

# APHG CHAPTER 6: LANGUAGE

**KEY QUESTION #1:  
WHAT ARE  
LANGUAGES, AND  
WHAT ROLE DO  
LANGUAGES PLAY IN  
CULTURES?  
(5 slides)**

# KQ #1: WHAT ARE LANGUAGES, AND WHAT ROLE DO LANGUAGES PLAY IN CULTURES?

- Language: a set of sounds, combinations of sounds, and symbols that are used for communication
- Language is an integral part of culture---it reflects the culture and shapes it
- Reflects where a culture has been, what a culture values, even how people in a culture think, describe & experience things
- Experts estimate the # of languages to be between 3,000 and 6,000 today

# Chinese Ideograms

Fig. 5-13: Chinese language ideograms mostly represent concepts rather than sounds. The two basic characters at the top can be built into more complex words.

From basic characters:



Sun



Person



White, clear (Sun peeping out)



Big (person with arms extended)



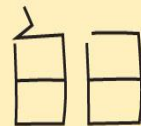
Heaven (above the biggest person)



White person



Daytime (clear and heaven)



Daytime (clear and Sun)

# KQ #1: WHAT ARE LANGUAGES, AND WHAT ROLE DO LANGUAGES PLAY IN CULTURES?

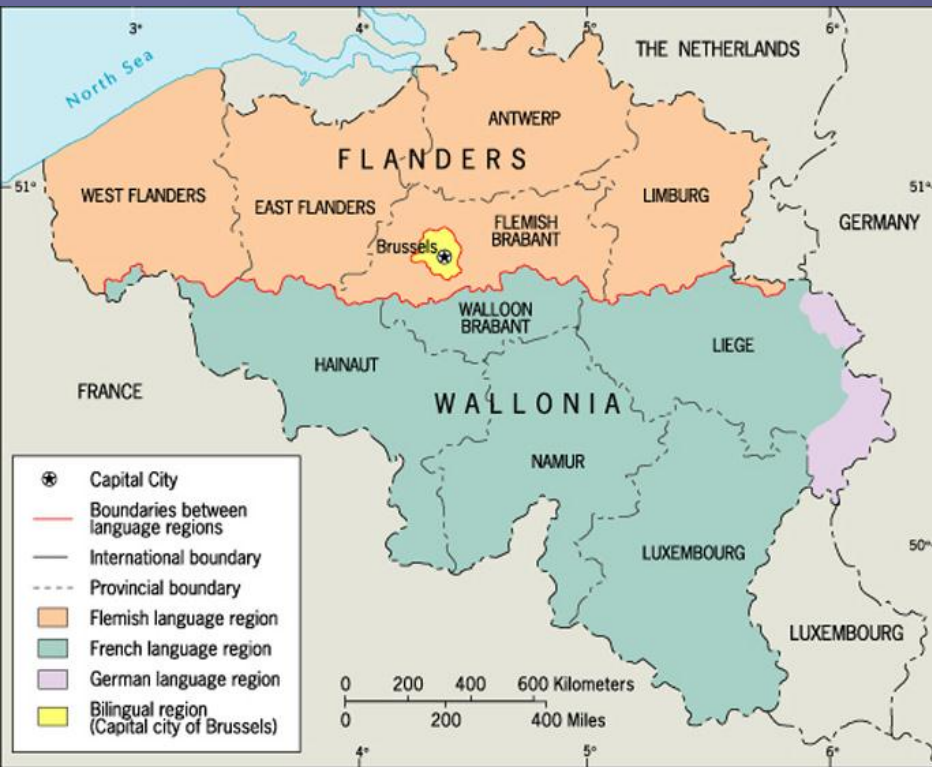
- A major force in preserving local & national culture is language
- The French take this quite seriously
  - French Academy's job is to standardize the language
  - 1975 law bans use of foreign words on ads, TV and radio broadcasts
  - 1992: French was made the official language
  - 1994: fines were put into places in parts of France for using a foreign language



# KQ #1: WHAT ARE LANGUAGES, AND WHAT ROLE DO LANGUAGES PLAY IN CULTURES?

- Language reflects the way people think about the world
  - In some African languages, there is no word for God
  - Some Asian languages have no tenses, no way for reporting chronological events
- Language is so tied to culture that people use it as a weapon in cultural conflict & politics
  - There was a big push in the 1980s to make English the official language in the U.S., as Spanish became more prevalent (25 states today list English as their official language)
  - Issue in Quebec almost led to secession

# Language and Political Conflict



Belgium:

Flanders (Flemish language)

Wallonia (French language)

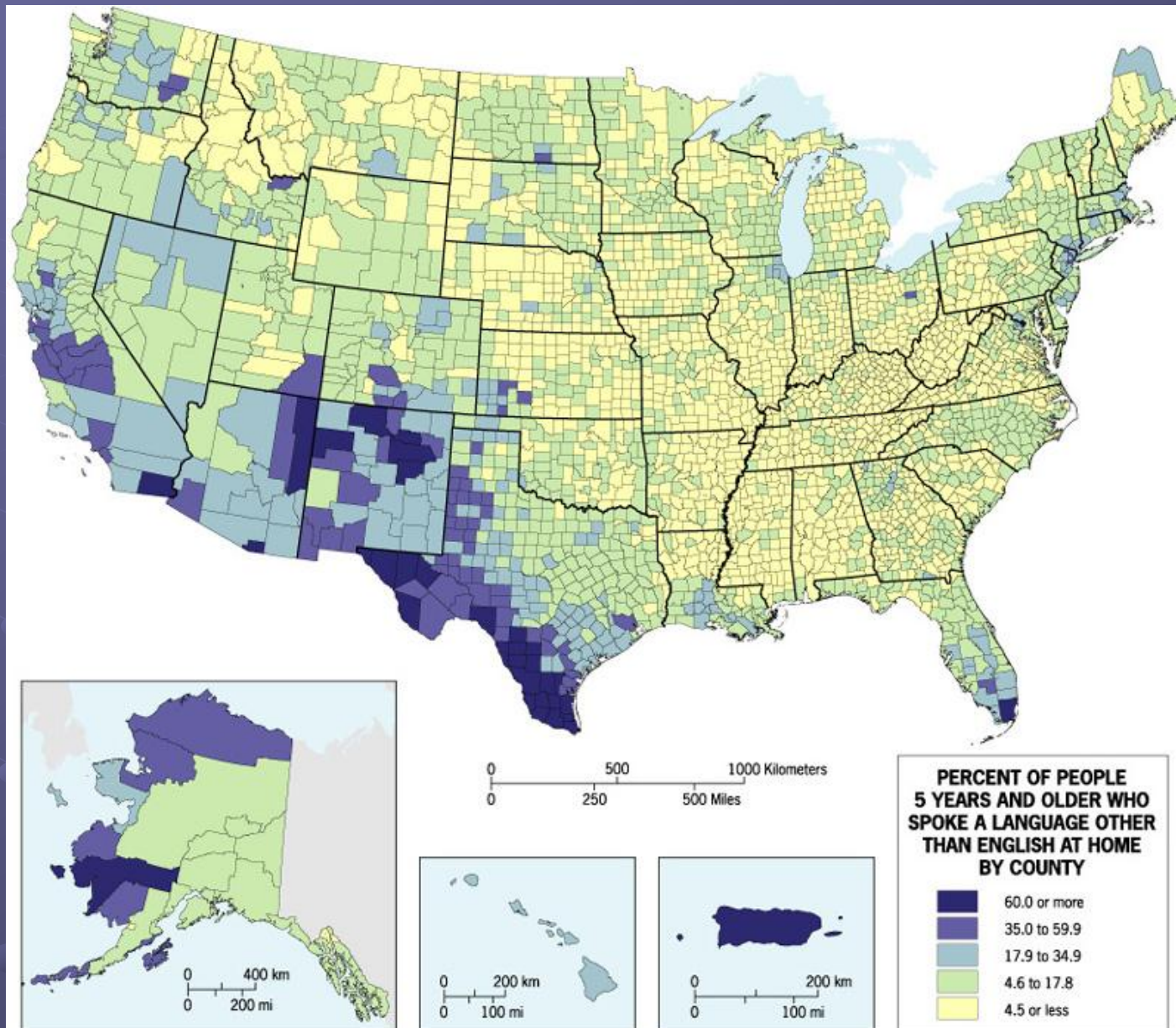


**TOP TEN LANGUAGES SPOKEN AT HOME  
BY NON-ENGLISH SPEAKERS**

<b>Language</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Percent</b>
<b>1. Spanish</b>	<b>28,101,052</b>	<b>59.9</b>
<b>2. Chinese</b>	<b>2,022,143</b>	<b>4.3</b>
<b>3. French</b>	<b>1,643,838</b>	<b>3.5</b>
<b>4. German</b>	<b>1,382,613</b>	<b>2.9</b>
<b>5. Tagalog</b>	<b>1,224,241</b>	<b>2.6</b>
<b>6. Vietnamese</b>	<b>1,009,627</b>	<b>2.1</b>
<b>7. Italian</b>	<b>1,008,370</b>	<b>2.1</b>
<b>8. Korean</b>	<b>894,063</b>	<b>1.9</b>
<b>9. Russian</b>	<b>706,242</b>	<b>1.5</b>
<b>10. Polish</b>	<b>667,414</b>	<b>1.5</b>



# Percent of People 5 Years and Older Who Speak a Language other than English at Home



# KQ #1: WHAT ARE LANGUAGES, AND WHAT ROLE DO LANGUAGES PLAY IN CULTURES?

- Language is dynamic and changing---new technologies, ideas & products require new words
- Variants of a standard language along regional or ethnic lines are called “dialects”
  - Evidenced in vocabulary differences, syntax(the way the words are put together to form phrases), pronunciation, cadence(rhythm of speech) and even the pace of speech
  - In America, the spelling doesn't change----the way words are said can definitely change from region to region



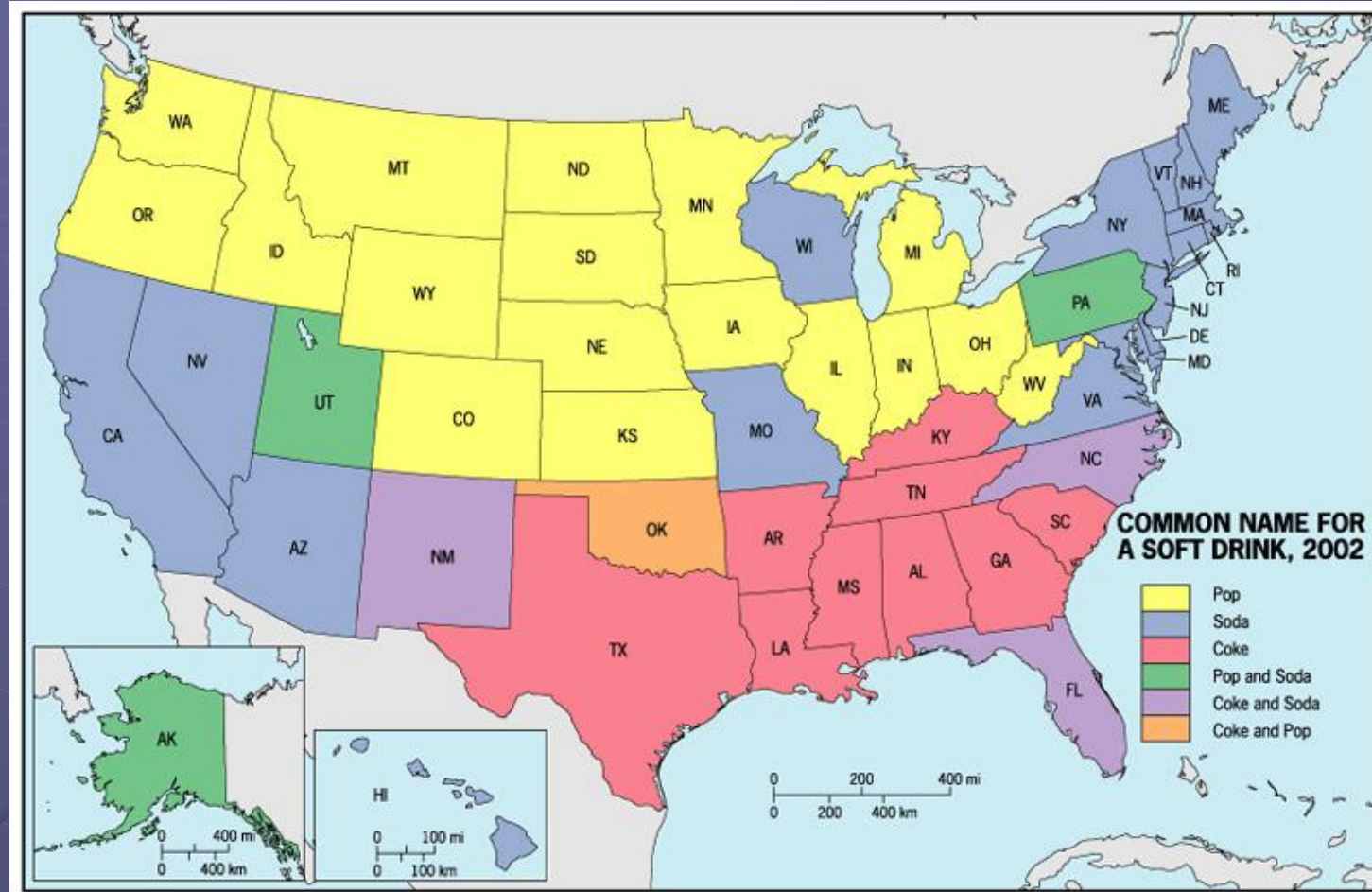
# KQ #1: WHAT ARE LANGUAGES, AND WHAT ROLE DO LANGUAGES PLAY IN CULTURES?

- An “isogloss” is a geographic boundary within which a particular linguistic feature occurs
- Another major language issue is “mutual intelligibility”---- two people can understand each other when speaking (even if speaking different languages)
  - People speaking different dialects of the same language can usually understand each other
  - Much harder with 2 different languages (Scandinavian languages are mostly mutually intelligible...as are Serbian/Croatian, Hindi/Urdu, Spanish/Portuguese and Navajo/Apache)

# Dialect

variants of a standard language along regional or ethnic lines

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



# Isogloss

A geographic boundary within which a particular linguistic feature occurs



# Mutual Intelligibility

- Means two people can understand each other when speaking.
  - Problems:
    - Cannot measure mutual intelligibility
    - Many “languages” fail the test of mutual intelligibility
    - Standard languages and governments impact what is a “language” and what is a “dialect”