
 - Polish: “Ojcie nasz, któryś jest w niebiesiech ...”
 - Greek: “Patera mas, pou̓ eĩsai stoũs ouranoũs ...”
 - Albanian: “Ati ynë që je në quiell ...”
 - Kurdish: “Yä bawk-ĩ ëma, ka la äsmän-ä-y ...”
 - Romany: “Dáde amaré, kaj isién k’o devlé ...”
 - Sanskrit: “Bho asmākham svargastha pitah ...”
- ❖ Notice the similarities (for example: “pitah,” “patera,” “padre”; or “father,” “vader,” “dáde”) and differences.

Language Families

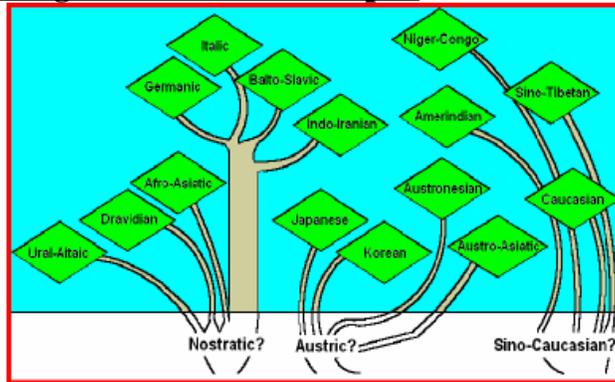


- ❖ Major language families (families with more than 100,000,000 speakers)
 - Indo-European (ex. English, Russian, Farsi, Hindi)
 - About 3 billion speakers; originally Europe-Asia, now worldwide
 - Sino-Tibetan (ex. Chinese, Tibetan)
 - About 1.5 billion speakers; mostly in China and surrounding areas.
 - Afro-Asiatic (also called “Hamitic-Semitic”) (ex. Arabic, Hebrew)
 - Almost ½ billion speakers; mostly in North Africa & Southwest Asia.
 - Austronesian (also called “Malayo-Polynesian”) (ex. Hawaiian, Malagasy)
 - More than ¼ billion speakers; Pacific Ocean to Madagascar.
 - Dravidian (ex. Tamil, Malayalam)
 - About ¼ billion speakers; Southern India.

Principles of Cultural Geography

- Niger-Congo (ex. Yoruba, Swahili)
 - About 200,000,000 speakers; Sub-Saharan Africa.
- Altaic (ex. Turkish, Mongol)
 - About 200,000,000 speakers; Turkey to Mongolia.
- Japanese (ex. Japanese!)
 - About 125,000,000 speakers; Japan (of course!)
- ❖ Some interesting minor language families
 - Austro-Asiatic
 - Major language: Vietnamese
 - About 60,000,000 speakers.
 - Korean
 - Major language: Korean
 - About 50,000,000 speakers.
 - Tai (your book considers this to be part of Sino-Tibetan)
 - Major language: Thai
 - About 50,000,000 speakers.
 - Nilo-Saharan
 - Major language: Masai
 - About 30,000,000 speakers.
 - Amerindian (not really a family, just a regional collection)
 - Major languages: Quechua, Navajo
 - About 25,000,000 speakers (mostly in South America).
 - Uralic (many authors combine Uralic with Altaic into one family)
 - Major languages: Finnish, Hungarian
 - Caucasian
 - Major language: Georgian
 - About 6,000,000 speakers.
 - Indo-Pacific (or Papuan – not a family, just a regional collection. There are about 800 languages spoken on the island of New Guinea!)
 - Major language: Motu?
 - About 3,000,000 speakers.
 - Khoisan (the “click” languages)
 - Major language: Khoikhoi
 - About 50,000 speakers.
 - Australian Aborigine (not a family, just a regional collection)
 - Major language: Arunta
 - About 50,000 speakers.
- ❖ Isolates (languages which aren't related to anything else, such as Basque)

Language families: origins and relationships?

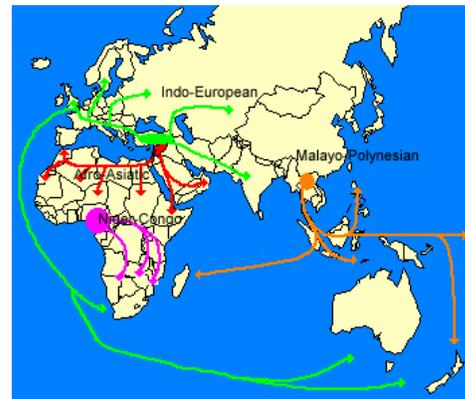


Origin of Indo-European: two hypotheses

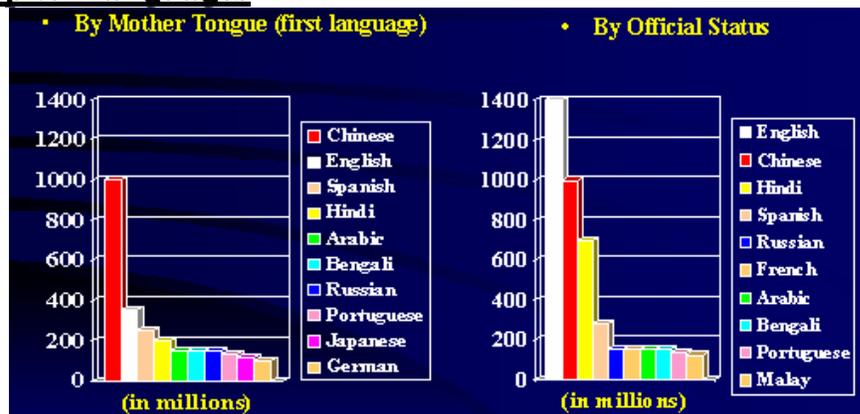
- ❖ The Kurgan Hypothesis (a war-like people expanding and conquering from the region north of the Black Sea)
- ❖ The Anatolian Hearth theory (farmers and pastoralists expanding slowly from a place of origin in what is now Turkey).

The movement of languages

- ❖ Throughout history, most languages have spread by relocation diffusion.
- ❖ A few languages – including Chinese, Latin, French and English – have also spread by expansion diffusion.
- ❖ Barriers to diffusion can be both physical and cultural.



The world's top ten languages



- ❖ Note the astonishing rise of English!
- ❖ Why? Mostly because of English's status as an official language in former British colonies (especially in India – even though just a small percent of the population speaks English fluently).

Origins of English

- ❖ Development
 - Nothing is known about the languages of Great Britain prior to the Celtic invasion (c. 2,000 BCE) (the Celts provided some loan words, but English is mostly a Germanic and Romance-descended language).
 - Old English (“Anglo-Saxon”):
 - Invasion by West Germanic peoples (Jutes, Angles, Saxons) from Northern Germany, beginning 449 CE.
 - Periodic invasions from Scandinavia starting c. 700 CE.
 - Middle English:
 - Invasion by Normans 1066 CE (mixture with Romance branch).
 - “The Great Vowel Shift” (1350-1550 CE); spelling frozen.
- ❖ Modern English: 1700-1800 CE English vocabulary enlarged, grammar simplified, codified.

Old, Middle & Early Modern English

- ❖ Old English
 - Fæder ure þu þe eart on heofonum si þin nama gehalgod tobecume þin rice gewurþe þin willa on eorðan swa on heofonum urne gedæghwamlican hlaf syle us to dæg and forgyf us ure gyltas swa we forgyfað urum gyltendum and ne gelæd þu us on costnunge ac alys us of yfele soþlice.
- ❖ Middle English
 - Oure fadir þat art in heuenes halwid be þi name; þi kyngdom come to be. Be þi wille don in herþe as it is dounin heuene. Yeue to us today oure eche dayes bred. And foryeue to us oure dettis þat is oure synnys as we foryeuen to oure dettouris þat is to men þat han synned in us. And lede us not into temptacion but delyuere us from euyl.
- ❖ Early Modern English
 - Our father which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. *Source (2-14-2005): <http://www.wordorigins.org/histeng.htm>*

The pleasures and perils of English

- ❖ Pleasures
 - Most widely spoken language, global dominance of media, internet.
 - No gender, number or case changes; easy formation of plurals.
 - Relatively simple verb forms (except for irregular verbs).
 - Huge, flexible vocabulary.

❖ Perils

- Idiomatic verb and preposition combinations (“put up,” “get down”)
- Irregular plurals (ox and oxen; foot and feet, etc.)
- Spelling (25% irregular, 27 graphemes vs. 40 phonemes)
- Bizarre written forms:
 - “Though the rough cough and hiccough plough me through, I ought to cross the lough.”
- No rules for pronunciation and stress
 - Polish vs. polish; dove vs. dove; to, too, two; there, their, they’re

Improving written English?

❖ Other proposed systems:

- Cut Spelng, New Follick, Checked Clipped Spelling, Sound Spell, Spell Right, NuSpel, EnglSpel, Alt Spell, Inglish, AnJel, etc.
- And if these look funny – remember, American spelling was “simplified” over a hundred years ago!
 - “tire” vs. “tyre”
 - “jail” vs. “gaol”
 - “curb” vs. “kerb”
 - “program” vs. “programme”

New Spelling

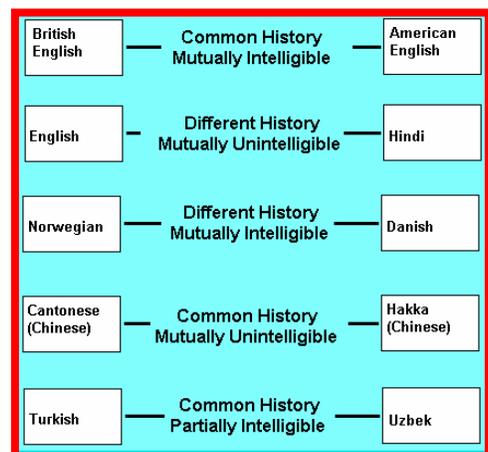
- Forskor and seven yeerz agoe our faadherz braut forth on dhis kontinent a nue naeshon, konseevd in liberti and dedikaeted to dhe propozishon dhat aul men ar kreeaeted eekwal.

Simpler Spelling Association

- forskor and sevn yerz ægo our fahers brøt forh on his kontinent ə niu nəfən, kənsēvd in libərti, and dedikated tu he propəzifən hat əl men ar kreated ekwəl.

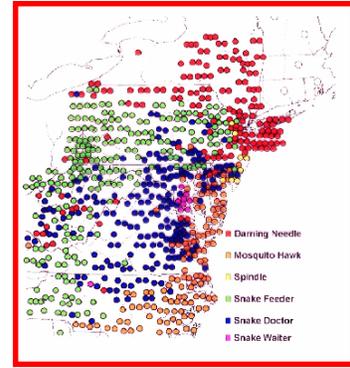
Language, dialect, accent

- ❖ Standard Language: Accepted norms of syntax, vocabulary and pronunciation.
- ❖ Dialect: A recognizable speech variant.
- ❖ Accent: A distinctive way of speaking typical of a group or a region.
 - Accents can be distinctive in terms of
 - Pronunciation
 - Tone
 - Inflection
 - Word choice



Drawing dialect boundaries: isoglosses

- ❖ Isoglosses are a kind of **isoline** – in this case, they are word-usage boundaries.
- ❖ Ideally, researchers go out, ask people what words they use for common things, put dots on the map, draw lines around the dots, and define boundaries between different dialects.
- ❖ That’s the ideal. It’s usually much messier.
- ❖ Can you guess what these different colored dots represent? Give up? These are all local words for “dragonfly!”



Dialects of English

- ❖ In England, there are still at least three main dialect groups:
 - NORTHERN
 - MIDLAND
 - SOUTHERN
- ❖ In the US
 - Isolation (physical and political) created differences in vocabulary, spelling and pronunciation.
 - Today, US dialects are most pronounced in the East, and there are at least three main groups (and perhaps five):
 - NORTHERN
 - MIDLAND
 - SOUTHERN (some break this down further, into Upland, Gulf and Coastal Southern dialects)

To hear a selection of American dialects, see: The Speech Accent Archive: <http://accent.gmu.edu/>
The International Dialects of English Archive: <http://web.ku.edu/idea/northamerica/usa/usa.htm>

“Ebonics”

- ❖ Also known as “Black English Vernacular” & “African-American Vernacular English”
- ❖ The Concept
 - Students and teachers need to understand each other.
 - Some African-American children’s English is so different from standard English they cannot be understood by their teachers.
 - Schools often treat such children as sloppy, wrong or stupid.
 - Schools should help children to learn standard English by building on the language they already have, and treat that language as distinct and worthy, not “wrong.”
- ❖ The Controversy begins (from the Oakland California School District)
 - “African people possess and utilize a language described as “Ebonics” ... studies have ... demonstrated that African Language Systems are

genetically-based and not a dialect of English ...” (December 18, 1996)

- ❖ The Controversy ends
 - “African-American students as a part of their culture and history as African people possess and utilize a language described in various scholarly approaches as “Ebonics” ... these studies have ... demonstrated that African Language Systems have origins in West [African] and Niger-Congo languages ...” (January 15, 1997)

Official English? No, but ...

- ❖ The English Language Empowerment Act (1996)
 - (1) The United States is comprised of individuals and groups from diverse ethnic, cultural and linguistic backgrounds.
 - (3) Throughout the history of the United States, the common thread binding individuals of differing backgrounds has been a common language.
 - (4) In order to preserve unity in diversity, and to prevent division along linguistic lines, the Federal Government should maintain a language common to all people.
 - (9) English should be recognized in law as the language of official business of the Federal Government.

Excerpts from HR 123, July 30, 1996 (Available <http://ftp.loc.gov/pub/thomas/c104/h123.rh.txt>)

- ❖ English Language Unity Act of 2003
 - 1. The United States is comprised of individuals from diverse ethnic, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds, and continues to benefit from this rich diversity.
 - 2. Throughout the history of the United States, the common thread binding individuals of differing backgrounds has been the English language.
 - 3. Among the powers reserved to the States respectively is the power to establish the English language as the official language of the respective States, and otherwise to promote the English language within the respective States, subject to the prohibitions enumerated in the Constitution of the United States and in laws of the respective States.

Excerpts from HR 997, February 27, 2003 (Available: <http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/z?c108:H.R.997>)

- ❖ ‘National Language Act of 2007’.
 - English shall be the official language of the Government of the United States.
 - The Government of the United States shall preserve and enhance the

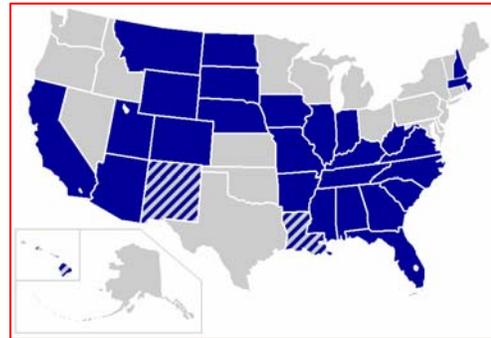
role of English ... no person has a right, entitlement, or claim to services, or ... materials in any language other than English.

- This ... does not apply to the use of a language other than English
 - (1) for religious purposes;
 - (2) for training in foreign languages for international communication;
 - (3) to programs in schools designed to encourage students to learn foreign languages.
- This ... does not prevent the Government ... from providing interpreters for persons over 62 years of age.
- BILINGUAL ELECTION REQUIREMENTS ... [are] repealed.

Excerpts from HR 769, January 31, 2007 (Available <http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/z?c110:H.R.769>)

Official English laws in the US

- ❖ As of 2007, 27 (?) US States have some kind of “official English” law.
- ❖ The impact and scope of the laws vary – from being little more than a simple statement (as in Illinois: “The official language of the State of Illinois is English”), to forbidding any activity of State or local government from doing anything which could be considered supporting the use of any language other than English.
- ❖ Two States – Hawaii and New Mexico – have specified that a language other than English is also official (Hawaiian and Spanish, respectively).
- ❖ A few States have taken the opposite position. Oregon, for example, says that “the use of diverse languages in business, government and private affairs ... is welcomed, encouraged, and protected in Oregon.”



The Top 20 US Languages (after English)

Spanish	28,101,052	Arabic	614,582
Chinese	2,022,143	Portuguese	564,630
French	1,643,838	Japanese	477,997
German	1,382,613	French Creole	453,368
Tagalog	1,224,241	Greek	365,436
Vietnamese	1,009,627	Hindi	317,057
Italian	1,008,370	Persian	312,085
Korean	894,063	Urdu	262,900
Russian	706,242	Gujarathi	235,988
Polish	667,414	Armenian	202,708

- ❖ Navajo is the Native American language with the largest number of speakers in the US today – 178,014.

Source: www.census.gov , file c2kbr-20.pdf

The urge to understand

- ❖ Mixing languages: Languages that are in contact often begin to blend together (pidgins, creoles, “Franglais,” “Spanglish,” etc.).
- ❖ Lingua franca: A major language used over a large area for commerce and diplomacy (Latin, English, etc.).
- ❖ Multilingualism: Knowing and using more than one language.
- ❖ Artificial language: A constructed language which is supposed to be logical, practical and easy to learn (Esperanto, etc.).
- ❖ Translation and interpretation:
 - Translation: Words and concepts expressed in one language are rendered more-or-less faithfully in another.
 - Interpretation: A less literal translation, emphasizing overall meaning.

Mixing languages

- ❖ Languages that come in contact always mix and borrow from each other.
- ❖ Examples:
 - SPANGLISH
 - Dolores dice: Need advice? Escribeme. (on the home page for the online magazine Latina)
 - Tengo que ir al bus stop para pick up mi hija. (overheard in the Western US)
 - Haz clic aquí. (commonly seen on Spanish-language Web sites)
 - Llamenos para delivery. (seen on advertising signs in Peru)
 - Tips para marketing. (advertisement in Mexico)
 - JAPLISH (also known as ENGRISH)
 - BRANDO NEW! (brochure rack in Shiga)
 - NOTICE: We have touched at point in under the boxes heads, for keeping qualities. It's very excuse. (notice above the door of a Yutaka drugstore)
 - Welcome to Mother Nature! In here, everyone are heroes. Let's play YOUR drama. (advertisement for a camping mattress).
 - Let's play bowling. Breaking down the pins and get hot communication.

Sources: <http://spanish.about.com/library/weekly/aa042301a.htm> ;
<http://www.tokyotales.com/blog/japlish/index.php> ; <http://www.tanuki.org.uk/japlish.html>

Pidgins and creoles

- ❖ Pidgin: A system of communication developed among people who do not share a common language but need to talk for trading or other reasons.
 - Limited vocabulary

- Simplified grammatical structure
 - Narrow range of functions, expressions
 - Usually short useful lifespan
 - “Nobody’s native language”
- ❖ Creole: A language which has been created by blending together elements of two or more other languages; a pidgin which has become a native language.

Lingua franca

- ❖ A “lingua franca” (either from “*language of the Franks*” or from “*free language*”) is any widely-used language used for commerce, diplomacy, science and technology.
- ❖ Lingua francas are often second languages, and may be a mixture of several languages.
- ❖ Historically, a number of languages have served as lingua franca:
- Koine Greek (ancient Eastern Mediterranean)
 - Swahili (Eastern Africa)
 - French (international diplomacy)
 - English (worldwide today in science, commerce, politics, literature)

Multilingualism

- ❖ Most of the world’s population is at least somewhat multilingual – that is, most people have at least some knowledge of more than one language.
- ❖ Some nations are officially multilingual, such as:
- Paraguay (Spanish, Guarani)
 - Switzerland (German, French, Italian, Romansch)
 - South Africa (Afrikaans, English, Ndebele, Pedi, Sotho, Swazi, Tsonga, Tswana, Venda, Xhosa, and Zulu)
 - India (Hindi, Bengali, Telugu, Marathi, Tamil, Urdu, Gujarati, Malayalam, Kannada, Oriya, Punjabi, Assamese, Kashmiri, Sindhi, Sanskrit; also English and Hindustani)

Artificial languages

- ❖ English
- For of the things that humanity possesses in common, nothing is so truly universal and international as science.
- ❖ Esperanto
- Char el la komunaj posedajhoj de la homaro, neniuj estas tiel vere ĝenerale kaj internacia kiel la sciencio.
- ❖ Latino Sine Flexione
- Nam, de commune possessiones de genere humano, nihil es tam generale et internationale quam scientia.

Specialized and restricted languages

- ❖ Occupational languages (professional jargon, etc.)
- ❖ Hidden and secret languages (criminal codes, cryptography, etc.)
- ❖ Slang
 - Primary use of slang is to mark identity (and exclude others).
 - Other reasons (*after Eric Partridge (1894-1979)*): Fun; Demonstrate ingenuity; Shock value; Escape clichés; Reduce seriousness.
- ❖ Cursing and swearing
 - Primary use: to express frustration and emotion (often meant to shock).
 - Usually refer to sex, excretion and the supernatural.
 - Frequency varies among languages
 - Arabic and Turkish are famous for range and imagination.
 - Swearing is almost absent from Japanese, Inuit (Eskimo).
- ❖ Euphemism
 - Literally “good speech” – substitute terms for things we don’t (or can’t, or don’t want to) talk about openly.
 - In general, euphemisms are used to refer the same things we use when we curse – things too awful or too important to talk about directly.

Occupational Language: SEASPEAK

- ❖ Some of the rules of SEASPEAK (used by the Merchant Marine):
 - Standard phrases; avoid alternatives.
 - Fixed syntax:
 - The word “reason” is the only connective allowed.
 - Days of the week never used, dates always in fixed format: “Day 04 Month 02.”
 - Compass bearings given in 3-digit form: “one-one-nine degrees.”
 - Special marker words indicate message type and responses:
 - “Question” is always followed by “Answer.”
 - “Instruction” is always followed by “Instruction-received.”
 - A sample SEASPEAK conversation (from *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of Language*):
 - “Singapore Port Operations. This is Western Sky. Information: My ETA position: East Johore pilot station is time: one-three-four-five UTC. Over.”
 - “Western Sky. This is Singapore Port Operations. Mistake. Time is: one-four-three-zero UTC now. Over.”
 - Singapore Port Operations. This is Western Sky. Correction. My ETA is one-five-four-five UTC. Over.”

Boontling: an American “secret language”

- ❖ A century ago Boonville, in Anderson Valley, California, was an isolated rural community. To pass the time (and have some fun) locals began to use a variety of terms. Boontling has more than a thousand unique words and phrases (65% are obscene or “nonch harpins”).
- ❖ Sample Vocabulary
 - Apple Head (girlfriend)
 - Charlie Ball (embarrass)
 - Trashmover (storm)
 - Bucky (a nickel)
 - Bahl Hornin (good drinking)
 - Gorm (eat)
 - Belhoon (dollar)
 - Heelch (a large quantity)
 - Bahl (good)
 - Dinkelhonk (cow)
 - Weech (child)
 - Walter Levy (telephone)
- ❖ Sample conversation
 - Charlie went to the hob.
 - “I shied the hob,” harped Bob.
 - “Was a fister,” harped Charlie. “The highman of the highheelers brought in thribs deputies and shut’er down.”
 - “Not bahl,” harped Bob.
- ❖ See? It’s as easy as a slow lope’n a beeson tree! [*Translation: “It’s as easy as a pleasant ride on horseback at a comfortable pace on one of the excellent saddles that used to be made by the Beeson brothers.”*]

1337 5p34(h [“LEET SPEECH”]

- ❖ 1337 (Or "31337") 5p34(h pr08481y d4735 84(k 70 teh 19805 0r 34r1y 19905. !7 d3v310p3d 45 4 k!nd Of "!n 9r0up" 514n9 4m0n9 h4(k3r5 4nd 94m3r5 [*Translation: LEET (or “ELITE”) SPEECH probably dates back to the 1980s or early 1990s. It developed as a kind of “in group” slang among hackers and gamers.*])
- ❖ (0mm0n phr4535 [*Common phrases*])
 - "WHeRE @Re J00" (Or "Wh3re aer j00?") [*Where are you?*]
 - "wH4+'S j00R nAME" [*What’s your name?*]
 - "1 4t3 j00r r4m3n n00d135" [*I ate your ramen noodles*]
 - "j00 suX0rz!" (Or "j00 i5 t3h sux0rz") [*You suck!*]
 - "PH34R MEH!!!" [*Fear Me!*]
 - "ph33r teh 1337 h4x0r5" [*fear the elite hackers*]
 - "n00b" (Or "noob" Or "nubcake" Or "nubcaek") [*newbie*]

Sources: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Leet> <http://www.albinoblacksheep.com/text/leet.php>
see also the 1337 Converter from <http://molotov.b0x.com>

Cursing and swearing: some classic examples

- ❖ "... [thou art] a knave, a rascal, an eater of broken meats; a base, proud, shallow, beggarly, three-suited, hundred-pound, filthy, worsted-stocking knave; a lily-livered, action-taking knave; a whoreson, glass-gazing, super-serviceable finical rogue; a one-trunk inheriting slave; one that wouldst be a bawd in way of good service, and art nothing but the composition of a knave, beggar, coward, pandar, and the son and heir of a mongrel bitch; one whom I will beat into clamorous whining if thou deniest the least syllable of thy addition." (William Shakespeare (c. 1608) *King Lear* (Act 2, scene 2))
- ❖ "... prattling gabblers, lickorous gluttons, freckled bittors, mangy rascals, shite-a-bed scoundrels, drunken roysters, sly druggels, lubberly louts, cozening foxes, ruffian rogues, paltry customers, sycophant-varlets, drawlatch hoydens, fouting milksops, jeering companions, staring clowns, forlorn snakes, ninny lobcocks, idle lusks, scoffing braggarts, noddy meacocks, blockish grutnols, doddipol-joltheads, jobbernal goosecaps, foolish loggerheads, flutch calf-lollies, grouthead gnat-snappers, lob-dotterels, gaping changelings, codshead loobies, woodcock slangams, ninny-hammer flycatchers, noddypeak simpletons, turdy gut, shitten shepherds, and other suchlike defamatory epithets ..." (Francois Rabelais (Urquhart & Motteux translation, c. 1653), *Gargantua and Pantagruel* (Book 1, chapter 25))

Euphemism

- ❖ The use of euphemisms is ancient – the ancient Greeks referred to the Furies, their spirits of vengeance, as “the kindly ones,” Germanic peoples referred to fearsome bears as “brown ones,” or “grandfathers,” Eric the Red called the land he discovered (which is about $\frac{2}{3}$ glacier-covered) “Greenland.”
- ❖ There are two basic categories of euphemism:
 - Positive euphemisms: make the euphemized subject seem bigger or more important (such as titles like “chief senior personal assistant” instead of “clerk.”).
 - Negative euphemisms: make the euphemized subject seem less important or dangerous (such as “the facility experienced a transient superprompt critical power excursion” instead of “the nuclear reactor started to melt down.”)
- ❖ There are several different forms of euphemism including:
 - Foreign language (“schmuck,” “merde,” “triage,” “lingerie”)
 - Abbreviations (“TB,” “SOB,” “BS,” “CYA,” or even “the f-word”)

Principles of Cultural Geography

- Abstraction (fuzzy terms like “the situation” or “unfortunate event”)
- Indirection (“bite the dust” instead of “died,” “clean up” instead of “destroy evidence,” “separate but equal” instead of “racist”)
- Understatement (“collateral damage,” “friendly fire,” “ethnic cleansing,” “final solution,” “”)
- Lengthy (“post traumatic stress disorder” instead of “shell shock”)
(much of the above after Hugh Rawson’s A Dictionary of Euphemisms and Other Doubletalk, New York: Crown 1981).

Preserving language diversity

- ❖ Languages can die. Today, in the face of the global dominance of English and other “world languages,” some people are trying to preserve and even revive languages.
 - Maintaining survivors: Celtic languages (Scottish Gaelic, Irish Gaelic, Welsh (Cymru), Breton.
 - Bringing back the dead: Hebrew, Manx.
- ❖ Why bother? Because language is about more than just “communicating facts.” Language is about identity, history, continuity – language is a fundamental part of who you are.

Language and the physical environment: Landforms

- ❖ Some languages have developed extensive vocabularies that let them easily and concisely describe certain kinds of terrain.
 - Selected Spanish words for hills and mountains
 - Peña (needle-like peak)
 - Candelas (collection of peñas)
 - Cejita (low escarpment)
 - Cordillera (rope; mass of mountains)
 - Mesa (table; flat-topped eminence)
 - Selected English words for rivers and streams
 - Branch (stream that flows into another stream)
 - Creek (small stream)
 - Fork (confluence of streams)
 - Prong (small fork)
 - Slough (swamp, river inlet)

Language and the physical environment: Colors!

- ❖ Some languages have words for colors that can’t be concisely described in English — and English has words for colors that can’t be easily described in other languages.

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- ❖ Latin
 - Originally had no words for gray or brown (borrowed from Germanic).
- ❖ Navaho
 - Same words can mean blue or green.
 - Two words for black (as in darkness or as in black colored object).
- ❖ Japanese
 - The word awo can mean green, blue or pale depending on context.
- ❖ Welsh
 - The word gwyrdd means some (but not all) shades of green.
 - The word glas means some (but not all) shades of green, blue and gray.
 - The word llwyd means some (but not all) shades of gray and brown.
- ❖ Papuan
 - Some languages in the highlands of New Guinea have only two color words, black and white (or perhaps dark and light).

Linguistic refuge areas

- ❖ Languages and dialects survive in some areas because they are isolated and protected by inhospitable terrain.
 - Example: Cajun, a form of French which survives in the Louisiana bayou country.
 - Example: Abaza, Avar, Bats, Chechen, and perhaps 36 other languages that survive in the Caucasus Mountains between the Black and Caspian Seas.

Language and culture: toponyms

- ❖ Toponyms (or places names) tell us about history and the movements peoples and cultures.
- ❖ All inhabited places have names (lots of uninhabited ones do, too).
- ❖ Toponyms often have a structure: generic + specific (Cape Town, Oklahoma City, etc.).
- ❖ Types of toponyms:
 - Commemorative (explorers; famous people; other places).
 - Natural features (Colorado, Florida, Long Beach).
 - Special Sites (military; religious; historical).
 - Other:
 - Animals & Plants (Chicken AK, Redwood City CA).

- Inherited (Minnetonka MN, Mojave CA).
- Humor (Truth or Consequences NM, Canyon Sin Nombre CA).
- Miscellaneous and uncertain (Oregon, Rhode Island)

Language and culture: change and stability

- ❖ Change: technology and new ways of living
 - Changes in technology require a new vocabulary
 - Changes in ways of living require a new vocabulary
- ❖ Stability: institutions
 - Education (all educated people are taught “proper” language)
 - Law (legal terms are very slow to change, and affect language)
 - Religion (religious terms are even slower to change)
 - Financial Advantage (better language skills = better paid)
 - Status (different social groups speak differently)

Writing

- ❖ Earliest use of symbol tokens c. 10,000 years ago.
- ❖ The earliest example of writing ever found was discovered in 1999 at a site called Harappa on the Indus River in Pakistan. It has been dated to 5,500 years ago. It is believed the symbols may indicate what this piece of pottery originally contained, but the Harappan language died out about 4,000 years ago (See: http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/english/sci/tech/newsid_334000/334517.stm).
- ❖ Some believe that symbols found on 8,600 year old turtle shells in China constitute even earlier examples of writing (See: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/science/nature/2956925.stm>).
- ❖ The earliest sample of New World writing, dated to about 900 BCE, was discovered in 2006 (See: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/science/nature/5347080.stm>).

Ways of writing

- ❖ Pictograms (also called “Logograms”)
 - Earliest system of writing
 - Begin as simple pictures of things (but this quickly becomes unsatisfactory)
 - Example: Earliest Egyptian hieroglyphs
- ❖ “Ideograms”
 - Abstract or conventional meanings, often combining two or more pictograms
 - No longer have a clear pictorial link
 - Almost always “impure” (or “logophonetic”) with clues to pronunciation
 - Examples: Late Egyptian hieroglyphs, Chinese?



Cuneiform tablet, c. 2039 BCE. Source: <http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/world/world-record.html>

- ❖ Syllabaries
 - Each symbol corresponds to a spoken syllable (usually consonant + vowel)
 - Examples: Japanese Katakana, Cherokee
- ❖ Alphabets
 - A small number of arbitrary symbols represent all sounds
 - All alphabets appear to be descendants of the first Phoenician (Semitic) alphabet
 - Many consist of consonants only, vowels understood in context

Syllabary: Cherokee

- ❖ This syllabary was developed about 1821 by Sequoya (c. 1770-1843), the great Cherokee leader.
- ❖ Its 85 symbols were obviously influenced by European alphabets, but usage is entirely different!

	D(a)	R(e)	T(i)	ᵔ(o)	C(u)	i(v)
—	S (ga)	F (ge)	Y (gi)	A (go)	J (gu)	E (gv)
—	ᵔ(ka)	—	—	—	—	—
—	H (ha)	P (he)	S (hi)	F (ho)	T (hu)	L (hv)
—	W (la)	ᵔ (le)	P (li)	G (lo)	M (lu)	ᵔ (lv)
—	ᵔ (ma)	C (me)	H (mi)	S (mo)	Y (mu)	—
—	ᵔ (na)	A (ne)	h (ni)	Z (no)	ᵔ (nu)	C (nv)
—	t(hna)	—	—	—	—	—
—	G (nah)	—	—	—	—	—
—	T (qua)	ᵔ(que)	P (qui)	ᵔ (quo)	ᵔ(quu)	S (quv)
ᵔ(s)	H (sa)	ᵔ (se)	L (si)	F (so)	ᵔ (su)	R (sv)
—	L (da)	S (de)	J (di)	V (do)	S (du)	ᵔ (dv)
—	W (ta)	T (te)	J (ti)	—	—	—
—	ᵔ(dla)	—	—	—	—	—
—	L (tla)	L (tle)	C (tli)	ᵔ (tlo)	ᵔ(tlu)	P (tlv)
—	G (tsa)	V (tse)	Ir (tsi)	K (tso)	J (tsu)	C (tsv)
—	G (wa)	ᵔ (we)	ᵔ (wi)	C (wo)	S (wu)	C (wv)
—	ᵔ(ya)	B (ye)	S (yi)	F (yo)	G (yu)	B (yv)

Alphabets

- ❖ As far as we can tell, all of the world’s alphabets (including Cyrillic, Hebrew, Arabic, and Roman) are derived from the Phoenician alphabet.

<i>Phoenician</i>	𐤀 𐤁 𐤂 𐤃 𐤄 𐤅 𐤆 𐤇 𐤈 𐤉 𐤊 𐤋 𐤌 𐤍 𐤎 𐤏 𐤐 𐤑 𐤒 𐤓 𐤔 𐤕 𐤖 𐤗 𐤘 𐤙 𐤚
<i>Classic Greek</i>	A B Γ Δ E F Z H Θ I K Λ M N Ξ O Π Q P Σ T Y Φ X Ψ Ω
<i>Old Roman</i>	A B C D E F H I K L M N O P Q R S T V X
<i>Modern "Roman" Alphabet</i>	A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T V W X Y Z

Source: http://edsitement.neh.gov/view_lesson_plan.asp?id=517

Fonts

Whether **you** realize IT or not, **you deal with** *many* different **ways of writing** – with a *variety* of FONTS.

Remember, even in the same font,
CAPITAL LETTERS CAN BE
very different from lower case letters.

You may **NOT** THINK it's **ESPECIALLY SIGNIFICANT**, but most computers **can't read decorative or ZIG ZAG** FONTS (also called "display" fonts). Computers **GENERALLY** can only *deal* with basic fonts ("book fonts").

And some fonts, as you can **see**, can **BE** very peculiar *indeed!*

Direction

- ❖ There is no particular reason for us to read or write in any one direction.
- ❖ Some languages, such as English, are written left-to-right.
- ❖ (Arabic as such) right-to-left written are Some.

Traditional Japanese and Mongolian were written top-to-bottom.	And one of the earliest ways of boustrophedon called is writing ("as the ox plows") in which then and direction one in read you in the opposite direction.	bottom-up. written were Greek of forms Some
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