

# 5

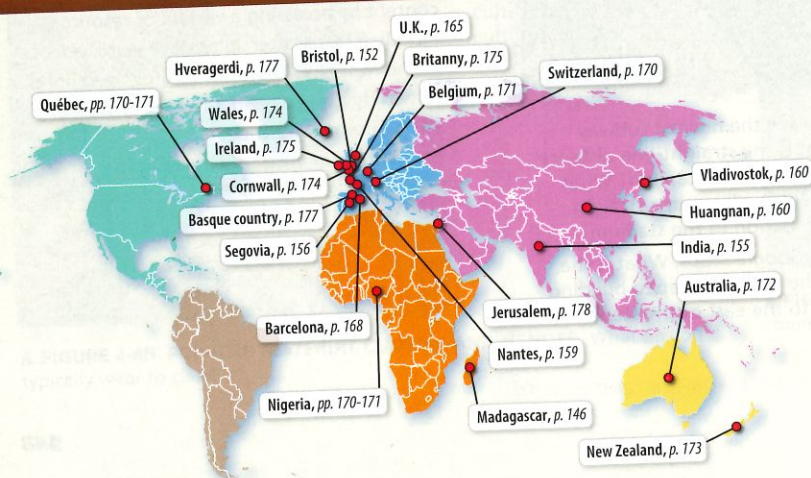
## Languages

Language is an important part of culture. It is the means through which other cultural values, such as religion and ethnicity, are communicated. 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.

English has achieved an unprecedented globalization because people around the world are learning it to participate in a global economy and culture. At the same time, people are trying to preserve local diversity in language because language is one of the basic elements of cultural identity.

Learning English in Malaysia.

### LOCATIONS IN THIS CHAPTER



### KEY ISSUES

#### 1

### Where Are the World's Languages Distributed?

Most languages can be classified as belonging to a family. Individual languages and language families cluster in distinctive **regions**.



#### 2

### Where Did English and Related Languages Originate and Diffuse?

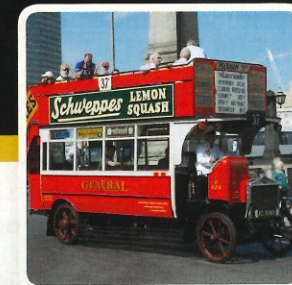
People in two locations speak the same language because of migration from one of the locations to another. If the two groups have few **connections** with each other after the migration, the languages spoken by the two groups will begin to differ.



#### 3

### Why Do Individual Languages Vary Among Places?

Distinctive languages form as people migrate to new **places** and incorporate new words into their language while holding on to some words brought from their previous place of residence.



#### 4

### Why Do Local Languages Survive?

Languages display contradictory trends of **scale**. On the one hand, individual languages remain clustered in **space** as an expression of cultural identity. On the other hand, languages such as English have achieved unprecedented globalization because people around the world are learning them to participate in a global economy and culture.



## KEY ISSUE 1

## Where Are the World's Languages Distributed?

- ▶ **Introducing Languages**
- ▶ **Language Families**
- ▶ **Two Largest Language Families**
- ▶ **Other Large Language Families**

## LEARNING OUTCOME 5.1.1

Understand how languages are classified.

**Language** is a system of communication through speech, a collection of sounds that a group of people understands to have the same meaning. Language is an important 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 three traits that 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.

## Introducing Languages

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.

Most people in the United States know only English. In the United States, only 8 percent of college students and

18 percent of high school students take a foreign language. In contrast, 69 percent of graduates from Dutch high schools have learned at least two foreign languages. Across Europe as a whole, 75 percent of elementary school students and 94 percent of high school students learn English.

## LANGUAGE AND MIGRATION

The study of language follows logically from migration because the contemporary distribution of languages around the world is largely a result of past migrations of peoples. People in two locations speak the same language because of migration from one of the locations to another.

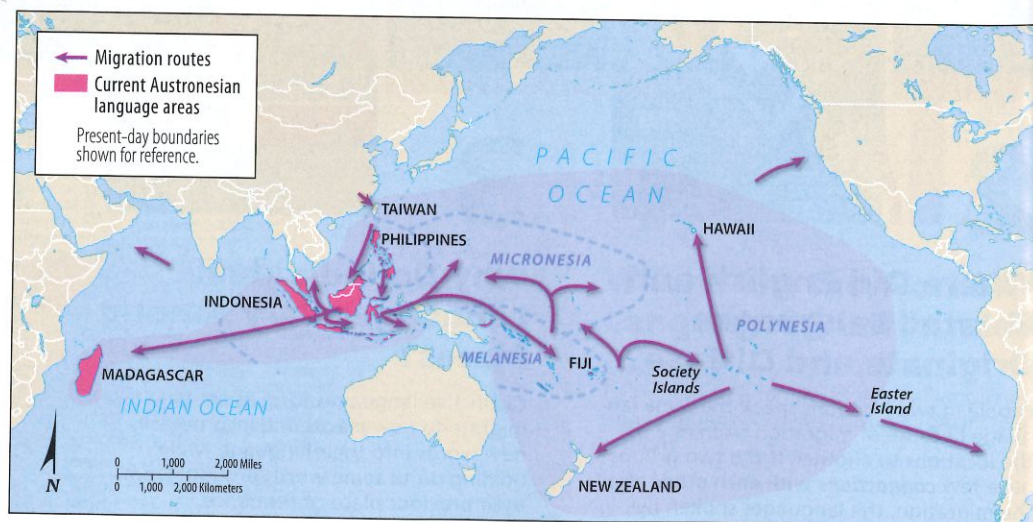
For example, the people of Madagascar (the large island off the east coast of Africa) speak a language belonging to the same family as the languages of most of Indonesia and the Philippines (Figure 5-1). The shared language family between Indonesia and Madagascar is strong evidence of migration a long time ago between these two places. Researchers have concluded that migrants sailed the 3,000 kilometers across the Indian Ocean from Indonesia to Madagascar approximately 2,000 years ago. Imagine sailing across 3,000 kilometers of ocean in tiny boats 1,500 years before Columbus sailed 6,000 kilometers across the Atlantic Ocean.

If the two groups have few connections with each other after the migration, the languages spoken by the two groups will begin to differ. After a long period without contact, the two groups will speak languages that are so different that they are classified as separate languages. The interplay between interaction and isolation helps explain the distribution of individual languages and entire language families.

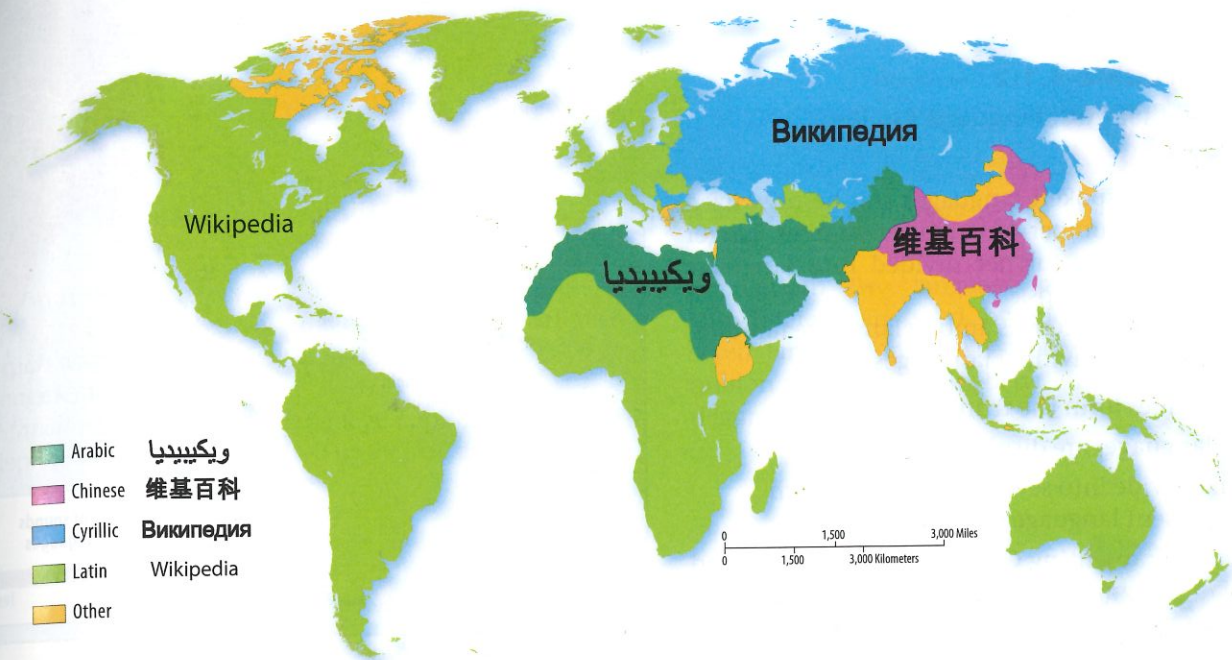
## PAUSE &amp; REFLECT 5.1.1

What forms of power would have moved boats 2,000 years ago?

Language is like luggage: People carry it with them when they move from place to place. They incorporate new words into their own language when they reach new places, and they contribute words brought with them to the existing



▶ **FIGURE 5-1 AUSTRONESIAN LANGUAGES** The current distribution of Austronesian languages is a function of migration of Austronesian people in the past.



▲ **FIGURE 5-2 WRITING SYSTEMS** The map shows the word "Wikipedia" in several writing systems.

language at the new location. Geographers look at the similarities among languages to understand the diffusion and interaction of people around the world.

## CLASSIFYING LANGUAGES

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 (online at ethnologue.com), estimates that the world has 7,102 languages, including 90 spoken by at least 10 million people, 304 spoken by between 1 and 10 million people, and 6,708 spoken by fewer than 1 million people. The distribution of some of these languages is easy for geographers to document, whereas with others—especially in Africa and Asia—it is difficult, if not impossible.

*Ethnologue* classifies languages as institutional, developing, vigorous, in trouble, and dying. Of the world's 7,102 languages, 578 are institutional, 1,598 developing, 2,479 vigorous, 1,531 in trouble, and 916 dying.

An **institutional language** is used in education, work, mass media, and government. Many countries designate at least one institutional language as an **official language**, which is used by the government for laws, reports, and public objects, such as road signs, money, and stamps. 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. Some countries have more than one official language and require all public documents to be in all of the official languages.

An institutional language also has a **literary tradition**, which means it is written as well as spoken. The system of written communication includes a method of writing

and rules of grammar. The world's languages with literary traditions make use of more than one alphabet (Figure 5-2). Thousands of spoken languages lack a literary tradition. The lack of written records is one reason it is difficult to document the total number of languages or their distribution.

A **developing language** is spoken in daily use by people of all ages, from children to elderly individuals. A developing language also has a literary tradition, though literature in the language may not be widely distributed. A **vigorous language** is spoken in daily use by people of all ages, but it lacks a literary tradition. Languages in trouble and dying, as the names imply, are considered by *Ethnologue* to be in various stages of disappearing from use. Some of these endangered languages are being saved, as discussed later in this chapter.

## ORGANIZING LANGUAGE FAMILIES

The world's languages can be organized into families, branches, and groups:

- A **language family** is a collection of languages related through a common ancestral language that existed long before recorded history.
- A **language branch** is a collection of languages within a family related through a common ancestral language that existed several thousand years ago; differences are not as extensive or as old as between language families, and archaeological evidence can confirm that the branches derived from the same family.
- A **language group** is a collection of languages within a branch that share a common origin in the relatively recent past and display many similarities in grammar and vocabulary.

# Language Families

## LEARNING OUTCOME 5.1.2

Identify the world's largest language families.

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.

Figure 5-3 depicts differences among language families, branches, groups, and individual languages:

- Language families form the trunks of the trees.
- Individual languages are displayed as leaves.
- Some trunks divide into several branches, which logically represent language branches.
- The branches representing Germanic, Balto-Slavic, and Indo-Iranian in Figure 5-3 divide a second time into language groups.

The larger the trunks and leaves are, the greater the number of speakers of those families and languages.

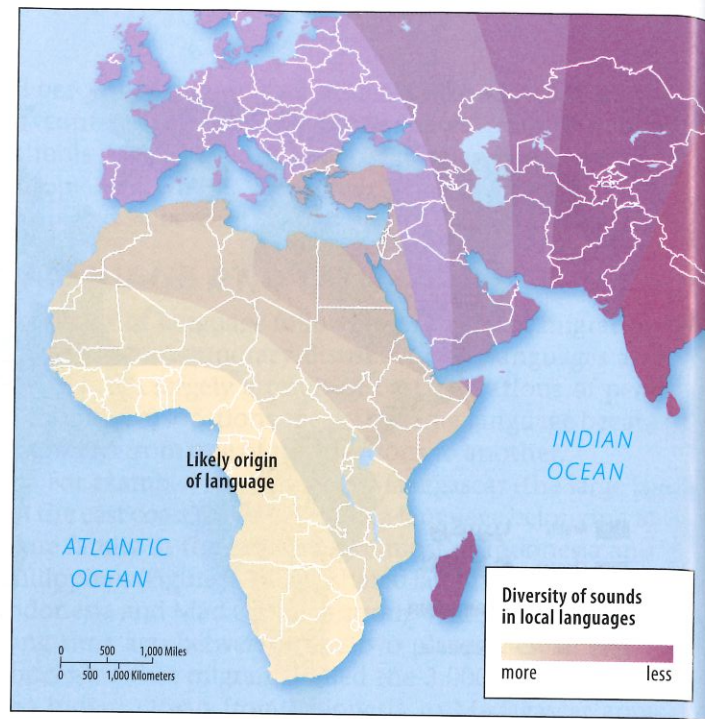
### PAUSE & REFLECT 5.1.2

Based on Figure 5-3, which four other languages with at least 5 million speakers belong to the same language family, branch, and group as English?

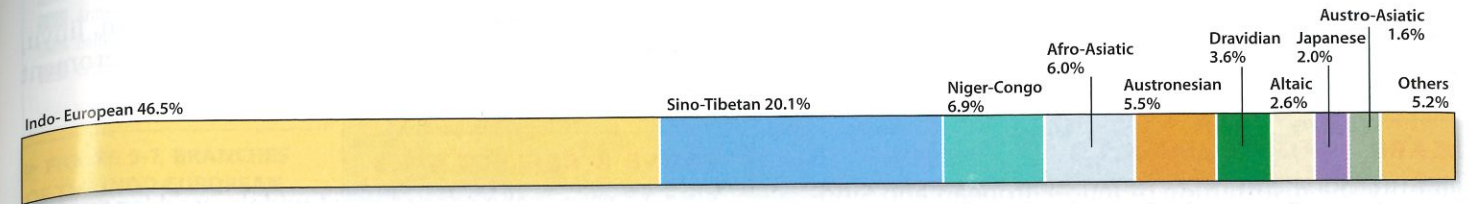
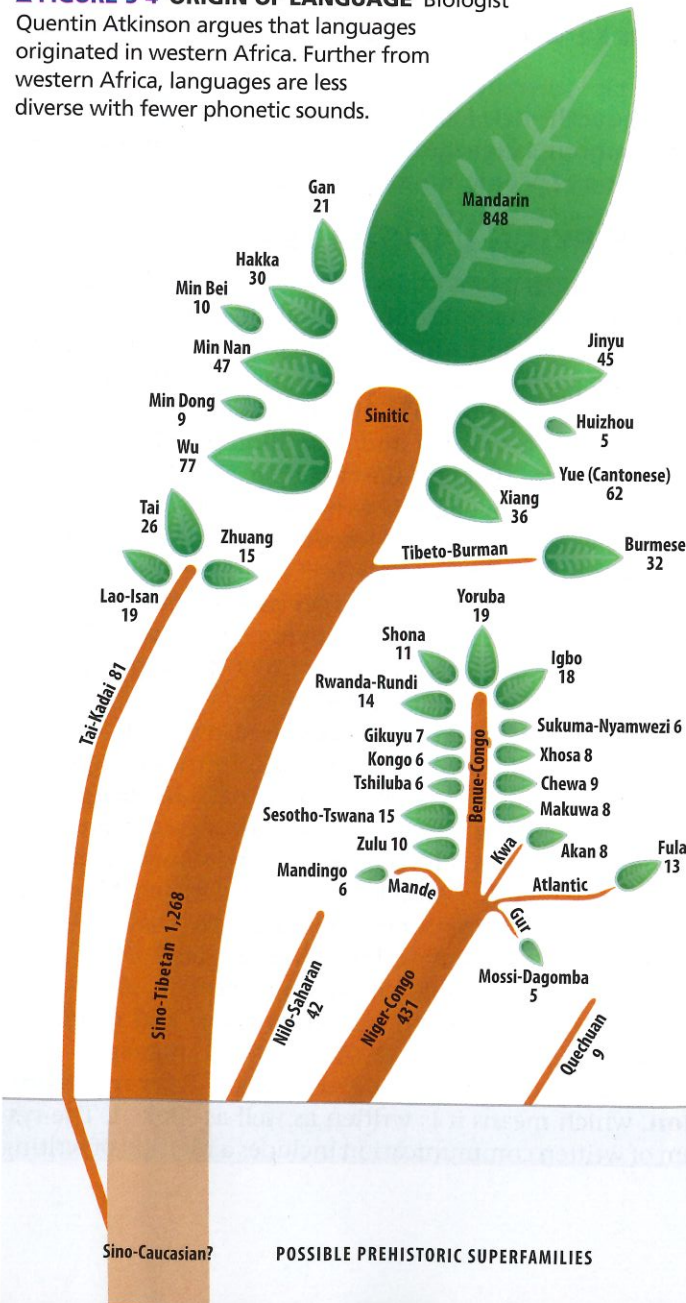
Figure 5-3 displays each language family as a separate tree at ground level because differences among families predate recorded history. Some linguists speculate that language families were joined together as a handful of superfamilies tens of thousands of years ago. Superfamilies are shown as roots below the surface because their existence is highly controversial and speculative.

A biologist in New Zealand, Quentin Atkinson, carries the speculation further, arguing that all languages can be ultimately traced to Africa (Figure 5-4). According to Atkinson, languages are most complex and diverse in Africa.

► **FIGURE 5-3 LANGUAGE FAMILY TREES** Language families with at least 9 million speakers, according to *Ethnologue*, are shown as trunks of trees. Individual languages that have more than 5 million speakers are shown as leaves. Some trunks divide into several branches, which logically represent language branches. The branches representing Germanic, Balto-Slavic, and Indo-Iranian divide a second time into language groups. Some linguists speculate that language families were joined together as a handful of superfamilies tens of thousands of years ago. Superfamilies are shown as roots below the surface because their existence is highly controversial and speculative.



▲ **FIGURE 5-4 ORIGIN OF LANGUAGE** Biologist Quentin Atkinson argues that languages originated in western Africa. Further from western Africa, languages are less diverse with fewer phonetic sounds.

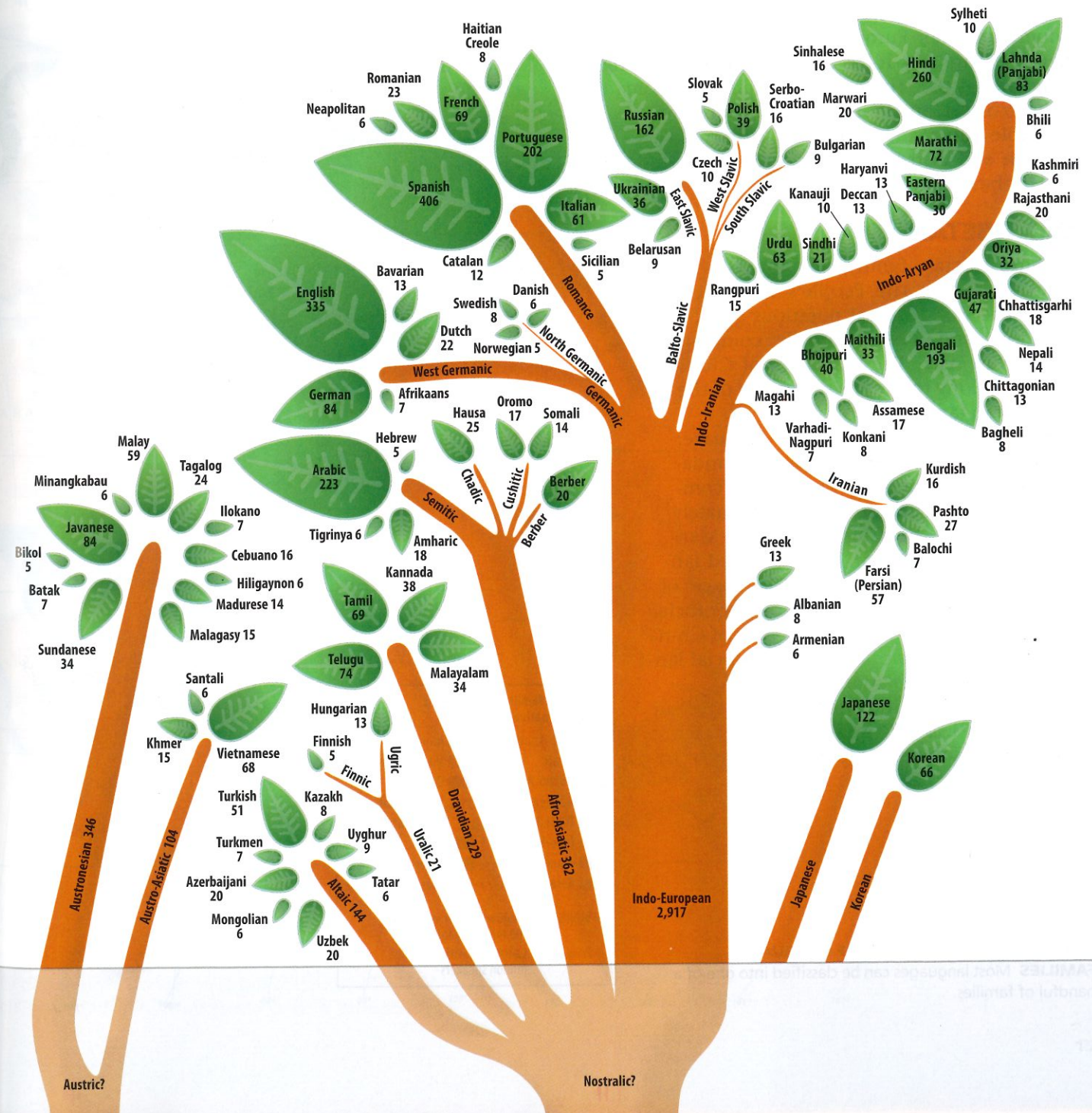


▲ **FIGURE 5-5 WORLD'S MAJOR LANGUAGE FAMILIES** The graph shows the percentage of people who speak a language from each major family.

Atkinson thinks humans outside Africa display less linguistic diversity because their languages have had a shorter time in which to evolve into new languages than have African languages.

*Ethnologue* identifies 142 language families. The 14 families depicted in Figure 5-3 are used by 99 percent of the world's

population. Two language families—Indo-European and Sino-Tibetan—are used by more than 1 billion people, seven language families by between 100 million and 500 million people, and 5 by between 9 million and 100 million (Figure 5-5).



## Two Largest Language Families

### LEARNING OUTCOME 5.1.3

Identify the distribution of Indo-European and Sino-Tibetan, the two largest families.

Language families with at least 9 million native speakers are shown in Figure 5-6. Individual languages with at least 50 million speakers are named on the map. The two language families with the most speakers are Indo-European and Sino-Tibetan.

### INDO-EUROPEAN

Indo-European, the most widely used language family, is the predominant one in Europe, South Asia, and North and Latin America (Figure 5-7). It has eight branches, including four that are widely used (Indo-Iranian, Germanic, Romance, and Balto-Slavic) and four that are spoken by relatively few people (Albanian, Armenian, Celtic, and Greek). Its origin and distribution are discussed in more detail in the next key issue.

### SINO-TIBETAN

The Sino-Tibetan family encompasses languages spoken in the People's Republic of China—the world's most populous state, at 1.3 billion—and in several smaller countries in Southeast Asia. The languages of China generally belong to the Sinitic branch of the Sino-Tibetan family.

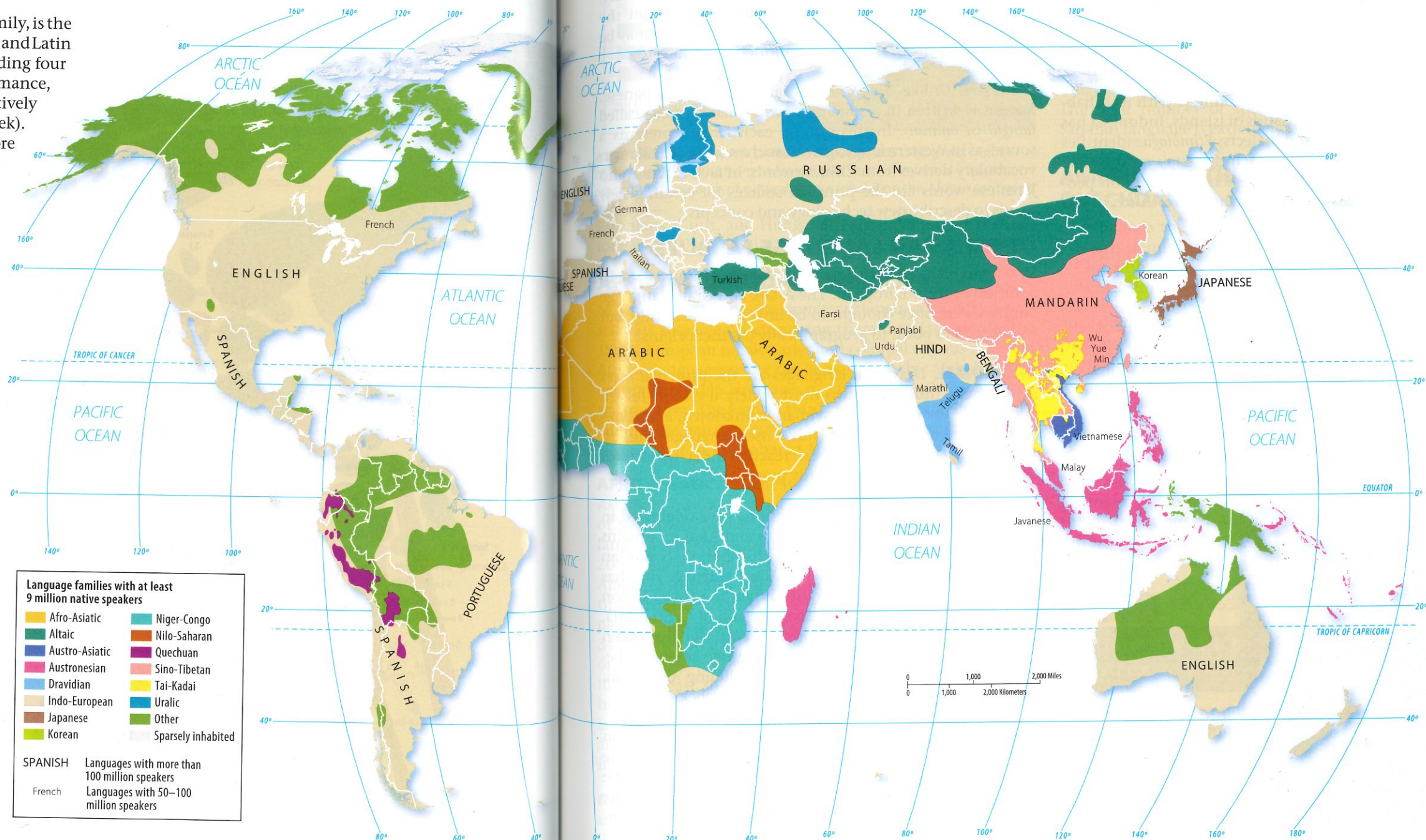
There is no single Chinese language. Rather, the most commonly used is Mandarin, which the Chinese call *Putonghua* ("common speech"). Spoken by approximately three-fourths of the Chinese people, Mandarin is by a wide margin the most-used language in the world. Once the language of emperors in Beijing, Mandarin is now the official language of both the People's Republic of China and Taiwan, and it is one of the six official languages of the United Nations.

Seven other Sinitic branch languages are spoken by at least 20 million each in China, mostly in the southern and eastern parts of the

country—Wu, Yue (also known as Cantonese), Min, Jinyu, Xiang, Hakka, and Gan. However, the Chinese government is imposing Mandarin countrywide.

### PAUSE & REFLECT 5.1.3

Sino-Tibetan is the second-most widely used language family, but it appears on Figure 5-6 to encompass a smaller land area than several other language families. Why is this the case?



► **FIGURE 5-6 DISTRIBUTION OF LANGUAGE FAMILIES** Most languages can be classified into one of a handful of families.

- Albanian
- Armenian
- Balto-Slavic
- Celtic
- Germanic
- Greek
- Indo-Iranian
- Romance
- Non-Indo-European languages

► **FIGURE 5-7 BRANCHES OF THE INDO-EUROPEAN LANGUAGE FAMILY** Most Europeans speak languages from the Indo-European language family.



## Other Large Language Families

### LEARNING OUTCOME 5.1.4

Identify the distribution of the largest language families other than Indo-European and Sino-Tibetan.

Figures 5-3 and 5-6 show 14 language families. The 2 largest—Indo-European and Sino-Tibetan—were introduced on the previous page. This page summarizes the distribution of the other 12 (Figure 5-8).

### SOUTHEAST ASIA LANGUAGE FAMILIES

The three largest language families of Southeast Asia are Austronesian, Austro-Asiatic, and Tai-Kadai.

**AUSTRONESIAN.** These languages are spoken by about 6 percent of the world's people, who are mostly in Indonesia, the world's fourth-most-populous country. With its inhabitants dispersed among thousands of islands, Indonesia has many distinct languages and dialects; *Ethnologue* identifies 706 living languages in Indonesia. Indonesia's most widely used first language is Javanese, spoken by 84 million people, mostly on the island of Java, where two-thirds of the country's population is clustered.

**AUSTRO-ASIATIC.** This family is spoken by about 2 percent of the world's population, Vietnamese, the most-spoken tongue of the 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 seventeenth century by Roman Catholic missionaries.

**TAI-KADAI.** The Tai-Kadai family was 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 have led some linguistic scholars to speculate that people speaking these languages may have migrated from the Philippines.

### EAST ASIA LANGUAGE FAMILIES

The two most widely used language families outside of China are Japanese and Korean.

**JAPANESE.** Written in part with Chinese characters, Japanese also uses two systems of phonetic symbols, used either in place of Chinese characters or alongside them. Chinese cultural traits have diffused into Japanese society, including the original form of writing Japanese. But the structures of the two languages differ. Foreign terms may be written with one of these sets of phonetic symbols.

**KOREAN.** Unlike Sino-Tibetan languages and Japanese, Korean is written in a system known as *hankul* (also called *hangul* or *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.

### OTHER ASIAN LANGUAGE FAMILIES

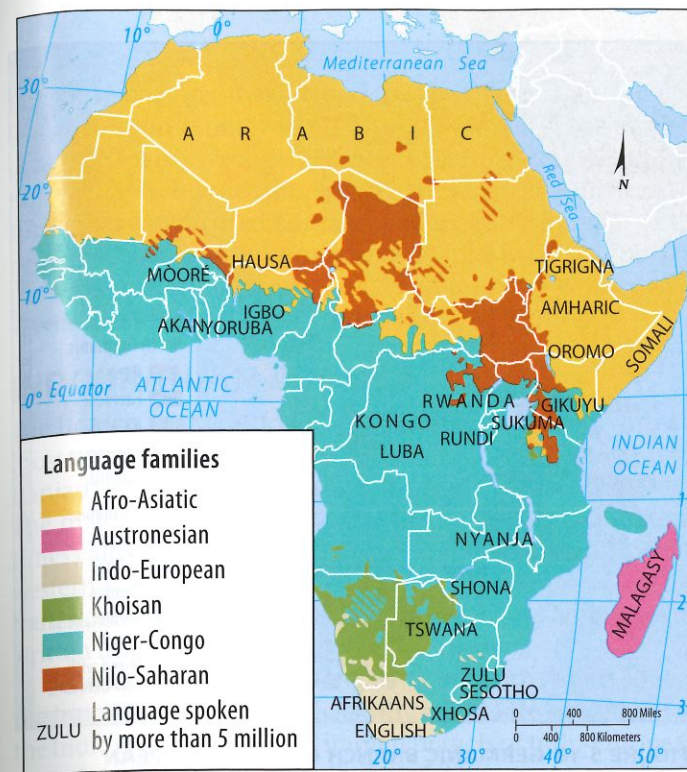
Dravidian is the principal language family of South Asia, in addition to Indo-European. The Altaic and Uralic language families were once thought to be linked as one family, but recent studies point to geographically distinct origins.

**DRAVIDIAN.** Dravidian languages are the principal ones in southern India. The two most widely used are Telugu and Tamil. The origin of Dravidian is unknown, and it has been studied less than other widely used language families. When speakers of Indo-European reached India, speakers of Dravidian languages were already present.

**ALTAIC.** Altaic 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 band of Asia. The Altaic language that has by far the most speakers is Turkish. When the Soviet Union governed most of the Altaic-speaking region of Central Asia, use of Altaic languages was suppressed. With the dissolution of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s, Altaic languages became official in several new countries, including Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan.

**URALIC.** Uralic languages are traceable back to a common language, first used 7,000 years ago by people living in the Ural Mountains of present-day Russia. Migrants carried the Uralic languages to Europe, carving out homelands in the midst of Germanic and Slavic-speaking peoples and retaining their language as a major element of cultural identity.

▲ FIGURE 5-8 WELCOME IN 33 LANGUAGES The sign is attached to a school in Bristol, United Kingdom.



▲ FIGURE 5-9 AFRICA'S LANGUAGE FAMILIES The great number of languages results from at least 5,000 years of minimal interaction among the thousands of cultural groups inhabiting the African continent.

Estonians, Finns, and Hungarians speak languages that belong to the Uralic family.

### AFRICAN LANGUAGE FAMILIES

No one knows the precise number of languages in Africa, and scholars disagree on classifying them into families. In the 1800s, European missionaries and colonial officers recorded African languages using the Roman or Arabic alphabet. *Ethnologue* lists 2,146 languages in Africa; only 699 have a literary tradition. The world's third- and fourth-largest language families are based in Africa: Afro-Asiatic in North Africa and Niger-Congo in sub-Saharan Africa.

**AFRO-ASIATIC.** Arabic is the major language of the Afro-Asiatic family, an official language in two dozen countries of Southwest Asia & North Africa, and one of six official languages of the United Nations. According to *Ethnologue*, 206 million people speak and write the official language Arabic. Most also speak a second language that is distinct from official Arabic. For example, 54 million people use Egyptian Spoken Arabic. *Ethnologue* identifies 34 distinct Arabic languages in addition to the official one. A large percentage of the world's 1 billion 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. The Afro-Asiatic family also includes Hebrew, the original language of Judaism's Bible and Christianity's Old Testament.

**NIGER-CONGO.** More than 95 percent of the people in sub-Saharan Africa speak languages of the Niger-Congo family (Figure 5-9). The three most widely spoken Niger-Congo

languages are Yoruba, Igbo, and Swahili. Yoruba and Igbo are among the many languages of Nigeria (look ahead to Figure 5-35). Swahili is an official language only in Tanzania, but it is the first language of 15 million people and is spoken as a second language by another 25 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. It is one of the few African languages with an extensive literature.

**NILO-SAHARAN.** Languages of the Nilo-Saharan family are spoken by 43 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 having relatively few 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.

### AMERICA'S OTHER LANGUAGE FAMILY: QUECHUAN

Quechuan is the most widely used language family in the Western Hemisphere other than Indo-European. Its speakers live primarily in the Andes Mountains of western South America. *Ethnologue* estimates that around 9 million people use a Quechuan language. *Ethnologue* identifies 44 distinct Quechuan languages. Quechua Cusco is the only one with more than 1 million speakers. According to *Ethnologue*, most speakers of a Quechuan language use Spanish first. Aymara, another indigenous language family in the Andes, has 3 million speakers, mostly in Bolivia.

### PAUSE & REFLECT 5.1.4

Most languages are named for regions or countries. For example, based on their names, how would you expect the distributions of Austronesian and Austro-Asiatic to differ?

### CHECK-IN KEY ISSUE 1

#### Where Are the World's Languages Distributed?

- ✓ Languages are classified as institutional, developing, vigorous, in trouble, and dying.
- ✓ Languages are organized into families and branches.
- ✓ Eighteen language families are used by at least 9 million people.

## Where Did English and Related Languages Originate and Diffuse?

- **Distribution of Indo-European Branches**
- **Origin and Diffusion of Indo-European**
- **Origin and Diffusion of English**
- **Global Importance of English**
- **Official Languages**

### LEARNING OUTCOME 5.2.1

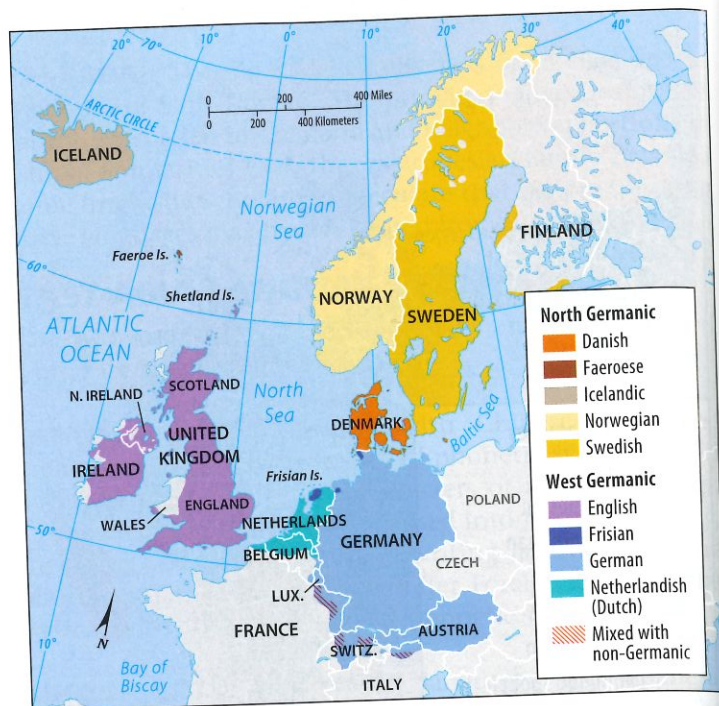
Identify the origin, diffusion, and current distribution of Indo-European branches.

Nearly one-half of the world's people speak a language belonging to the Indo-European language family. Indo-European languages have a common ancestor that predates recorded history.

## Distribution of Indo-European Branches

Indo-European is divided into eight branches. Four are widely spoken, and four much less so.

▼ **FIGURE 5-11 ROMANCE BRANCH OF INDO-EUROPEAN** Romance branch languages predominate in southwestern Europe.



▲ **FIGURE 5-10 GERMANIC BRANCH OF INDO-EUROPEAN**

## GERMANIC BRANCH

English belongs to the West Germanic group of the Germanic language branch of the Indo-European family (Figure 5-10). German and Dutch are also West Germanic group languages.

The Germanic language branch also includes languages in the North Germanic group, 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.

## ROMANCE BRANCH

The four most widely used contemporary Romance languages are Spanish, Portuguese, French, and Italian (Figure 5-11). The

European regions in which these four languages are 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. The fifth most widely used Romance language, Romanian, is the principal language of Romania and Moldova. It is separated from the other Romance-speaking European countries by Slavic-speaking peoples.

## INDO-IRANIAN BRANCH

The branch of the Indo-European language family with the most speakers is Indo-Iranian. The branch is divided into the Iranian, or Western, group and the Indic, or Eastern, group. 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.

The most widely used languages in South Asia belong to the Indo-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 1.2 billion residents of India is language (Figure 5-12). *Ethnologue* identifies 461 languages currently spoken in India, including 29 languages spoken by at least 1 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 a secondary official language. Speakers of different Indian languages who wish to communicate with each other sometimes use English as a common language.

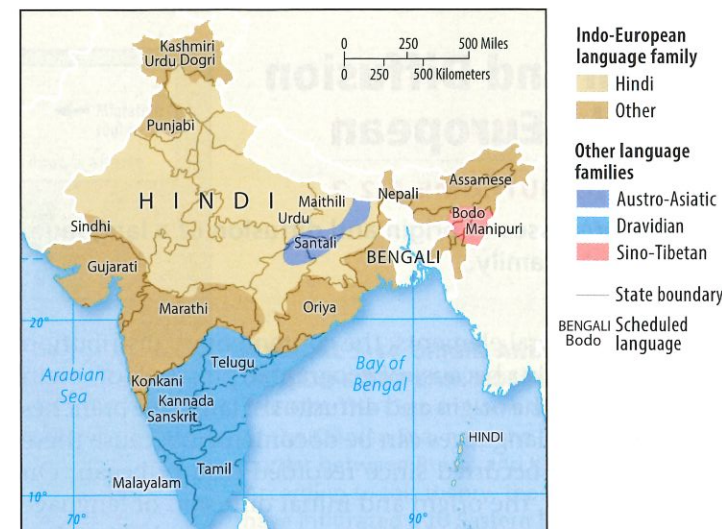
India also recognizes 22 so-called scheduled languages, including 15 Indo-European 4 Dravidian, 2 Sino-Tibetan, and 1 Austro-Asiatic. The government of India is obligated to encourage the use of these languages.

Hindi is spoken in many different ways, but there is only one official way to write Hindi, using a script called Devanagari. For example, the word for sun is written in Hindi as सूरज (pronounced “surya”).

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.

## BALTO-SLAVIC BRANCH

Balto-Slavic languages predominate in Eastern Europe. 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



▲ **FIGURE 5-12 LANGUAGE FAMILIES IN INDIA** India's principal official language is Hindi, which has many dialects. The country has 22 scheduled languages that the government is required to protect.

and thereafter lived in isolation from one other. As a result, this branch can be divided into East, West, and South Slavic groups, as well as a Baltic group. Figure 5-7 shows the widespread area populated with Balto-Slavic speakers.

The most widely used Slavic languages are the eastern ones, primarily Russian, which is spoken by more than 80 percent of Russian people. The importance of Russian increased with the Soviet Union's rise to power. 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 by the Soviet Union, Russian was taught as the second language.

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 most widely used South Slavic language is the one spoken in Bosnia & Herzegovina, Croatia, Montenegro, and Serbia. When they were all part of Yugoslavia, the language was called Serbo-Croatian. This name now offends Bosnians and Croats because it recalls 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, to demonstrate that each language is unique, even though linguists consider them one. Bosnians and Croats write the language in the Roman alphabet (what you are reading now), whereas Montenegrins and Serbs use the Cyrillic alphabet (for example, Serbia is written Србија).

Differences among all of the Slavic languages are relatively small. However, because language is a major element in a people's cultural identity, relatively small differences among Slavic as well as other languages are being preserved and even accentuated in recent movements.

### PAUSE & REFLECT 5.2.1

Which branch predominates to the north in Europe, which to the south, and which to the east?

## Origin and Diffusion of Indo-European

### LEARNING OUTCOME 5.2.2

Identify processes of origin and diffusion of a language branch and a family.

Like other cultural elements, the contemporary distribution of languages exists because of geographic processes of origin and diffusion. The origin and diffusion of language branches and individual languages can be documented because these processes have occurred since recorded history began. On the other hand, the origin and initial diffusion of language families predate recorded history, so we can only speculate about them. The origin and diffusion of the Romance language branch and Indo-European family are examples.

### ORIGIN AND DIFFUSION OF ROMANCE LANGUAGES

The Romance languages belong to a single branch because they originated from Latin, the “Romans’ language.” The rise in the importance of the city of Rome 2,000 years ago brought a 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 (Figure 5-13). The empire’s boundary is shown in Figure 8-8. As the conquering Roman armies occupied the provinces of this vast empire, they brought the Latin language with them. In the process, the languages spoken by the natives of the provinces 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 grew over a period of several hundred years, and the Latin used in each province was based on that spoken by

▼ **FIGURE 5-13 ROMAN AQUEDUCT, SEGOVIA SPAIN** The Romans built this 17-kilometer (11-mile) aqueduct to bring water to one of their westernmost outposts.



the Roman army at 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 the standard literary form but a spoken form, known as **Vulgar Latin**, from the Latin word referring to “the masses” of the populace.

Following the collapse of the Roman Empire in the fifth century A.D., 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.

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 branch languages have achieved worldwide importance because of the colonial activities of their European speakers. Spanish is the official language of 18 Latin American states, and fewer than 10 percent of the speakers of Spanish live in Spain. Portuguese is spoken in Brazil, which has a population of 200 million, compared to only 10 million in Portugal. The division of Central and South America into Portuguese- and Spanish-speaking regions resulted from 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.

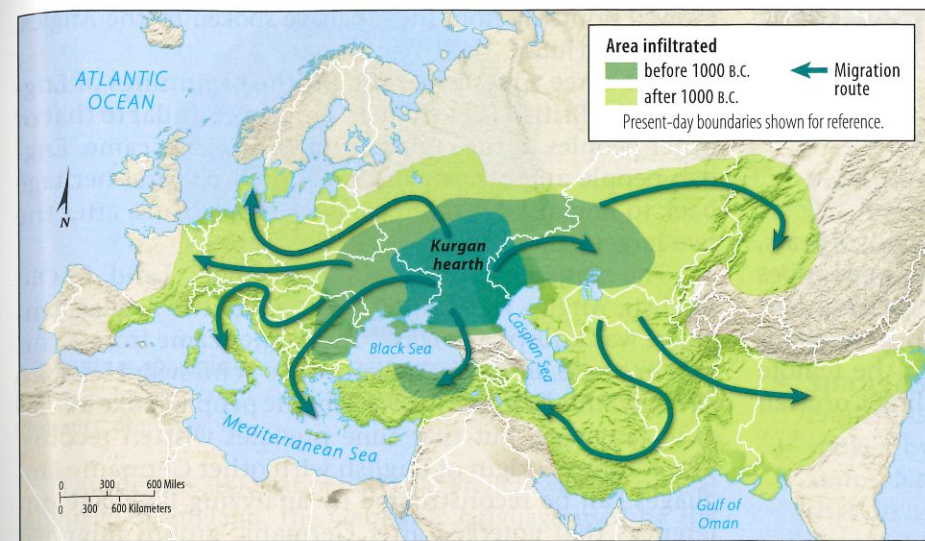
### COMMON ANCESTRY OF INDO-EUROPEAN LANGUAGES

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.

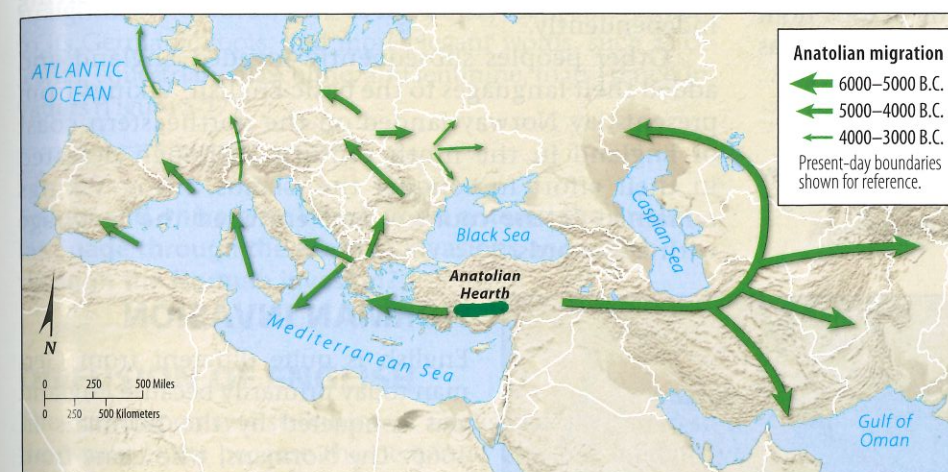
Because the origin of language families predates recorded history, the evidence that Indo-European originated with a single language comes primarily from words related to the physical environment. For example:

- Individual Indo-European languages share common 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.
- Individual Indo-European languages share words for some animals and trees (such as beech, oak, bear, deer, pheasant, and bee), but other words are unshared (such as elephant, camel, rice, and bamboo).

Therefore, linguists conclude that original Proto-Indo-European speakers lived in a place where the shared animals



◀ **FIGURE 5-14 ORIGIN AND DIFFUSION OF INDO-EUROPEAN: NOMADIC WARRIOR THEORY** The Kurgan homeland was north of the Caspian Sea, near the present-day border between Russia and Kazakhstan. According to this theory, the Kurgans may have infiltrated into Eastern Europe beginning around 4000 B.C. and into central Europe and Southwest Asia beginning around 2500 B.C.



◀ **FIGURE 5-15 ORIGIN AND DIFFUSION OF INDO-EUROPEAN: SEDENTARY FARMER THEORY** Indo-European may have originated in present-day Turkey 2,000 years before the Kurgans. According to this theory, the language diffused along with agricultural innovations west into Europe and east into Asia.

and trees are found, whereas the unshared words were added later, after the original language split into branches.

**NOMADIC WARRIOR THEORY.** Linguists and anthropologists disagree on when and where Proto-Indo-European originated and the process and routes by which it diffused. The first Proto-Indo-European speakers were the Kurgan people, according to archaeologist Marija Gimbutas. The earliest archaeological evidence of the Kurgans dates to around 4300 B.C., near the border between present-day Russia and Kazakhstan.

Among the first people to domesticate horses and chariots, the Kurgans migrated in search of grasslands for their animals. This took them westward through Europe, eastward to Siberia, and southeastward to Iran and South Asia. Between 3500 and 2500 B.C., Kurgan warriors, using their domesticated horses and chariots to establish military superiority, conquered much of Europe and South Asia (Figure 5-14).

**SEDENTARY FARMER THEORY.** Archaeologist Colin Renfrew argues that the first speakers of Proto-Indo-European lived 2,000 years before the Kurgans, in the east-

ern part of present-day Turkey (Figure 5-15). Supporting Renfrew, biologist Russell D. Gray dates the first speakers even earlier, at around 6700 B.C. This hypothesis 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.

Thus, the diffusion of Indo-European speaks to a fundamental question for humanity: Do cultural elements such as language diffuse primarily through warfare and conquest or primarily through peaceful sharing of food? 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.

### PAUSE & REFLECT 5.2.2

Which hypothesis appeals more to you: the “war” hypothesis or the “peace” hypothesis? Why?

## Origin and Diffusion of English

### LEARNING OUTCOME 5.2.3

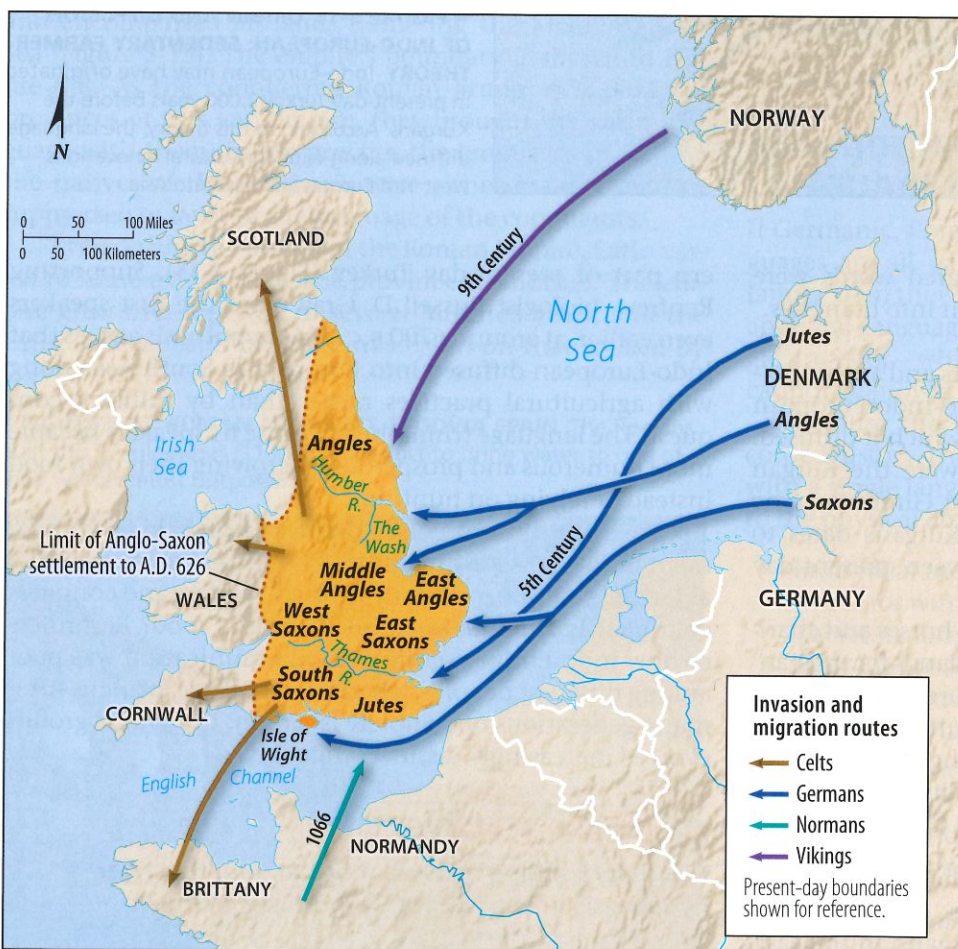
Understand processes underlying current distribution of English.

The British Isles have been inhabited for thousands of years, but we know nothing of their early languages until tribes called the Celts arrived around 2000 B.C., speaking languages we call Celtic. 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 tribes invading the British Isles were known as the Angles, Jutes, and Saxons. The Jutes came from northern Denmark, the Angles from southern Denmark, and the Saxons from northwestern Germany (Figure 5-16). Modern English has

▼ **FIGURE 5-16 INVASIONS OF ENGLAND** The first speakers of the language that became known as English were invaders from present-day Germany and Denmark. Later invasions by Vikings and Normans brought new words to the language spoken in the British Isles. The Normans were the last successful invaders of England.



evolved primarily from the language spoken by the Angles, Saxons, and Jutes.

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. English people and others who trace their cultural heritage back to England are often called Anglo-Saxons, after the two larger tribes.

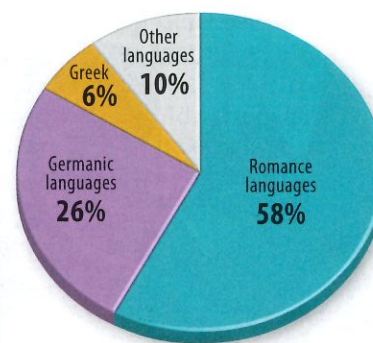
The name England comes from Angles' Land. In Old English, Angles was spelled *Engles*, and the Angles' language was known as *englisc*. The Angles came from a corner, or angle, of Germany known as Schleswig-Holstein. At some time in history, all Germanic people spoke a common language, but that time 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 northeastern coast of England in the ninth century. Although defeated in their effort to conquer the islands, many Vikings remained in the country, and enriched the language with new words.

### NORMAN INVASION

English is quite 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, 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, 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. Parliament continued to conduct business in French until 1489.



▲ **FIGURE 5-17 ORIGIN OF ENGLISH WORDS** Although classified in the Germanic branch, English actually has a higher percentage of Romance branch words.

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 more elegant words, such as celestial, equestrian, masculine, and feminine, to its French invaders (Figure 5-17).

### PAUSE & REFLECT 5.2.3

**School and university:** Which word entered the English language through the German invasions and which through the Norman invasion?

### DIFFUSION OF ENGLISH

The contemporary distribution of English speakers around the world exists because the people of England migrated with their language when they established colonies over the course of four centuries.

English first diffused west from England to North America in the seventeenth century. The first successful 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.

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.

Into the twentieth century, the United States was 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.

## COMBINING ENGLISH WITH OTHER LANGUAGES

New languages are being created through mixing English with other languages. Here are several examples:

- **Franglais** is the mix of French and English. French is an official language in 29 countries and for hundreds of years served as the lingua franca for international diplomats. Traditionally, language has been an especially important source of national pride and identity in France (Figure 5-18).
- **Spanglish** is the mix of Spanish and English. English is diffusing into the Spanish language spoken by 34 million Hispanics in the United States. New words have been invented in Spanglish that do not exist in English but would be useful if they did. For example, *textear* is a verb derived from the English and is less awkward than the Spanish *mandar un mensajito*.
- **Denglish** is the mix of German and English. The D stands for Deutsch, the German word for German. For example, the German telephone company Deutsche Telekom uses the German word *Deutschlandverbindungen* for “long distance” and the Denglish word *Cityverbindungen* for “local” (rather than the German word *Ortsverbindungen*).

▼ **FIGURE 5-18 FRANGLAIS** The name of the cafe in Nantes, France, is a mix of English (“death”) and French (“porc”).





## Global Importance of English

### LEARNING OUTCOME 5.2.4

Understand the concept of lingua franca.

One of the most fundamental needs in a global society is a common language for communication. In the modern world, the most important language of international communication is English. A Polish airline pilot who flies over Spain speaks to the traffic controller on the ground in English. Swiss bankers speak German among themselves, but with German bankers they prefer to speak English. English is the official language at an aircraft factory in France and an appliance company in Italy.

The dominance of English as an international language has facilitated the diffusion of popular culture and science and the growth of international trade. 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.

### LINGUA FRANCA

A language of international communication, such as English, is known as a **lingua franca**. To facilitate trade, speakers of two different languages create a lingua franca by mixing elements of the two languages into a simple common one. The term, which means “language



▲ FIGURE 5-20 LEARNING RUSSIAN School in Vladivostok, Russia.

of the Franks,” was originally applied by Arab traders during the Middle Ages to the language they used to communicate with Europeans, whom they called Franks.

People in smaller countries need to learn English to participate more fully in the 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.

The rapid growth in importance of English is reflected in the percentage of students learning English as a second language in school (Figure 5-19). More than 90 percent of students in the European Union learn English in middle or high school, not just in smaller countries such as 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 the global economy and participate in the global culture.

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 and 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 (Figure 5-20). A number of African and Asian



▲ FIGURE 5-19 TEACHING ENGLISH Huangnan, China.

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.

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.

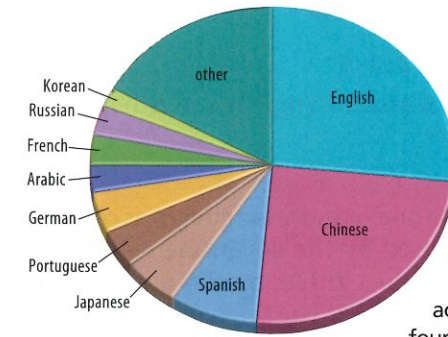
The inability to speak other languages is also a handicap for Americans who try to conduct international business. Successful entry into new overseas markets requires knowledge of local culture, and officials who can speak the local language are better able to obtain important information. Japanese businesses 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.

### ENGLISH ON THE INTERNET

The emergence of the Internet as an important means of communication has further strengthened the dominance of English. More than one-half of all Internet content is in English (Figure 5-21). Because a majority of the material on the Internet is in English, knowledge of English is essential for Internet users around the world.

The dominance of English-language websites persists despite the fact that a decreasing percentage of Internet users are English speakers. English was the language for only 27 percent of Internet users in 2015, a substantial decline from 71 percent in 1998 (Figure 5-22). 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 4-33). Meanwhile, Chinese (Mandarin) language online users increased from 2 percent of the world total in 1998 to 25 percent in 2015.

English may be less dominant as the language of the Internet later in the twenty-first century. But the United



◀ FIGURE 5-22 LANGUAGES OF INTERNET USERS English and Chinese speakers each account for around one-fourth of Internet users.

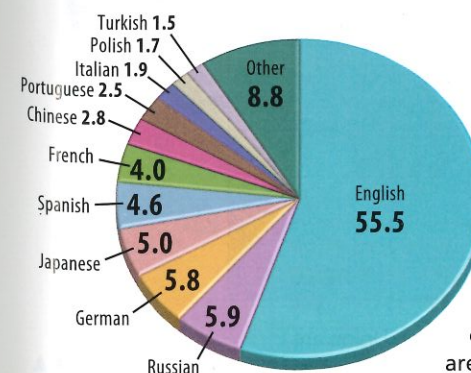
States—and with it the English language—remains the Internet leader in key respects. The United States created the English-language nomenclature for the Internet that the rest of the world has followed. The designation “www,” which English speakers recognize as an abbreviation of “World Wide Web,” is awkward in other languages, some of which do not have an equivalent sound to the English w.

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. 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.

### CHINESE: THE NEXT LINGUA FRANCA?

The future leadership of Chinese in social media comes in part from the large number of people worldwide who speak Chinese languages. The attraction of Chinese languages also comes from the way they are written. Rather than sounds (as in English), Chinese languages are written primarily with **logograms**, which are symbols that represent words or meaningful parts of words. Ability to read a book requires understanding several thousand logograms. Most logograms are compounds; words related to bodies of water, for example, include a symbol that represents a river, plus additional strokes that alter the river in some way.

Chinese is thus an attractive language to use in Twitter and other social media that restrict the number of characters. An English message that uses the maximum 140 symbols permitted by Twitter could be written in Chinese in only around 70 characters.



◀ FIGURE 5-21 LANGUAGES OF WEBSITES More than one-half of all websites are in English.

### PAUSE & REFLECT 5.2.4

What is the title of the book in Figure 5-20? Type the letters into Google Translate.