

ENGLISH LANGUAGE

BEYOND LANGUAGE

When people talk, they don't stop short at language. They use their voices in ways that go along with language. People also talk with their bodies. And they use substitutes for language.

Paralanguage

The voice carries more than the sounds of language. It carries sounds that go along with language. A voice may tell whether the speaker is sick or healthy, sleepy or wide awake, drunk or sober. A voice can cry or laugh, moan, groan, or giggle apart from the words. A voice can drawl. It can hiss or hesitate. It can even fall silent in a special way the silence of shame, the silence of anger, the silence of bitter disappointment. None of these sounds is language. They are paralanguage, sounds that go along with language.

Body Talk

Body movements, too, go along with language. Sometimes they take the place of actual speech. Some body signals probably can't be helped. Someone who says "Wha-a-at?" may show disbelief by actions as well as words. His eyes may widen, his mouth open a little wider perhaps. Eyebrows may draw together as angry words are spoken. A slight hunch of the shoulders may go along with a confession of fear. Body signals that can't be helped sometimes contradict the messages of spoken language. A look may say *yes*, even if the words say *no*. The way a person stands may say "I don't like you," even if the words say "We're friends." Some body signals are deliberate. Deliberate signals, called gestures, have to be learned. People in different places use different gestures and attach different meanings to them. In many places, an up-and-down nod means *yes*. But in the Middle East, an upward jerk of the head may mean *no*. Western Europeans often shake the head from side to side to say *no*. But in some Arab countries, that same gesture means *yes*. Most Chinese motion "Come here" with palm down instead of palm up. French people often substitute a shrug for "I don't know." Even among the same group of people, a gesture can have many possible meanings. In the United States, for instance, a wink can mean "Hi, there." Or it might mean "This is our secret," or "You'll get a laugh out of this," and so on.

Language Substitutes

People have many ways of getting through to one another (*see* Communication). And some of these are substitutes for language. Most written languages are substitutes for spoken language. Morse code and semaphore code, too, are language substitutes. Their signals stand for letters of the alphabet, which in turn stand for spoken language. The same is true of braille, the reading alphabet for the blind. Another substitute for language is the hand alphabet for deaf-mutes. (*See also* Braille; Signaling.) Another system of hand signals is Indian sign language. But it isn't a substitute for language, at least not in a direct way. Indian sign language is used by people speaking different languages. So the signs cannot stand for words. Instead the signs themselves have meaning. For instance, two spread fingers moving past the mouth mean "lie," or "forked tongue." Each person translates the meaning of the hand signals into the words of his own language. Other language substitutes include whistle talk and drum talk. Whistle talk is used for communicating over long distances by people of the Canary Islands. Drums are used to send messages in many parts of Africa. The signals of these systems stand for the words of spoken language.

KINDS OF LANGUAGE

People speak many kinds of language. There is the language of different places, and there is the language of different groups.

Language and Dialect

A speaker of Arabic and a speaker of Malay have different speech habits and don't understand one another's speech. A speaker from the Tennessee hills and a speaker from Chicago have different speech habits too. But they can pretty much understand each other. Arabic and Malay are called languages. Chicagoese and Tennessee mountaineese are called dialects. A dialect is a variety of a language. The line between languages and dialects is not always clear. Dialects are sometimes called languages, and languages are sometimes called dialects. Northern Italians and Sicilians commonly do not understand each other's speech. Yet both speak so-called dialects of Italian. Danish and Norwegian are called different languages. Yet Danes and Norwegians pretty well understand one another. A country's boundaries can be marked on a map. But language boundaries can't at least, not in the same way. A line between two languages would mean everyone on one side of the line spoke one language. It would also mean everyone on the other side of the line spoke another language. But language just doesn't work that way. For one thing, some people use two or more languages. French and English are spoken by many Canadians, especially by those living in Quebec. Quite a few Swiss can speak both German and French. Many people of Paraguay are fluent in both Spanish and Guarani, an American Indian language. Quite a number of Israelis understand Hebrew, Yiddish, and a European language, such as Russian. For another thing, languages, have dialects. And often the dialects of one language merge into the dialects of a neighbor language. Take French and Italian. Anyone going from Paris to Naples can hear small language differences between each town and the next. At no point can a sharp line be drawn. Yet the French of Paris and the Italian of Naples are different languages.

The Difference in Dialect

Differences in speech habits are what make dialects. Speakers pronounce words differently. They use different words for the same thing. And they sometimes put words together in different ways. A London cockney will say '*arry* for *Harry*, '*orrible* for *horrible*. *Hot dog*, *frankfurter*, *wiener*, and *red hot* are all words for the same thing in the United States. "Goin' git me some" and "I'm going to get some" are two ways of saying much the same thing. Each way of pronouncing words, of using words, is right for a particular dialect. No dialect is better or worse than another only different.

All Kinds of Dialect

Strictly speaking, no two people have exactly the same dialect. Every speaker pronounces at least some words a little differently from everyone else. Probably no two persons know exactly the same set of words. Everyone puts his words together in his own ways. And to complicate matters, a person's dialect is always changing. Just the same, there are patterns of dialect. People in certain neighborhoods, certain cities, certain regions speak a lot alike even if there are some differences. Many New Yorkers have a way of speaking that sets them apart. The speech of most people from the South is distinctive. American English is distinct from Australian English, which is distinct from English English. Such dialects, spoken by people of different places, might be called geographical dialects. Another type of dialect is the social dialect. Social dialects are spoken by people of different groups. In many countries, people in high society speak differently from working-class people. People who work together astronauts, doctors, gangsters often share special work words, a sort of shop

talk. Men's talk is a little different from women's talk. The language of older people is not the same as that of the young. In many places one dialect has more social standing than the others. Often it becomes the language of government and is taught in the schools. Such a dialect is called a standard dialect. Take the dialect of Paris. Originally it was one of many dialects spoken in what is now France. As Paris became more important, so did the Parisian dialect. Now it is the standard French dialect. All people have more than one dialect. A person's dialects depend on where he lives, what groups he moves with, his education, and so on. For instance, a Tokyo engineer from Kyoto might use his own Kyoto dialect at home, the standard dialect of Tokyo at work. His speech would differ in some ways from that of his wife. And it would differ from that of his teen-age son. With other engineers he would use a kind of engineering shop talk. Such switching from one dialect to another is common. People also have more than one way of using their dialects. There is a relaxed way for talking with friends, for instance. And there is a formal way for talking with a job interviewer, say.

Standard Languages

Language has no boundaries. Speakers of the same language may live in many countries. And every country has many languages. But often, one of the languages of a country is chosen as the standard language. And this is the language taught in the schools and used for official business. In France, for instance, the standard language is French. But not all Frenchmen speak French. There are German speakers in Alsace-Lorraine, Breton speakers in Brittany, Basque speakers in the Pyrenees mountains. And in southern France the Provençal dialects are so different from standard French that they can be considered a separate language. The standard language is used for easier communication. It is also used to unite the people of a country. Often a standard language does make communication easier. French is taught in all the schools of France. So most Frenchmen can get through to each other. A Basque speaker can use French to talk to a Breton speaker, for instance. A standard language can also help give speakers of different languages a feeling of oneness. An example is Modern Hebrew, the standard language of Israel. The trouble is, a standard language doesn't always work the way it's supposed to. There are no first-class or second-class languages. But because a standard language is the official language, it often has a higher social standing. And nonstandard languages are often considered less important, even looked down on. In such instances, nonstandard speakers learn the standard language only if they have to. And even then they resent it. The resentment may take the form of not learning it well just enough to get by. Or they may simply refuse to learn it at all. Some countries have more than one standard language. Belgium uses French and Flemish. Canada uses French and English. Switzerland has three standard languages. India has no less than 14 standard languages. But often even such countries have language problems. Problems arise because one language is or seems to be more favored than another. In Belgium, Flemish speakers have protested the favored position of French. In India, many have protested the favored position of Hindi. Problems also arise because most people in most places use only one language. So unless all a country's languages are taught in the schools, which usually isn't practical, most people can't understand speakers of another language. In some countries, an outside language is sometimes chosen as a standard language. Take Ghana. Its people speak perhaps 50 or more languages. So English was adopted as an official language. And it was used for teaching in the schools.

Second Languages

Most people speak only their first language the language learned in the home. But many also learn a second language. There are several kinds of second languages. One kind is the language of the other speaker. When a

Basque speaker uses French to talk to a French speaker, for instance, he is using the other speaker's language. But sometimes speakers of different languages don't use the language of the other speaker. They use a third language. Such a language is sometimes called a lingua franca. A speaker of Telugu from southern India and a speaker of Hindi from northern India may talk to each other in English. Then English is being used as a lingua franca. A Ukrainian speaker and a Yakut speaker from Siberia may use Russian as their common language. In that case, Russian is their lingua franca. Another kind of second language is a pidgin language. Pidgins are often used for brief contacts between people between two traders, say. A pidgin is a sort of hybrid of both the speakers' languages. But the vocabulary is greatly reduced. And the way words fit together is greatly simplified. The first known Pidgin English was used by English speakers and American Indians. One justice of the peace wrote to an Indian policeman, "You, you big constable, quick you catch um Jeremiah Offscow, strong you hold um, safe you bring um afore me." To illustrate further, Russonorsk was a pidgin of Russian and Norwegian. It was used by Russian and Norwegian fishermen for about a hundred years before World War I. A pidgin of Dutch and Malay, known as Bazaar Malay, was used in the Dutch East Indies. Bahasa Indonesia, the official language of Indonesia, is based on Bazaar Malay. Sometimes a pidgin becomes the first language of a group of speakers. Then it is a creole language. In the Caribbean, African slaves from the same tribe were often separated. This was done to reduce the danger of revolt. So the slaves on a plantation had no common language. They could only talk to each other in a pidgin of their owner's language such as Pidgin French or Pidgin Spanish. In time the slaves married and had children. The children learned the pidgin as their only language. At that point, their language was a creole language. Gullah is a creole language. It is spoken on and near the Sea Islands off Georgia. Louisiana Creole is a French-based language. Another French-based creole is Haitian Creole, the language of Haiti. Speakers of Louisiana Creole and Haitian Creole commonly understand each other. Jamaican Creole is an English-based language of Jamaica. So-called Hawaiian Pidgin English is actually a creole language. It is the speech of a large number of people brought up in the Hawaiian Islands.

Interlanguages

The Old Testament tells of a time when there was one world language. It tells of how Nimrod ruined it all by building a tower to reach Heaven, and how the Lord made the workmen speak different languages. So the Tower of Babel was never finished. The idea of a world language, or interlanguage, is very old. Hundreds have been invented. But few have received much attention. The first one to become well known was Volapuk. It was introduced by a Bavarian clergyman, Johann Martin Schleyer, in 1880. Schleyer based his language mostly on German and English, with many words also from languages like Latin French, Italian, Spanish, and so on. The name Volapuk meant "world speech." Volapuk was popular in Europe for a while, but it didn't last. For one thing, some of its sounds were difficult for non-German speakers. The *u* sound in Volapuk is an example. For another thing, the way its words fit together was complicated. Volapuk went out of use shortly after the invention of another and simpler interlanguage, Esperanto. Esperanto is probably the best known interlanguage. It was introduced in 1887 by a Polish doctor, L.L. Zamenhof. The name Esperanto is based on a word for "hope." Zamenhof felt that language was at the root of problems between people. He believed a world language would bring peace and understanding. Esperanto is based mostly on languages like French, Italian, and Spanish, with a number of words also from German and Greek. Both the sounds and the mechanics of the language are fairly simple for most Europeans. Esperanto is used in many countries. Schools teach it, and books are published in Esperanto. The trouble with world languages is that they're not. Mostly they are made for speakers of English, German, French, Spanish, Portuguese, Italian, and a number of related languages. A speaker of Northern Chinese, for instance, would have as much trouble with Esperanto as with French or German. The same is true of a speaker of Eskimo or a speaker of Tamil, a language of southern India. Esperanto ignores the sounds and mechanics and meanings of most of the world's languages. Another problem with world languages has to do with language change. Suppose Esperanto, say, were adopted as a world

language. It would soon be spoken in many different dialects. For one thing, people have different speech habits. For another thing, language is always changing. Dialects of people far apart would become more and more different. This would be especially true of people in remote places, people having little or no contact with speakers of other dialects. It would probably also be especially true of people who felt that Esperanto was not "their" language, that it represented the languages of other people. Given time enough, resistance or resentment enough, and separation enough, speakers of different dialects would no longer be able to understand one another. And a new interlanguage would have to be invented all over again.

Related Language

Languages have dialects. And some of those dialects grow so far apart that they become languages. And the new languages separate into dialects. And some of those become languages. Such related languages are called a language family.

Indo-European. The family to which English belongs is the Indo-European family. It consists of many groups of languages. The Germanic, or Teutonic, group includes the Scandinavian languages Danish, Norwegian, Swedish, and Icelandic. German is commonly divided into High German and Low German. High German includes the dialects of southern Germany, the dialects of Austria, and the German dialects of Switzerland. Dutch, Flemish (spoken in Belgium), and the dialects of northern Germany make up Low German. Afrikaans, an offshoot of Dutch, is spoken in South Africa. English, which is also a Germanic language, is closely related to Dutch. But even closer to English is Frisian, spoken mostly in the northern Netherlands. Yiddish, a language of the Jewish people, is for the most part a High German of the Middle Ages. The Romance group descended from Latin. After the Roman Empire fell apart, the Latin dialects of the different regions grew farther and farther apart. Best known of the Romance languages are French, Spanish, Portuguese, Italian, and Romanian. Provençal, a name for the dialects of southern France, is sometimes considered a separate language. Catalan is spoken mostly in eastern Spain. Romansh is spoken in Switzerland. The Balto-Slavic group consists of the Baltic languages and the Slavic languages. Lithuanian and Latvian (or Lettish) are Baltic languages. The Slavic languages include Russian, spoken in Russia; Ukrainian, spoken in Ukraine; and Byelorussian (or White Russian), spoken in Belarus. Czech and Slovak, spoken in the Czech Republic and Slovakia, are closely related. Indeed they might be called varieties of the same language. Serbo-Croatian is one language written in two alphabets Croatian in Roman letters, Serbian in the Cyrillic alphabet. It is spoken chiefly in Serbia. Other well-known Slavic languages include Polish and Bulgarian. (*See also* Writing.) The Celtic group of languages, once spoken over a large territory, today is used only in the British Isles and northwestern France. The number of speakers is small. Irish Gaelic and Scottish Gaelic are Celtic languages. Welsh, spoken in Wales, and Breton, a language of Brittany in northwestern France, form another branch of Celtic. The Indo-Iranian group consists of Indic languages and Iranian languages. Persian (or Farsi) is an Iranian language. So are Pashto (or Pushtu), spoken in Afghanistan and Pakistan; and Kurdish, spoken in Kurdistan. Baluchi, spoken mostly in Pakistan and Iran, also is an Iranian language. Sanskrit is an Indic language. It is the oldest living Indo-European language, now used chiefly as the sacred language of Hinduism. Hindi, the leading language of northern India, and Urdu, the national language of Pakistan, are also Indic languages. Both Hindi and Urdu are varieties of the same language. But Urdu has more Persian and Arabic words and is written with a different alphabet. Other Indic languages include Bengali, Panjabi, Gujarati, Marathi, Rajasthani, Bihari, Kashmiri, Oriya, Sindhi, Assamese, and Nepali. Sinhalese, spoken in Sri Lanka, is also an Indic language. And so is the language of the Gypsies, Romany. Greek belongs in a separate group. The same is true of Armenian and of Albanian. An Indo-European language called Tocharian was once spoken in what is now Xinjiang, China. The language of the Hittites, a people of Anatolia mentioned in the Bible, was also Indo-European.

Uralic. The Uralic family has two main groups: Finno-Ugric and Samoyed. Of the Finno-Ugric group, the best known Ugric language is Hungarian (or Magyar). Finnish, Estonian, and Lapp are the best known Finnic languages. Lapp, the language of the Lapps, is spoken mostly in Norway, Sweden, and Finland. Two other Finnic languages, Mordvin and Cheremis, are spoken in Russia. The Samoyed group of languages is spoken in Siberia.

Altaic. The Altaic family is commonly divided into three main groups: Turkic, Mongolian, and Manchu-Tungus (or Manchurian). Turkish is the best-known Turkic language. Other Turkic languages include Azerbaijani, spoken in Azerbaijan; Uzbek, spoken in Uzbekistan; Kazakh, spoken in Kazakhstan; Tatar, spoken in Russia; Kyrgyz, spoken in Kyrgyzstan; and Turkoman (or Turkmenian), spoken in Turkmenistan. Azerbaijani is also spoken in Iran. Another Turkic language, spoken mostly in what is now Xinjiang, China, is Uygur. Yakut, spoken in Siberia, is also a Turkic language. The Mongolian group of languages is spoken in Mongolia and China. The Manchu-Tungus group of languages is spoken in Manchuria and Siberia.

Sino-Tibetan. The Sino-Tibetan family has many groups of languages. Of these, the best known is the group called Chinese. Chinese has about half a dozen main dialects, so-called. But they are, for practical purposes, separate languages. They are very different in sounds and vocabulary mostly. And the speakers of one dialect cannot understand the speakers of another. Northern Chinese (or Mandarin) is considered the standard language of China. Other Chinese languages include Wu, Min (or Fukienese), Hakka, and Cantonese (or Yue). Most Chinese in Taiwan speak Min. Cantonese is used by most of the Chinese speakers in the United States. Tibetan and Burmese also belong to the Sino-Tibetan family. Sometimes they are considered one group, sometimes two. Another group includes Thai and Lao. Thai is spoken in Thailand mostly, Lao mostly in Laos. The Miao-Yao languages are sometimes considered Sino-Tibetan. They are spoken by tribespeople in southwest China, northern Myanmar, and Indochina.

Austronesian. The Austronesian, or Malayo-Polynesian, family is spoken from Madagascar, off the coast of Africa, to Hawaii. One of its best-known languages is Malay. The standard languages of Malaysia and Indonesia are varieties of Malay. Tagalog, Visayan, and Ilocano, all spoken in the Philippines, also belong to this family. So does Malagasy, a language spoken on the island of Madagascar. Maori, spoken in New Zealand, is an Austronesian language. And related languages are spoken in many of the South Sea Islands. These include Fiji in the Fiji Islands, Samoan in the Samoan Islands, Tahitian in the Society Islands, and Hawaiian in the Hawaiian Islands.

Congo-Kordofanian. The Congo-Kordofanian family has two main groups: the Niger-Congo and the Kordofanian. The Kordofanian languages are spoken in the Sudan. The Niger-Congo languages are spoken over a great part of central and southern Africa. Well-known languages of the Niger-Congo group include Ibo, Yoruba, and Efik, spoken in Nigeria. Fulani (or Fula) is spoken mostly in Nigeria and Guinea; Mandingo mostly in Mali, Cote d'Ivoire, and Guinea. Twi has many speakers in Ghana. Mossi, Wolof, Ewe, and Tiv also are Niger-Congo languages. The numerous Bantu languages are only one branch of one division of the Niger-Congo group. A few better-known Bantu languages are Swahili, Rwanda and Rundi, Sotho and Tswana, Ganda, Kongo, Kikuyu, Xhosa, Zulu, Swazi, and Shona.

Afroasiatic. The Afroasiatic family is divided into four main groups. The best known is Semitic. Arabic, with its many dialects, is the most widely used Semitic language. It is spoken in many countries of the Near East and North Africa. Modern Hebrew, the standard language of Israel, is also a Semitic language. So is Amharic, the standard language of Ethiopia. The other groups of Afroasiatic are Berber, Cushitic, and Chadic. The Berber languages are spoken in North Africa. The Cushitic languages are spoken over a wide area in East Africa.

Somali is the best known Cushitic language. Hausa, the best known Chadic language, is widely spoken in West Africa.

Other Families. The Dravidian family of languages is spoken mostly in southern India. They include Telugu, Tamil, Kanarese (or Kannada), and Malaya-lam. Tamil is also spoken in Sri Lanka. Brahui, a Dravidian language, is used in Pakistan and Iran. The Munda family consists of a few languages in central India. The Mon-Khmer family is spoken in Southeast Asia. Its best-known language is Cambodian, or Khmer, spoken in Cambodia. Most Mon speakers live in Myanmar and Thailand. Among the better-known languages of the Nilo-Saharan family are Kanuri, Dinka, Luo, and Masai. Kanuri is spoken in Nigeria and Niger, Dinka and Luo in Kenya, Masai in Tanzania. The Khoisan family of languages is spoken mostly in South Africa by the Khoikhoi and San peoples. These languages, including Nama and !Khung, use special click sounds. Some of these sounds have spread to nearby Bantu languages like Zulu, Sotho, and Xhosa. Japanese seems to be the only member of a family. The same is true of Korean. And the same is true of Vietnamese. Basque is spoken mostly in the Pyrenees mountains region of France and Spain. It has no ties with any other language. Another language without ties is Burushaski. It is spoken in and around Hunza, in the Karakoram mountains of Kashmir. Andamanese, spoken by a handful of people in the Andaman Islands, has no known relatives. Neither has Ainu, once the language of a non-Japanese people of northern Japan. The Ainu people survive, but only a few words of their language are still used in communication today. About 25 or so languages spoken in the Caucasus Mountains have no known relatives. Some of them seem to be related, but the language picture there as a whole is not clear. Among the better known of these languages are Circassian and Georgian. How the languages spoken in Australia are related also is not known. The same is true of most languages of Papua New Guinea. Sometimes they are divided into two groups, a northern group and a southern. A few languages of Siberia do not belong to families elsewhere. These are sometimes called Paleosiberian languages. Some of these are related. But it is not certain that all are. Probably the most numerous group, the Chukchi group, includes Chukchi and Koryak. The American Indian languages in North and South America are sometimes called Amerindian languages. Like the Paleosiberian languages, they are not clearly understood. Some Amerindian languages are related Eskimo and Aleut, for instance. And most seem to fit into families such as Iroquoian, Siouan, etc. But many do not.¹

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