

# Linguistic diversity

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# ACTIVITY 1

Before we begin, think about the following

- What does **linguistic diversity** mean to **you**?  
Can you provide a brief definition?
- To what extent is the **country** or **area** you live in **linguistically diverse**?
- What do you think about linguistic diversity in the **classroom**? Does it affect **English learning** in any way?

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# What is linguistic diversity?

- Similar to biological diversity, **linguistic diversity** refers to the range of variation across languages spoken around the world
- There are about **6000-7000** languages nowadays
- **Most spoken languages** (by native speakers):
  - Mandarin Chinese (approx. 1.3 billion)
  - Spanish (approx. 460 million)
  - **English** (approx. 379 million—the most widely spoken if we count non-native speakers)

(Source: [www.statista.com](http://www.statista.com))

# What is linguistic diversity?

- Some languages are **genetically close** to each other, i.e. they belong to the same language family
- Some others are **typologically** similar, i.e. they have similar grammar structures
- Others show **internal diversity**, i.e. variation due to social or geographical circumstances

**Linguistic  
diversity**



**Human  
diversity**

# ACTIVITY 2

Think about **your own context**—do some search on the Internet if necessary

- Regardless of level of language proficiency and whether the users are native or non-native, **how many languages are used**:
  - in the **country** where you live?
  - in your **city/town/village**?
  - in your **work place**?

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# Linguistic diversity as a historical fact

- Linguistic diversity is closely connected to **human diversity** in the world today—as people lived in groups of differing sizes in the inhabitable places of the world, most of them spoke languages **unique** to their groups/communities without much contact with other groups
- The diversity in human groups inventing their own languages led into the **linguistic diversity** that we are speaking of today—some of these languages may have been extinct due to population factors and others are endangered, we still live in a world of immense linguistic diversity

# Indigenous languages

- **Indigenous languages:** languages native in **particular** regions—not necessarily the same as the national language(s) of the country
- **High number** of indigenous languages around the world—for example, there are 54 officially recognized states in Africa and 48 in Asia but more than 2000 languages are spoken in each of these continents

(Source: [www.ethnologue.com](http://www.ethnologue.com))

# Linguistic diversity and colonialism

- **Colonial history** in certain parts of the world: an important reason behind linguistic diversity—**major European languages** owe their spread outside Europe to colonization
- **Unequal distribution of resources** partially stemming from colonialism had led to continuous **human migration**—also another reason behind linguistic diversity today



# Linguistic superdiversity today

- High number of **immigrants** from formerly colonized countries in urban centres all over Europe
- **Superdiversity**: “a **dynamic interplay** of variables among an increased number of new, small and scattered, multiple-origin, transnationally connected, socio-economically differentiated and legally stratified **immigrants** who have arrived over the last decade”  
(Vertovec, 2007: 1024)

# Linguistic superdiversity today

- For example, one can see in a **mid-sized** city in Europe various strands of immigrants who may originate from the same country—they might **differ** though in hometowns of origin, ethnic, racial and religious composition, socioeconomic status, educational background, etc.
- The **diversity** in this demography has increased tremendously with **globalisation**

# Linguistic superdiversity today

- Superdiversity in societies leads to **linguistic superdiversity**—not only do **mobile** individuals migrate from one place to another and start learning new languages, they also do so with **various languages at their disposal**
- For instance, immigrants from the same country might speak different **home languages** while they also learn the **languages of the host country** and **additional languages** through schooling—the most widespread of which is **English**

# Linguistic superdiversity today

- **Colonization** of the outer circle countries by the inner circle: important effects on the **spread of English** around the world
- **Emergence of World Englishes**: large number of native speakers of English, e.g., in African and Asian countries today—this essentially means that there is **variation** even within **English** itself
  - British / American / Australian English...
  - Indian / African / Asian English...
  - English as a lingua franca

# ACTIVITY 3

Watch the video “**World Englishes: Implications for International Communication and English Language Teaching**” by Andy Kirkpatrick

<https://youtu.be/BmzCEenoqOg>

- To what extent do **you** agree with Kirkpatrick’s view that there are often **prejudices** against some English varieties? Do **you** personally think some varieties have ‘**higher**’ status? **Why** or **why not**?
- How do **you personally feel** as regards **variation** in English language use? Do you welcome it or do view it perhaps as something undesired or even dangerous?

Click the **link** under the video to share your views

# Linguistic superdiversity: Global flows

- **Spread of English in the extended circle**
  - **Globalisation, new technologies, Internet**—today, the whole world invests in **English education** and speakers in the Extended Circle **far exceed** those in the Inner and Outer Circles
  - **Inter-/intra-national mobility, migration flows**—in major cities **across Europe**, more than half of the students in **school classrooms** come from **multilingual** immigrant families

# Linguistic diversity at school

- The **superdiverse** structures of **major urban areas** are directly reflected in the composition of **mainstream schools** in Europe
- Research has focused on many major European cities of varying sizes and has uncovered how **multilingualism** is not an exception but the **norm** in these schools
- Starting with the pre-school ages up until higher education, **multilingual immigrants** who have populated Europe mainly after the WWII are represented in classes

# Linguistic diversity at school

- The linguistic diversity as represented in **higher education** stems both from the **local** multilingual students, e.g. Turkish multilingual students studying in German universities, and **international** students, e.g. Chinese students in British universities
- As one major trend of **globalization**, there is now more circulation of students among universities, which leads into a revised understanding of the role of **English as a medium of instruction** (EMI)



# Linguistic diversity at school

- **Language policy making** in multilingual schools shows variations across contexts
- For instance, in some schools, **classroom** language policy is different from the **school's** language policy—while the former may be based on **monolingualism** as the norm, the latter may be more permissive of **multilingualism** as an everyday reality

# Multimodality in language use

- As multilingualism becomes an everyday reality, **multimodal language use** is equally widespread in classrooms—a key reason is the incorporation of **digital technologies** in personal lives and education more than ever before
- This has led teachers into designing **classes** that are **more multimodal** and relevant to learners' needs and wants—language is not only in verbal or written form anymore, but the **whole set of multimodal resources** contributes to the meaning-making process

# Multimodality in language use

- **English** has an important role both in terms of **linguistic diversity** and **multimodality**
- For example, while most of the world's **online communication** is conducted in English, the **culture** brought with it is perpetuated through multimodal resources, such as videos, gifs, etc.—a highly diverse set of English speakers deploys these resources and feel **attachment** to a **global community**

# ACTIVITY 4

Think about **your own context** and your experience so far as a **user** and a **teacher** of English

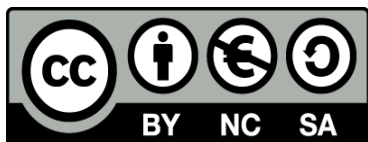
- In general, what would you say are the **benefits** and **challenges** of **linguistic diversity** around the world, especially as regards teaching **multilingual classes**?
- Among all **English varieties** that there are nowadays, which one(s) do **you teach** your own learners? **Why**?
- In your opinion, to what extent should **learners** be **exposed to** and **aware of** linguistic diversity? **Why**?

Click the **link** under the video to share your views at the **Forum** of this section

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