

# Language Maps from Africa to Europe: Multilingualism, Colonialism and New Approaches to Geographical Linguistics

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## Abstract

Language maps, which reflect linguistic pluralism, multilingualism and the spread of languages across countries and empires were part of an evolving human history. Historically, language came under the impact of geography, political conflicts and colonization. Due to these factors, languages penetrate borders or ended up in isolation or even in extinction. In this context, the paper investigates selected language maps of many African, Asian, European and South American countries in order to underline the connections between language, politics, immigration, war and other related elements. The paper argues that current language maps in some geographical regions are similar to the political maps of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries because colonial languages continued to exist in these countries even after the departure of the colonizers. Further, the paper explores the spread of a variety of languages and their penetration in some countries, which constituted a great part of the European Union, in order to examine the impact of geo-politics on the changing status of language maps in Europe.

**Keywords:** language maps, geography, multilingualism, colonization, hybridity, environment, culture

## INTRODUCTION

The emergence of language was a miracle by all standards, and its development in the form of many vernaculars and dialects was conclusive evidence of human development and creativity. The human race is divided into more than five thousand groups, each of which speaks a different language and does not understand any of the languages of the others except through learning and practice. Abram de Swaan argues that “the human species is divided into more than five thousand groups each of which speaks a different language and does not understand any of the others. With this multitude of languages, humankind has brought upon itself a great confusion of tongues” (1) Due to the abundance of languages, humanity has brought upon itself a great deal of linguistic confusion and division. However, the human race as a whole remained interconnected, since this linguistic division was transcended by those who speak more than one language. Thereupon, bilingual groups ensured communication between the communities speaking different languages.

The links of multilingualism between language groups did not appear randomly, but on the contrary, they forged a powerful, effective and amazing network of communication linking directly or indirectly between the six billion people of the Earth. The current global system of language constitutes an innovative model of links between language groups at a time when it is increasingly believed that all living languages belong to a common ancestry and that they likely evolved in the wake of the evolutionary path of present-day humans from a common genetic line during about one hundred and twenty thousand years.

At the present time, and in light of the progress of genetic studies, comparative linguistics and ancient archeology, a successive and growing body of evidence has emerged that proves this common origin of languages. Even if evidence proves one day that the human race and its languages came from multiple and scattered origins, there is no doubt that human groups at present constitute a single interdependent whole, and that their languages together constitute an interlocking group that constitutes one dimension of the world order at the present time. Currently, there are five or six thousand languages spoken on the earth, and the number cannot be checked to the desired degree, as languages are sometimes not arithmetic. Obviously, languages are like clouds and it is not easy for anyone to tell where one cloud begins and where another ends, although most clouds, like most languages, are clearly distinguished through the clear spaces between each other.

The best way to visualize the evolution of universal language groups is through a series of global language maps.<sup>1</sup> It is quite possible in the prehistoric stages that

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1 Apparently, maps most likely utilize polygons to show the approximate boundaries of the language groups.

from time to time, during the spread of human species across different continents that small groups of people separated from the main group, crossed mountains and seas to settle finally in remote areas far from any neighboring population. There, in their isolation, and in the absence of any written texts, their languages changed relatively quickly, reaching the stage of obscurity in relation to their original languages over a considerable period that took many years and tens of generations. Then the confrontations between these human groups and the frictions between the emerging languages resulted in new linguistic fusions.

Accordingly, an imaginary map of the distribution of prehistoric languages may provide linguistic areas in the form of small circles that soon expanded and elongated in light of the spread and migration of linguistic groups across the new lands, extending to their maximum limits. Later it may happen that a separate circle heralded the emergence of a new language in different locations. Moreover, there is absolutely no contradiction between the hypothesis of the development of all languages from one absolute origin and the existence of innumerable languages which are completely incomprehensible to each other, since human species have been scattered across all continents.

There is no doubt that early distribution of human languages was much more fragmented than in the current global language system.<sup>2</sup> Despite this fragmentation, it is possible to argue that in early times great numbers of people in adjacent areas traded and intermarried among themselves, and some learned the languages of the neighboring communities. These language circles, no matter how small, should have produced an intertwining of the most densely populated areas. Wherever people settled and began cultivating the land, it was inevitable that they developed language/s of communication shared by the population of the adjacent villages. These early tongues which encircled the neighboring regions were used as connecting languages reflecting the logical coherence of the distribution of languages at ancient times.

## LANGUAGE MAPS: A HISTORICAL APPROACH

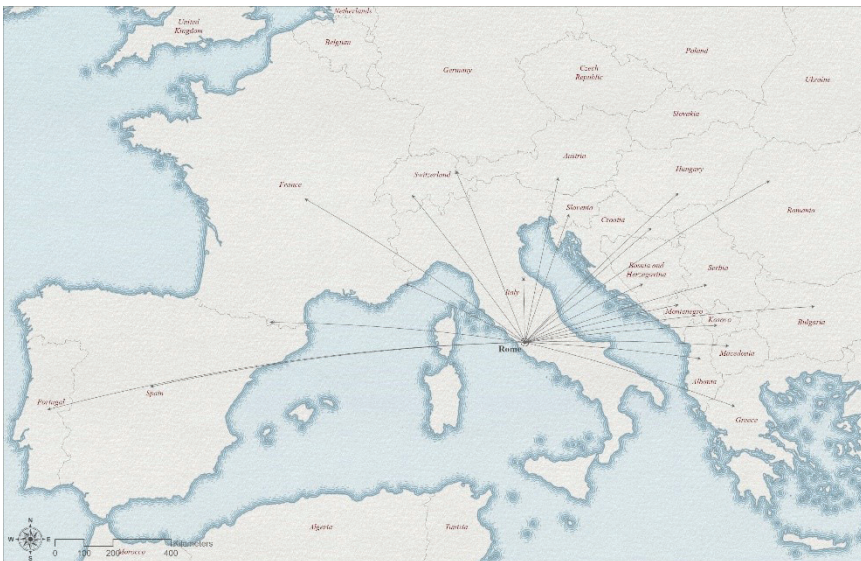
There was not much knowledge about the emergence of languages in early times. However, conquering groups and invading armies imposed their languages and religions in the areas they captured. In other words, the languages of the conquerors were used as means of subjugation and trade. Therefore, the languages of the conquerors emerged as a means of communication imposed upon the conquered societies. Bilingual speakers who simultaneously spoke the peripheral/submerged

2 See: Swaan de Abram. *Words of the World: The Global Language System*. Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishers Ltd., 2001.

languages of the defeated communities and the wide-spreading language/s of the victors played an important role as facilitators in the transfer of languages on both sides. Further, the languages of the invaders were used to proliferate Christianity and force their religion/s on the colonized peoples in different parts of the world, particularly in Africa.

Unequivocally, it was difficult to draw maps for the language communities in early ages. Nevertheless, language maps became more apparent after the emergence of great world empires, which existed in the Western Hemisphere of the globe such as the Roman empire. At the very least, it can be argued that there were three imperial languages that spread worldwide in ancient times and followed three different trajectories. The first of these languages according to George Coulter, was Latin, which originated in Rome and spread on all the European coasts of the Mediterranean covering the southern half of Europe, while its impact diminished as it headed north towards German and the Celtic lands (76) as indicated in (figure1) below. Latin was a spoken and written language used in carrying out diplomatic missions and in the dissemination of new knowledge and technology throughout the territories conquered by the Roman empire at that time. With the passage of time the Latin language became a tool for Christian expansion around the world. After the fall of the Roman Empire, Latin continued to be used for more than fifteen centuries as the central European language.

Figure 1

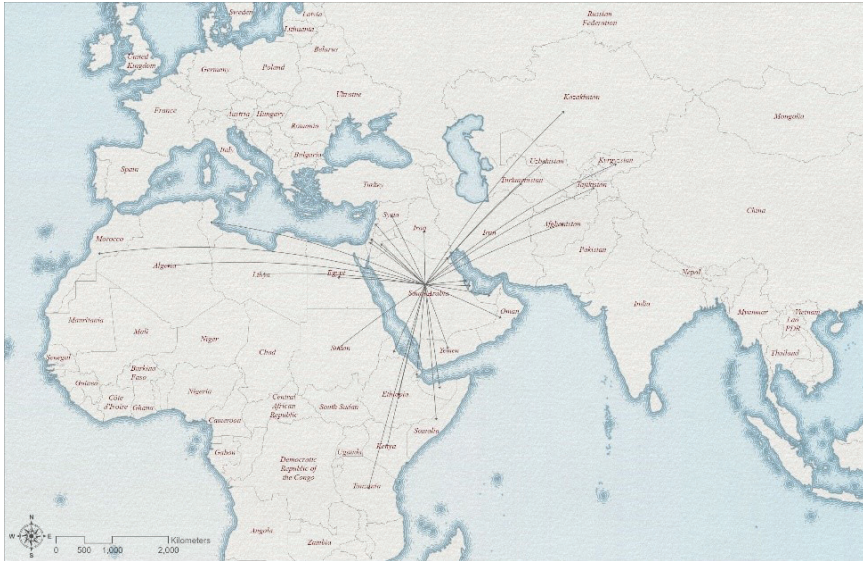


Despite the large number of language groups within the Christian European landscape, Latin came under the control of a small group of individuals, usually men of the priesthood, who learned it as the language of the Church and were able to communicate with all their counterparts throughout the European continent. They acted as translators and mediators in connecting their communities to the continental network. Latin did not encounter any significant competition as a language of education and long-ranging communication until the emergence of the Renaissance, when the communication network was greatly weakened, due to the decrease in the number of speakers who mastered the language. However, Latin remained in use with regard to scientific studies, law and religion until the nineteenth century. Hence, Europe through Latin, its first central language, had already established a coherent, even if loose, linguistic system for more than two thousand years. The language map of this era highlighted the central presence of the Latin language, which extended from Rome with lines that get lighter and less dense as the language permeated the continent.

Apart from Latin, Chinese, according to Roger Woodard, was the second central language in that era. Chinese adopted a pre-classical version of the Han language as a long-ranging communication tongue, spoken and written by clergymen and scholars across the Chinese territories. Han was used in the royal court as the language of government and administration. Likewise, educated people and clergymen, in South Asia, used Sanskrit for the same purposes, and the language map of the Indian subcontinent was characterized by a variety of languages used by different population groups. In the past, Latin, Chinese, and Sanskrit were used by priests and court men. Nevertheless, these classical languages were useless to ordinary people such as tavern owners and merchants, as well as peasants and soldiers. Later, these central classical languages spawned vernacular editions and versions in their territories and areas of expansion. However, they remained the languages of communication, far-reaching and widespread, in the fields of administration, diplomacy, religion, science, literature and commerce. In the areas located in the heart of the Afro-Eurasian steppe, a fourth language - Arabic - spread over a period of time descending from the Arabian Peninsula and extending its lines of expansion across North Africa to the Southern tip of Spain. It also spread through the East African coast and Central Asia as demonstrated in (figure 2) below.



Figure 2



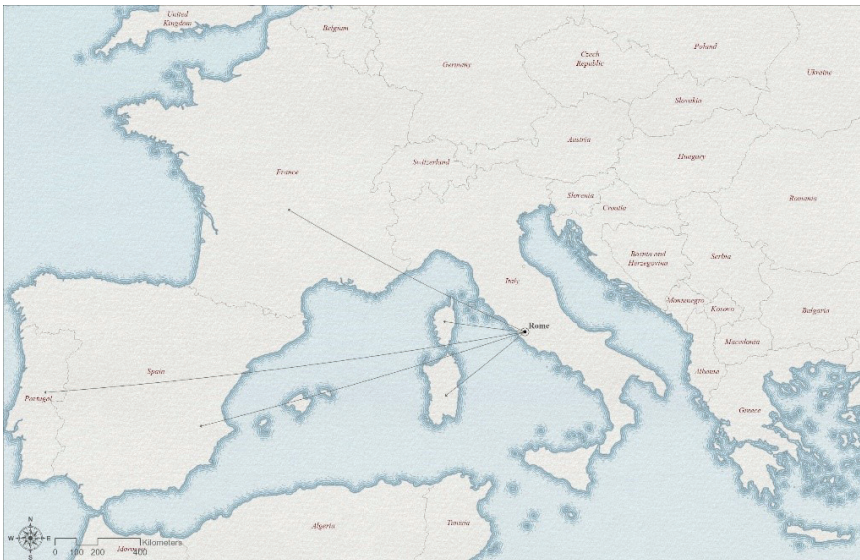
It is obvious that classical languages, originated in the areas of major religions, such as Islam, Christianity, Hinduism, Confucianism and Buddhism, dominated the language maps in ancient times<sup>3</sup>. The networks of central languages were vast, but nonetheless very weak, because very few people were able to assimilate them, not to mention the scarcity of those who were able to read and write in these communities. After the passage of years and with the emergence of the modern era around the year 1500 AD, the long-ranging linguistic communication model of the past began to change significantly. On the one hand, the colloquial versions that branched off from the major classical languages have dominated the scene. Poets, writers, and scholars were able to generate eloquent versions of these vernacular sub-languages. Consequently, these sub-languages were increasingly used in trade, science, law and administration. In the West, these sub-languages were also used in religion and royal offices. In Europe, and among many vernaculars and sub-languages derived from Latin, Italian became a literary language in the early fourteenth century.

Later, Italian became the language of the educated, courtiers, politicians, scholars and the military in an amazing time. Starting from the prosperous Italian mega-cities, the Italian language extended to include all parts of southwestern Europe as a language of diplomatic and educational communication as clarified

3 See: Coulter H. George. *How Dead Languages Work*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press 2020.

in (figure 3) below. The same applies to other vernaculars derived from Latin such as English, French, Spanish and Portuguese, which later became the major European national languages. They spread beyond the boundaries of their own regions, enhanced by the wide increase in the circulation of literature written in these languages and printed by the modern printing tools at that time. These languages were also widely used at the royal courts and in courtrooms, in parliaments and in schools and academies.

Figure 3



Moreover, Alastair Pennycook demonstrates that the new national European languages crossed the seas with the explorers and invaders to Africa, Asia and America (69). In the colonies, they established their footholds near the mouths of rivers or on islands close to the shore. Therefore, these languages began to expand in remote continents as languages of government and trade and as a means of imposing Christianity on other peoples. Concurrently, Arabic reached its zenith as a global language. However, the language of the Qur'an remained in its pure classical form because Islamic scholars considered any deviation from this form a sign of religious violation. Accordingly, it did not happen that the vernacular sub-languages derived from Classical Arabic developed to the level of distinct and recognized languages, as was the case for the languages descended from the Han languages, Sanskrit and Latin.

In the same vein, it is worth noting that when the Ming emperors stopped sea trade and exploration in the early sixteenth century, the Chinese maritime

expansion ended forever. Consequently, the spread of the Chinese language was restricted from expansion overseas; however, it continued to spread across a large area of land in Asia. Similarly in India, during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the Mughal kings extended their rule to the south, at a time when the vernacular languages - (Prakrits in the north and Dravidian languages in the south) - had established themselves in their own regions according to Thomas Trautmann (37). Nevertheless, one of the vernacular languages (Hindi), which was in force in the province of Delhi, has finally become the language of communication in the Mughal kingdom. In a similar scenario, the Russians subjected to their rule a large part of the regions - known today as Russia - in the seventeenth century and laid the basis for their expansion towards the East, which continued for centuries until the annexation of Siberia and most of Central Asia. Through this vast scale of territories, Russian became the central language and schools in the newly conquered lands used it as a first foreign language.

In continuation of the above-mentioned argument, scholars considered the modern era as a time of expansion and imposition of European vernaculars across the globe. Portuguese, Spanish and English languages shared among themselves dominance over the western half of the world. Further, English became the dominant language on the Australian continent and French dominated - next to Arabic - in North Africa, and Russian ruled all North Asia. Beyond sub-Saharan Africa and in most of Southeast Asia, English, French and Portuguese spread through colonial conquest and were increasingly used as the languages of administration, commerce, higher education, and long-distance communication, but they failed to exclude local languages from the scene. This was partly due to the apparent small number of European immigrants to those countries at that time. Nevertheless, in most of the former colonies, European languages continued to play the main role in daily circulation and usage. Even after the departure of colonists, they are still playing a significant role half a century after the independence of these countries.

There is no sign of the end of this global presence of European languages across other continents. According to David Crystal, English has increased its presence and prominence as a language that occupies a central and supreme position almost everywhere on Earth (48). Explicitly, the map of the current global system of languages appears as a mosaic reflecting the political maps of the past, including the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth centuries. This map illustrates to what extent political realities determined the emergence of language groups, as well as how they continued to exist for so long after their political basis had disappeared. As such, Spanish and Portuguese settled in the southern part of the Western Hemisphere, whereas English and French proliferated in North America as shown in (figure 4) below.



Figure 4



Although the majority of the countries in the South American continent were independent of the mother European countries from the end of the eighteenth century until the middle of the nineteenth century, English, Spanish and Portuguese remained prevalent there. Similarly, and at the end of the nineteenth century, all Western European powers alike divided most of Africa among themselves. According to G. T Childs, Germany lost its African colonies in the aftermath of World War I (112). More than six decades after the independence of the African peoples, the languages of the former colonizers, English, French and Portuguese are still circulating in all of Africa, and we hardly notice a big difference between the current map of languages and the political map in 1920 for example as reflected in (figure 5) below.

Figure 5



Webb and Kembo argue that in Africa, the language map was more complicated than other continents (26). Nowhere else in the world has there been greater linguistic diversity than sub-Saharan Africa, where there are thousands of oral and written languages. With the beginning of the Portuguese voyages to the west coast of Africa, which lasted for four centuries, Europeans controlled the communities on the shores of islands or near the mouths of rivers. Through communication, carried out from a distance, simplified jargon and African dialects hybridized by European languages came into existence. The first of these hybrid dialects came through contact with the Portuguese, then came the local African versions of English and French according to H.M. Batibo (75).

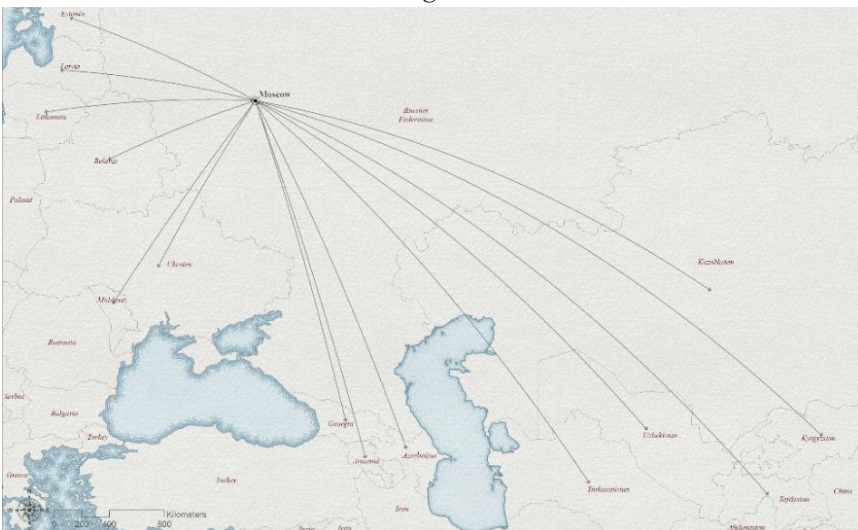
Throughout history, the colonial narrative about the differences between the languages of the neighboring communities in Africa aimed to dominate them according to the „divide and rule“ system. The local chiefs also wished to maintain these differences in order to strengthen and support their local tribal authorities. After the European conquest of Africa at the end of the nineteenth century, especially in the aftermath of the Berlin Conference of 1884-1885, the Western powers began to explore and exploit the heart of the African continent and build roads across the savannah and rainforests starting from their bases on the coast. In this context, and according to T. Odlin, the workers from local villages had no option but to develop a hybrid language as a means of communication with their European masters and the local workers from other communities who do not master their indigenous languages (123). In addition to this hybrid labour language, there were other linking languages, brought

by the indigenous African merchants and traders including Hausa, Igbo, Soninke and Swahili. Moreover, Fardon and Furniss argue that the languages of the warring kingdoms, such as the language of the Wolf people or the language of the Fon people, became part of the language map of Africa (94). In a related context, the Fon people used to buy weapons from European merchants in exchange for ivory, gold and slaves and then they used European-made weapons to extend their control over their neighbors in the adjacent villages who speak different languages.

## MAP OF EUROPEAN LANGUAGES

The current distribution of languages in Europe was impacted by military conquests. Compared to the political map a century ago, the map of European languages similarly has not changed in a radical way. The central languages in many European countries are compatible with the political borders of those countries although a more detailed map may reveal some inconsistencies and contradictions in each country. However, a violent outburst and disruption of borders appeared in the twentieth century due to military conflicts. The German language spread with the Nazi invaders, and retreated after their defeat. During the cold war era, Russian language spread in the countries of Eastern and Central Europe, including East-ern Germany and Poland, however, it disappeared after the collapse of the Berlin wall. Russian is the official language of Russia, Belarus, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan. Further, Russian is an unofficial lingua franca in Ukraine and many former Soviet countries such as Azerbaijan, Estonia, Georgia, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Tajik-istan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, as demonstrated in (Figure 6) below.

Figure 6



Alexander Kent, in his investigation of “the stylistic diversity in European 1:50 000 state topographic maps, explores the extent to which national conditions, such as socio-economic, cultural, and demographic characteristics, are intrinsically expressed in their symbolization of the national landscape” (14). He signifies that European languages in particular are stable and strong languages as a result of the long process of language standardization that lasted for years at the national level. This strength, in addition to the continuous support from each country separately, prevented the emergence of new linguistic jargon or hybrid languages. However, these well-established national languages were jeopardized by the spread of English, the prestigious international language, which invaded their borders. Definitely, the national language of any European country had to coexist with English as a second language and a world language of high standing. Available statistics enabled researchers to calculate a quality standard or a measure of communicative value for all relevant European languages.

More than 80% of secondary school students learned English, less than 40% learned French and less than 20% learn German, and less than 10% learned Spanish, and these statistics in turn provided access to scholars to predict the course of the European language group. In the post-nation-state era, there were four levels of language communication within the European Union countries and each of them required a different language system.

The first level was associated with the local communication within each of the member states where the mother tongue was adopted as the official language spoken by the majority of the population throughout the country while the state defended and protected its national language by all means. However, these official central languages faced many challenges from the sub-languages and minority languages, which spread within the territories of the member states of the Union. They also confronted dangers coming from outside the borders from the expansionist transnational languages, particularly English.

The second level included transnational communication between citizens of the European Union countries. Within this level, various languages competed to extend their sovereignty over the member states of the EU as languages of communication in many different fields. English was placed at the top of this level of communication. However, English had to enter into a state of linguistic competition with French in southern Europe and with German in Central Europe after the disappearance of the Russian language from these regions. The two former linguistic levels include, respectively, the local communities and civil societies within the EU member states, as well as the ability to cross the linguistic borders of the countries of the Union.

The other two levels - of language communication - were limited to European institutions and organizations. For example, the third level related to public



official communications and included the institutions of the European Parliament and the European Council of Ministers - in its official sessions - and the European Commission - in its external contacts. The third level also related to the institutions of the European Union, where the founding treaty of the EU Union stated that all the languages of the member states are official languages and stipulated the necessity of publishing all decisions and decrees in all the languages of the member states because of their impact on the legal legislation in these countries. This principle established the formal and legal basis for the language system within the European Parliament, the Council of Ministers of the Union, the external correspondence and publications of the Organization of European States. However, the linguistic preference of the EU member states was finally implemented on the basis of the rate or standard of the quality value „communicative value“ for each language, which was determined through a secret periodic ballot to prevent a decision from changing the status quo.

The fourth level of language communication is limited to internal official consultations of administrative nature and informal purposes such as personal correspondence and daily conversations. It is also concerned with internal communications between European institutions/EU Union officials and in the corridors of the European Parliament. But when it comes to daily consultations and messages between officials or representatives, French and English are the main working languages. This issue has repeatedly raised some questions about the language methods and policies used in the countries of the Union, especially after language experts have changed their positions, particularly the advocates of unifying the language of communication in the institutions of the Union. This group played a significant role in defending the rights of less important languages and calling for the use of local languages. Nevertheless, most of the arguments they made were false, because they all preferred to speak English or French according to language experts such as Abram De Swaan. However, Alice Leal claims that “no official decision was taken to adopt English as the EU’s working language, procedural language or lingua franca – 23 other languages are classed as working languages and, informally, English, French and German are procedural languages. In fact, the EU has continuously spoken against the adoption of a lingua franca, since officially raising the status of a single language would constitute a breach of its own legislation” (3).

The languages of the European Union include 450 million speakers, therefore, their number is smaller than speakers of other languages. Moreover, the economic output of the EU countries is less than that of other countries like China, and the total number of living European languages in circulation is less than that of Asia or Africa. However, the European Union, in terms of multilingualism, comes first in the world with a great number of languages.



The reason behind EU multilingualism (the ability of people in all EU countries to speak several languages at the same time) is due to the emergence of the European Union as an integrated and interconnected political and economic entity. Fifteen official languages are currently recognized in the European Union, and a similar number of languages will be added to them in the coming years.

Concerning the linguistic entanglements within the European languages, it is obvious that this group is similar in its complexities with its counterparts in India or South Africa and it is probably more intertwined and complex. The language issue was a top priority in the EU Union because of its implications for the integration among the European member states. The EU countries found it difficult to agree on a unified language for the EU Union while it was easy for them to reach a consensus regarding a common currency for all member states. The inability of the EU member states to take a decisive decision on establishing an official language for all member states may lead to complications and unknown developments. The failure of the EU countries to take a decision regarding the unification of the languages of this political and economic block may result in negative consequences. In fact, there is no unified or specific language policy for the European Parliament, its administrative body, or civil society organizations within the European Union. It is obvious that all the languages of the member states are considered official languages and are recognized within the societies included in the European Union.

In her study of the changing relations between language, power and territory in Europe throughout the process of European integration, Virginie Mamadouh explains that, initially, the EU-recognized languages were very limited, then the number increased to fifteen, and after a decade the number of EU official languages reached twenty or more (91). When the European Union was established, French was the official language used in the Union's administrative bodies and organizations. In the aftermath of World War II, the Germans and Italians did not insist that German and Italian be equal to French, and the number of Dutch and Flemish speakers in Europe did not enable them to claim any advantages that might seem unconvincing. The treaties and procedures governing the language system in the countries of the Union that were agreed upon in the past were still in force to this day, with the exception of some accidental modifications. With the increase in the number of EU member states, population and budget, there are further complications in vision and methodology resulting from the political, demographic and linguistic expansion of the European Union. Until recently, there were no signs of reaching an end to the EU expansion, even after Britain's exit from the Union months ago.

## MULTILINGUALISM AND HYBRIDITY OF LANGUAGES IN ASIA

As an imperialistic power, Japan expanded - through colonial conquest - during the last century from Manchuria to New Guinea. Like the languages of other invaders, the Japanese language almost completely disappeared after the defeat of Japan in the Second World War. The same concept applies to Indonesia, one notable exception, whose independence resulted into the complete disappearance of Dutch, the language of the colonizer. Instead, Malay spread throughout the Indonesian archipelago. Muhammad Ridwan states that “from earliest recorded times Malay was, and still is, the native tongue of the people who live on both sides of the Straits of Malacca that separate Sumatra from the Malay Peninsula. (73) On the other hand, the linguistic groups of China, India, the Philippines, Thailand, and Malaysia have remained largely identical to their political patterns, which existed a century ago. Moreover, English language replaced French language in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia in the wake of the wars that broke out there in the twentieth-century.

In Indonesia, the language map includes many interconnections, overlaps and complications. In addition to Malay and Javanese, there was a third language that sought to impose its control on the Indonesian archipelago, which was the Dutch language. Dutch was used in all parts of the country for a period of time, but later disappeared after the independence of Indonesia. It was obvious that Dutch, a language of limited importance in other countries of the world, was spoken only by the local elite in Indonesia. Therefore, Dutch was erased by the stroke of a pen under the Japanese occupation of the country during World War II, and from it subsequently vanished without a trace.

At first glance, it seemed that the withdrawal of the Dutch language from the Indonesian linguistic scene was a logical and reasonable due to local and international considerations. Nevertheless, the disappearance of Dutch from Indonesia after more than three centuries of Dutch presence in the country and more than a century of intensive colonization revealed many discrepancies and unanswered question marks. While Dutch was spoken by few elites in Indonesia Spanish, Portuguese, French and English had acquired large numbers of speakers in the colonies of Africa and Asia as shown in (figure 7) below.

Figure 7



Ironically, the anti-colonial elites in Africa and Asia continued to communicate with each other in the language of the colonizers even after their countries gained their independence. Moreover, the national authors who advocated socialism continued to write in the languages of the colonizers. In a similar context, the advocates of the Indonesian patriotic movement adhered to the language of the colonizer, and the national leaders, without exception, learned Dutch and spoke it among themselves after the departure of the Dutch. Dutch became used inside the communities of the elite and in the corridors of politics, but it lost its functions among the public and outside the elite circles after the spread of the national language (Bahasa Indonesia). Apparently, Indonesia is a great exception in the model of the post-colonial language groups according to Alisjahbana (76). The Indonesian language (Bahasa Indonesia) is a unique case that is difficult to compare with other similar indigenous languages that competed with colonial languages. Therefore, the Indonesian language system should be illustrated in order to understand the peculiar condition of the linguistic landscape in the country.

In the form of an arc with a length of 5100 km, the Indonesian archipelago extends from the Malaysian Peninsula in the west and the Philippine Islands in the north to the Australian subcontinent in the east. It has been called the „Emerald Belt“ and it is made up of about 13,000 islands, of which 6,000 are inhabited, and together they cover about 2 million square kilometers. The only common factor linking the peoples who inhabited these islands was their common history under the Dutch colonial hegemony. This colonial heritage constituted the past that distinguished them from neighboring societies.

Since ancient times, Java, which includes 60% of the population of the archipelago, was the political and economic center of the East Indies under Dutch occupation, which was later known as Indonesia. In the area that appeared in the form of an arc extending around this center, there was a large group of people who spoke multiple languages, amounting to more than five hundred languages: that is, one tenth of the number of known languages in the world, including 300 languages whose number of speakers exceeded one hundred thousand speakers, belonging to a family of Austronesian languages (the languages of Australia, Indonesia and the oceanic islands).

There are two hundred other languages in the archipelago divided into two groups according to J. N Sneddon (52). The number of speakers of the languages of the first group is less than a thousand speakers based on the 1990 census, when the population of Indonesia reached 180 million.<sup>4</sup> The languages of this group belong to seven different language families, while the second group includes fourteen languages, each with more than one million indigenous speakers.

More than 40% of Indonesians over 4 years old speak Javanese as their first language and most of them live in the eastern part of Java, which includes two-thirds of the population in addition to the inhabitants of the southern tip of the island of Sumatra. Moreover, the **Sundanese language** is spoken by approximately 36 million people according to the 2010 census and is the second most widely spoken regional language in Indonesia and it spreads in the western part of Java. Moreover, Madura, the language of the western island of Madura, is spoken by about 7 million people. There are five other languages: Batak, Minankbawe, Pali, Bengin, and Bengali, each of which is spoken by 3 million people as shown in (figure 8) below.

Figure 8



4 By the end of the last century, the population reached 225 million.



Other Indonesian communities speak the Malay language in its updated version (Bahasa Indonesia) as their original language, and most of them live in areas where Bahasa has spread as an indigenous language for many centuries, especially in the eastern part of Sumatra and the adjacent islands and coastal areas of the island of Kalimantan (Borneo) in addition to the very important Jakarta region, where the Malay vernacular has spread for centuries and has become a dominant language in cinema and films. When Indonesians were asked whether Bahasa Indonesia is a first or second language, more than 130 million answered that it is their first language. They represent about 83% of Indonesians over four years old. Linguists believe that caution should be taken in dealing with these statistics due to the sensitivity of this issue, as there may be a tendency on the part of the population to answer “yes” to emphasize national unity and belonging, but this may not be consistent with the linguistic facts on the ground.

A closer look at the population survey statistics revealed the existence of essential facts, among which was that the percentage of the number of participants who said that they can speak Bahasa Indonesia has increased steadily in all regions of the archipelago. On the eve of World War II, about 15% of Indonesians spoke some version of Malay either as a mother tongue or as a second language. It appeared that the demographic changes and demographic mobility as a result of the Japanese occupation, in addition to the successive wars of liberation against the Dutch and economic migrations since then, have contributed to the spread of the Indonesian language (Bahasa Indonesia) as a popular and elegant language. With the establishment of the Republic and the beginning of the construction of its educational institutions, the scene changed in favor of the national language (Bahasa Indonesia).

During the first three years of primary school, youngsters study the main language of the region to which they belong, or Bahasa Indonesia, if there are many secondary languages spoken locally. From the fourth year onwards and throughout the educational system the language of instruction becomes Indonesian (Bahasa). This explains, according to M. Marhum (28), the amazing speed of the spread of national Indonesian language across the archipelago after independence. Education and knowledge of the Indonesian national language has spread more in urban than in rural areas, among men more than females, and among adults (over 12 years old) more than the older generations. Due to the rapid increase in the number of students, Indonesian (Bahasa) has become the first language learned by youngsters, although parents prefer to use different local languages at home. But when parents want to encourage their children to acquire Bahasa, they communicate with them in the same language even though they speak another native language. In fact, the number of native Bahasa speakers has increased from less than 15 million in 1980 to more than 24 million in 1990, a rate of increase of more than 60% over ten years, as reflected in (figure 9) below.



Figure 9



By deducting the general population growth rate (about 22%), there is an indication of an increase of more than a quarter in one decade. However, the number of native speakers of Indonesian (Bahasa) as a mother tongue did not approach the number of native speakers of Javanese as a mother tongue. The number of speakers of Indonesian (as a mother tongue) is hardly close to the number of speakers of „Sundanese language, approximately 36 million people according to the 2010 census. The national movement rejected from the beginning the use of Dutch or Javanese as the official national language in place of (Bahasa Indonesia), a derivative of Malay, which is now spoken by almost all citizens of the archipelago (as a second language) even if it is not their mother tongue but rather the language they learned in school. Moreover, one of the versions of the Malay language is the national language of Malaysia and Brunei, and in these two countries English is used as the second official language. Since independence, the importance of Indonesian (Bahasa) has grown because it is the official language of instruction throughout the educational system, with English being a foreign language rather than a second language. At the present time, Malay, in its various versions, competes with English in the local use and in the academic field. Additionally, Malay in the (Bahasa Indonesia) version is closely related to the Austronesian language groups in the Southeast Asian region, which inevitably adds to its communicative value as demonstrated in (figure 10) below.

Figure 10



Austronesian languages are the languages spread in the countries and islands located in the ocean regions from Madagascar in the west to the far east of the globe and includes countries such as Taiwan, the Indonesian Archipelago and the Malay-speaking countries, as well as the Philippines, Micronesia, Melanesia and Polynesia in the Pacific Ocean. The Indonesian language group is one of the small wonders of the post-colonial world dominated by Western languages as the most widespread means of communication in the former colonies. The Indonesians have successfully managed to preserve one of their local languages as a language of communication, which is the national Indonesian tongue (Bahasa Indonesia). It is in fact a revised version of the Malay language. But what is surprising in the Indonesian language scene is that the Indonesian people have sacrificed the wide-spreading Javanese language as an official national means of communication for the public interest of the country. In their efforts to combat the hegemony of colonial languages, the people of Indonesia supported one of their local languages. In other words, the people of the country ignored the Javanese language, although it is one of the indigenous languages and is the mother tongue of nearly half of the citizens. It was the dominant language in the centers of power in political circles and economic transactions. It was also the official language of religious and literary inheritance, in addition to being the language of the court in the millennium. For very realistic reasons, from the point of view of Indonesians and the majority of „Austronesian“ language experts, Javanese has been removed and replaced with an updated version of Malay (the language of the Malay people) as the official national language.

## LANGUAGE MAPS IN INDONESIA AND INDIA IN THE POST-COLONIAL ERA

In an important essay on Indonesian languages, H. Steinhauer clarifies that “nobody knows how many languages are spoken in the world today, but it is estimated that one-tenth of them are spoken in Indonesia (755). Experts have taken the Indonesian linguistic experience as a model that can be applied by approach to the linguistic scene in India, Kenya and the Philippines, where Hindustani, Swahili and Filipino have been adopted as the national languages of those countries, respectively. However, none of those countries succeeded in adopting the Indonesian model or applying it on the ground, despite the compatibility of this proposal with the aspirations of the nationalist movements in those three countries (India, Kenya, and the Philippines). Undoubtedly, there are common aspects in the linguistic landscape between Indonesia and India, and there is a similarity between the Javanese language in Indonesia and the Hindi language in India, in addition to the similarity between the role played by the Malay language (in Indonesia) and the Hindustani language (in India) during the colonial era, regardless of the fact that the differences between Malay and Javanese are much greater than the differences between Hindustani and Hindi.

In the same context, a good number of major languages are spread in both India and Indonesia, but India is characterized by the abundance and diversity of the number of speakers of each of these languages. In essence, the similarities are formed in the history and trajectory of the two language groups in India and Indonesia, the Hindustani language was adopted as the unified language of the country in 1925 upon the approval of the Indian Congress Party. In 1928, the Indonesian National Youth Party adopted the Malay language as the language of the national movement, ignoring the Javanese language. The Hindu national movement in India sought to impose a new edition of the Hindi language after purifying it from other linguistic impurities, but the concerned parties rejected this proposal. The Dravidian-speaking ethnolinguistic groups have also blocked the expansion of the Hindi language through the expansion of English language learning. Contrary to what happened in India, the Javanese people and other Javanese-speaking groups in Indonesia accepted the Malay language with open arms, while the Dutch language (the language of the colonizer) was completely excluded.

Paradoxically, what happened in Indonesia regarding the Indonesian national language (Bahasa Indonesia) was a dream of Mahatma Gandhi and the man hoped it would come true in his country. The same dream also haunted the imagination of most national leaders in the post-colonial states that gained independence,

those who dreamed that their national languages would become symbols of their young, emerging countries. But this dream, which captured the imagination of the national leadership as a whole, was only once or twice embodied on the ground. The adoption of Bahasa Indonesia as a national language, which permeated the islands of the archipelago was an unprecedented case in the annals of comparative sociolinguistics focusing on the study of universal languages. This seems familiar to the Indonesian inhabitants of the islands of the archipelago, who were familiar with the linguistic diversity of their country. Researchers were surprised because the speakers of Javanese language raised the white flag and left the field for the Malay language in its revised version "Bahasa Indonesia" voluntarily because the conflict between them would lead inevitably to the dominance of a European colonial language over the local linguistic scene.

Moreover, some Indonesians considered Javanese as an ambiguous language, difficult to understand, and completely unsuitable for the requirements of contemporary life. Javanese has two linguistic versions, one used by the high-class people called „Krama“ and another low-level version called „Njoku“. In more formal encounters, people, unless they have an intimate relationship, tend to use the upper version of Javanese with its flowing vocabulary derived from ancient Sanskrit origins and its past-scented styles. When the elite classes address people from the lower classes, the speech is in the lower version of Javanese while the mob must respond to their masters using a simplified version of the higher version of Javanese.

What made matters worse is that the Javanese language contains a good number of discourse forms that deepen the differences and widen the gap in the relations between people in the diverse communities of the country. In contrast to what happened to Javanese, Malay has turned into a language for trade and tourism for more than a thousand years, as it became the language of travelers, merchants, sailors and people passing through the islands of the archipelago. Through the Malay language, Islam came with its message to the country. Further, Malay was the language used by Portuguese missionaries and priests, and after them, the Dutch priests who evangelized the local population and invited them to Christianity.

Although Malay is the original language of the eastern parts of the island of Sumatra and coastal areas of the province of Kalimantan, this language does not represent any specific Indonesian creed, religion or ethnic group. On the other hand, the people of the country see Javanese as a language associated in their minds with the linguistic dominance that the island of Java exercised over the archipelago. In light of the previous context, the national movement adopted Malay in its version, „Bahasa Indonesia“, as the official language of the country, after the submission of the representatives of the Javanese-speaking sects.



Various ethnic groups have expressed their willingness to sacrifice their ethnic glories and linguistic heritage for the sake of national unity, which has become an urgent necessity, and this applies to the Javanese speakers in the first place. Javanese student communities in the Netherlands during the 1920s attempted to revive the Javanese language and heritage, but later joined their comrades from the „East Indies“ in their quest for a comprehensive Indonesian national renaissance. Similar to what was done by the pioneer patriots throughout the Indonesian islands, the supporters of the patriotic movement of the people of the island of Java welcomed the spread of the language of „Bahasa Indonesia“ and expressed their happiness for this development. The collective sacrifice of Javanese interests and their tolerance can be justified as a trait of generosity and it seemed that they chose to sacrifice a chess piece (the language) while playing in order to win the game in the end as they gave up their language in order to take over the entire Indonesian empire. The Javanese people later succeeded in tightening and consolidating their hold on the entire Indonesian archipelago.

The unremitting efforts and attempts made by the Dutch to stir up unrest and spread the spirit of separatism and schisms in the country during the late 1940s resulted in some failed rebellion attempts against the Javanese who remained in power throughout the reign of Suharto, who controlled the country for half a century. East Timor was a unique case because it was not completely under the control of the Dutch Empire, but joined the republic when the Portuguese colonizer left in 1975. As for New Guinea, which was part of the colonial Dutch Empire, it refused to integrate with Indonesia after the Dutch withdrew from it in 1965, but it failed in its efforts which did not last long. New Guinea is divided into two administrative parts: its western half comprises the Indonesian provinces of Papua and West Papua (collectively, formerly called Irian Jaya); and its eastern half comprises the major part of Papua New Guinea, an independent country since 1975. Many years ago, secessionist movements spread in many Indonesian islands, and the ruling regime sought at once to pacify the rebels in order to preserve the cohesion of the republic. Java was able to dominate matters without objection after the Javanese accepted to spread a language that was not their language throughout the country. While Javanese leaders, with their foresight and wisdom, were able to reach a formula of understanding with others. Unlike the Javanese people, regional elites who experienced the same conditions in the newly independent countries such as India and Kenya failed to deal with the linguistic situation with the same tolerance and generosity.



## CONCLUSION

### **The Impact of languages on Environment, Culture and Human Societies**

Discussing the boundaries of Indian languages, superintendent George Abraham Grierson (1851–1941) revealed: “Indian languages gradually merge into each other and are not separated by hard and fast boundary lines. When such boundaries are spoken of, or are shown on the map, they must always be understood as conventional methods of showing definitely a state of things which is in its essence indefinite. It must be remembered that on each side of the conventional line there is a border tract of greater or less extent, the language of which may be classed at will with one or other. Here we often find that two different observers report different conditions as existing in one and the same area, and both may be right. (30)

The paper not only touches swiftly upon the linguistic situation in India but also traces potential conflicts, interconnections and entanglements between local and colonial languages in different continents illustrating the peculiar situation in Indonesia, where different ethnic communities abandoned their differences and selected one of their local vernaculars to be the national language of the nation. The paper also revealed that the current language maps of many African, Asian and Soutcan countries are similar to the political maps of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries because colonial languages continued to exist in these countries even after the departure of the colonizers. Further, the paper explores the spread of a variety of languages and their penetration in some countries, which constituted a great part of the European Union in order to investigate the impact of geo-politics on the changing status of language maps in Europe.

There is no doubt that the emergence and development of languages during more than one hundred and twenty thousand years was a miracle by all standards and an evidence of the evolutionary process of the human race descending from a common genetic lineage. Human languages, like their native speakers, belong to a common origin. Through a creative mechanism, far from petrified dogmatic arguments, this article partly traces the map of some contemporary human languages, stressing that English is the focus of the contemporary global linguistic system, as it holds the reins of other linguistic groups and revolves in its orbit other languages that form the basic global linguistic system in addition to innumerable languages, sub-languages, vernaculars and dialect, which spread through population expansion and migrations over the course of thousands of years.

In this context, the paper argues that in ancient time there were wide-spreading languages such as Latin, Chinese, Italian and Arabic. Moreover, central language groups around the world include European, Indian, Indonesian, South African, West and East African languages. The paper also demonstrated that languages sometimes spread by armed conquest of ancient agricultural societies, power of military regimes, missionary campaigns, wars, colonialism, and trade. Languages also penetrated across huge spaces of land when empires rose and collapsed with their demise. As vehicles for social mobility, ancient languages such as Latin, Chinese, and Sanskrit have influenced education, journalism, literature, art, science, politics, and economics. Due to a multiplicity of social, economic, and political circumstances, several communities of people were forced to migrate to a new language and abandon their original tongue.

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## **Jezikovni zemljevidi od Afrike do Evrope: večjezičnost, kolonializem in novi pristopi k geografski lingvistiki**

Jezikovni zemljevidi, ki odražajo jezikovni pluralizem, večjezičnost in razširitev jezikov po deželah in imperijah so bili del človeške zgodovine. Zgodovinsko gledano je jezik vselej prišel pod vpliv geografije, političnih konfliktov ter kolonizacije.

**Ključne besede:** jezikovni zemljevidi, geografija, večjezičnost, kolonizacija, hibridnost, okolje, kultura