

# **PLURICENTRIC LANGUAGES**

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# Introduction

- **Pluricentric:** *“Languages with several interacting centres, each providing a national variety with at least some of its own norms.”*
- Unifiers and dividers of people
- Group boundaries are marked
- Pluricentric model is rather followed by linguists outside major centre of the language
- These tend to see other varieties as deviations from their norm

# Introduction

- This model has been employed much longer in Eastern Europe than in the west
- “standard language variant”
- “national variety”
- These are differentiated from dialects at the status level
- They are identified with a particular nation and are used to exclude “non-nationals”

# Introduction

- Pluricentric languages
  - are employed across the boundaries of individual political entities
  - may form a (almost) contiguous region
  - may be dispersed
  - or may be used over both contiguous and dispersed areas
- Distinction between traditional substratum national, immigrant and nativized colonial varieties

# Introduction

- Nativized varieties have evolved → e.g. French, English
- Different “centres” of a pluricentric language may have varying attitudes to the transfer of items and constructions from other languages
- Co-operation between nations can facilitate planning

# Introduction

- Bi- or multilateral agreements can have the effect of equalizing both varieties or of strengthening one variety
  - higher prestige of French French programs than local ones in the French-speaking part of Belgium
  - “pluricentric” French-language TV program TV5 receives different amounts of program input from the various countries

# French as a pluricentric Language

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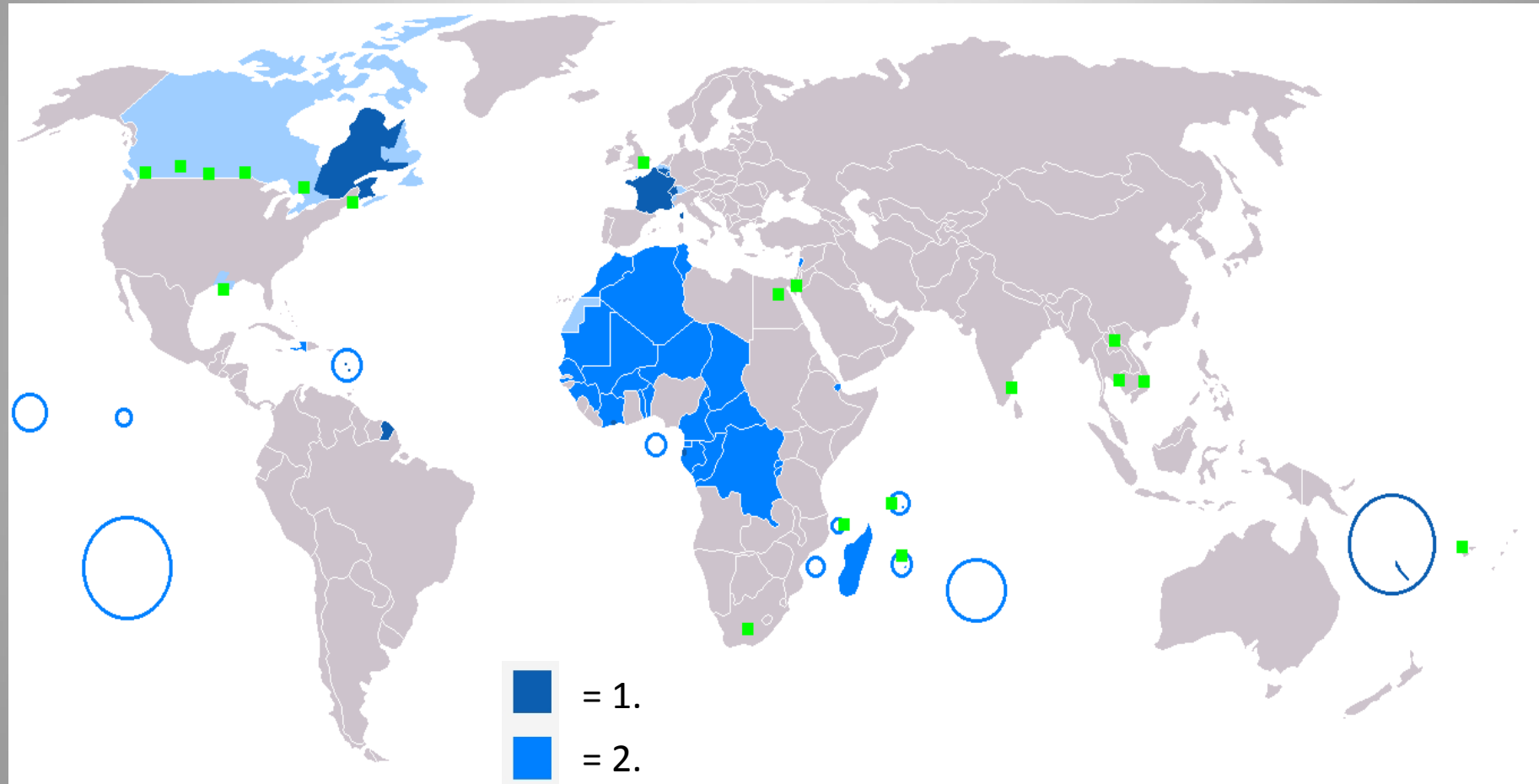
# French as a pluricentric language

- Stereotype: one and the same variety is spoken by all educated French speakers all over the world
- Analysis has proven this statement wrong

# French as a pluricentric language

- “La Francophonie”: The conglomeration of wholly or partly French-speaking states
- Divided into three subcategories
  1. Territories where French is the 1<sup>st</sup> language of a significant part of the population
  2. Countries where French is the official language without generally being among the languages of the primary socialization of the population
  3. French is a frequently spoken vehicular language and usually the 1<sup>st</sup> foreign language

# French as a pluricentric language



- = 1.
- = 2.
- = language of the culture

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# French as a pluricentric language

- Unilingualism seen as warranty for the unity of the nation and for cultural and moral salvation of citizens → Raymond Barre
- During Middle Ages one dialect (*Francien*) became dominant (9<sup>th</sup>–13<sup>th</sup> cent.)
- Francien developed into French – other regional varieties “decayed” into dialects (end of 13<sup>th</sup> cent.)
- Paris enforced the use of French in the south (middle of 16<sup>th</sup> cent.)

# French as a pluricentric language

- French spread in France (16<sup>th</sup> century) and regional variants emerged which aroused negative attitudes in Paris → turned from diatopic (regional) to diastratic (social) forms
- 1635 Académie française was founded
- French Revolution: Barère wants to eradicate regional languages
- Key term: *bon usage* (i.e. correct usage)

# French as a pluricentric language

- One unique *bon usage*, but many “bad usages”
- The French taught in the schools doesn't always meet this criterion
- Spoken and written French is, in fact, quite heterogeneous
- Attitude of censorship was extended to regions outside France

# French as a pluricentric language

- Notion of *français régional* is a negative one
- Usual standard of comparison is *bon usage* as described in dictionaries
- Regionalisms are identified in comparison with general (“correct”) usage → regarded as less prestigious

# French as a pluricentric language

## French varieties in Canada:

- The “Acadian”
- The French of Quebec → THE “national” variety of Canada
- Quebecisms = words exclusively used in Canada
- e.g.: *auteure*/ female author (*autrice*)  
*magaziner*/ to shop (*faire les courses*)



# French as a pluricentric language

- char/ car (*voiture*)
- Various dictionaries have been published
- Phonetic study of Franco-québécois spoken in the mass media showed slight differences to French French:
  - Closed vowels are less closed
  - Nasal vowels clearer
  - Singing intonation
  - Light shifting of rhythmic accent

# French as a pluricentric language

## French varieties in Africa:

- The French of Black Africa is often confused with "*petit-français*" spoken as vehicular language by large parts of the illiterate population
- Characterized by far-reaching simplification and code-mixing
- Inquiries have proved this wrong

# French as a pluricentric language

- French in Africa is the speech of competent educated speakers
- It reveals the emergence of regional norms responding to communicative and expressive needs
- Non-native speakers of francophone Africans can form French-speaking language communities

# French as a pluricentric language

- Regional peculiarities are mostly of a phonological or lexical nature:
  - a rolled [r] instead of French [R] = typical trait of the French of the Ivory Coast
- French as the language of the former colonial power led to insecurity
- 1973 Makouta-Mboukou (*Grand Prix littéraire de l'Afrique noire* winner) urged Africans not to passively consume ...

# French as a pluricentric language

- but to reshape French in order to adapt it to daily life
- This right to differ from the French norm (*bon usage*) forms part of the cultural identity

# English as a pluricentric Language

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# Major stages of the spread of the English language

- 1) The Elizabethan and Jacobean periods (middle of the 16th century to the late 17th century): most of Great Britain
- 2) The Victorian period (industrialization, and colonization): overseas expansion
- 3) the post-World-War II period with the important role of the US in world affairs: global role

# English in America

- the development of English in America involved people from vastly differing ethnic backgrounds – the English, Scots, and Irish settlers, ones from non-English-speaking European and Asian countries; the African slaves; and the Indians
- they many of them maintained their own language over long periods of time and then shifted to English or adopted it as a second language



- other influences were maritime and port jargons and pidgins

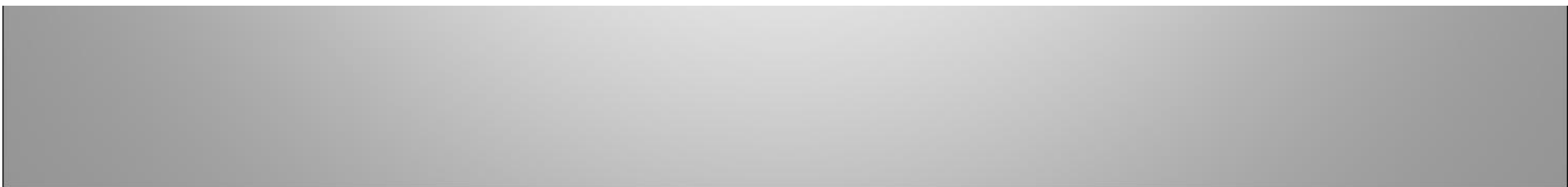
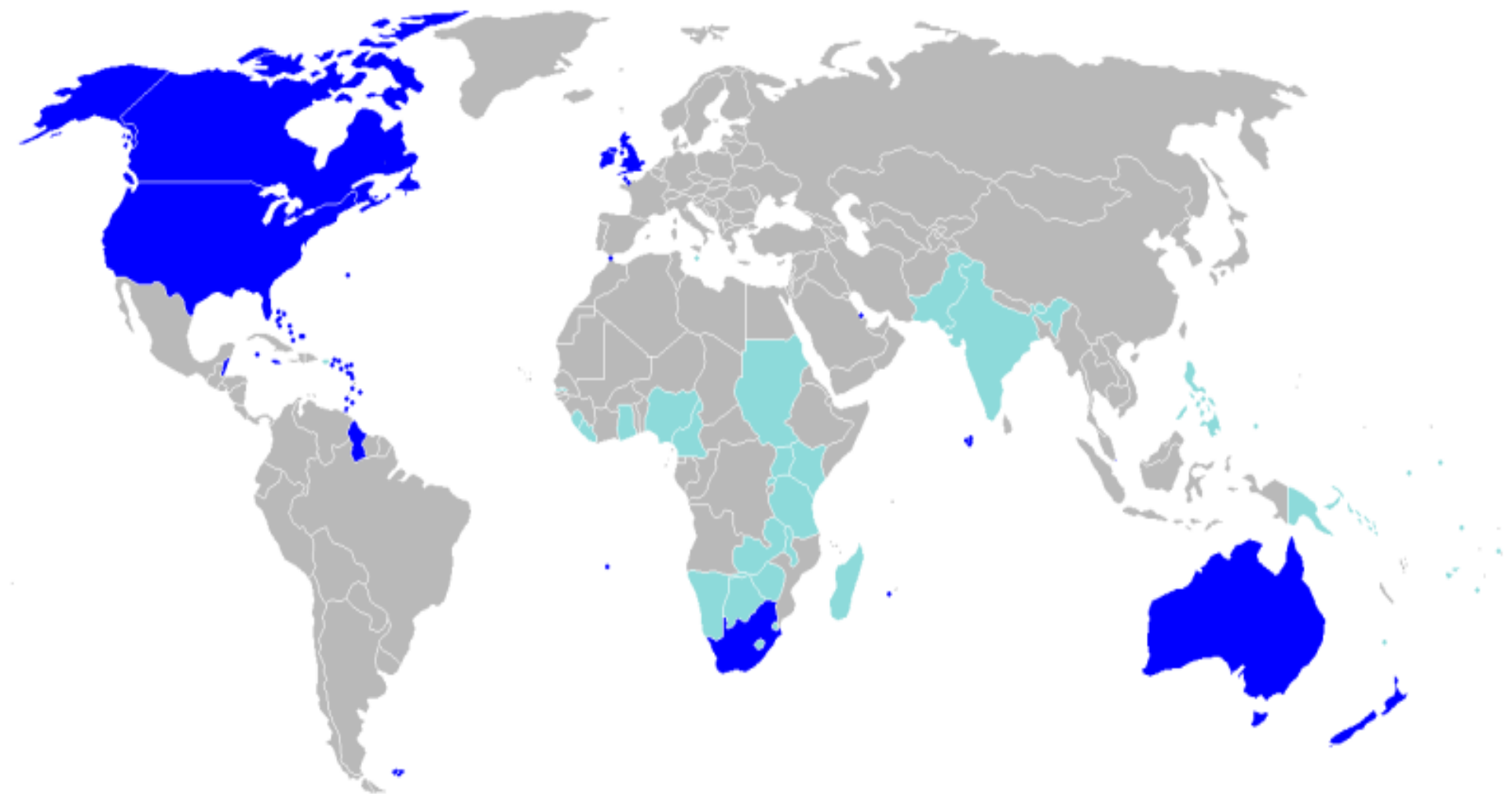
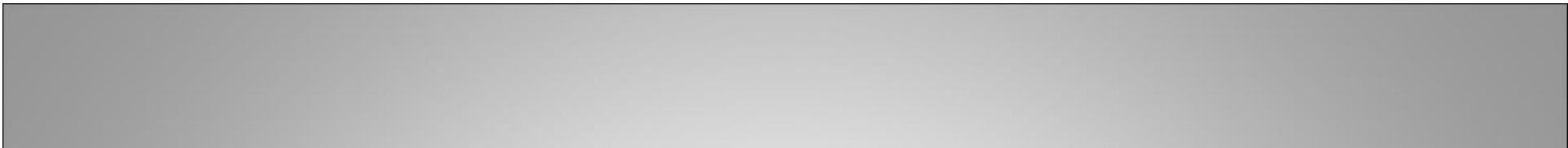
- Irish influence was very strong:  
they migrated to the 'New World'  
seeking religious and political freedom,  
but formed fairly homogenous ethnic  
settlements

- the American Revolution marked a turning point in the making of American English

- the increasing population of the states and their universal connection and correspondence with all nations were the first signs that English might turn into a global language

# Beyond the British Isles: the West Indies, Africa, Asia

- First British Empire: explorers settled in the West Indies, West Africa, South Asia and beyond
- slaves were taken to Britain and the West Indies and English-based pidgins began to develop everywhere (maritime)
- the forms that developed spread worldwide, wherever the regular routes of the trading ships took them



- the East India Company held a monopoly on the trade with the East and intervened heavily in local political matters: permanent settlements and a growing number of military, administrative personnel, of traders, missionaries and educationists lived in India: Anglo-Indian developed

- by the late 18th century, English was present on all the continents: two centres, England and the US, had established themselves

- as the British Empire grew and consolidated its power, the formulation and implementation of educational and language policies became a necessity: English was imposed as the official language and native languages were neglected – English alone could open up careers and other paths to social and economic advancement

- native speaker-based forms of English only appeared in colonies like Australia, New Zealand and (Anglo-)South Africa, where Anglophone settlements were numerically strong

# Post-War period

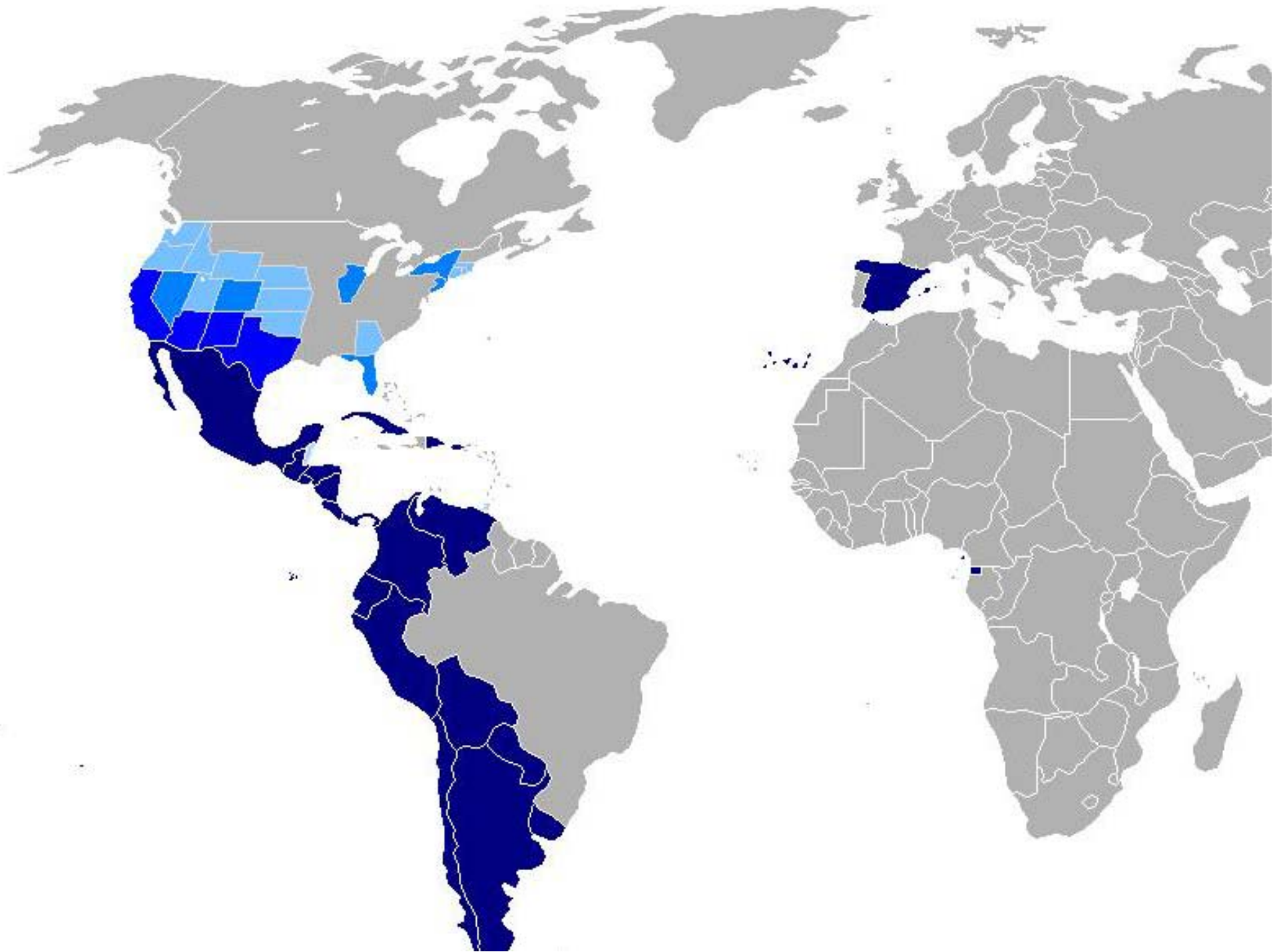
- English had established a firm foothold in all the major national domains, even in ordinary communicative contexts, in all British and American colonies by the middle of the 20th century
- English was accepted as a lingua franca

# Spanish as a pluricentric Language



# Spanish as a pluricentric Language

- Spanish is spoken in more than 20 countries
- 300 mio. speakers
- One of the 3 most widely spoken languages



# Spanish in Spain

- Has a population of 40 mio.
- Has 4 different Languages:
  1. Castilian (official language)
  2. Galician (17%)
  3. Catalan (7%)
  4. Basque (2%)

## Canary Islands

- Politically part of Spain
- A population below 2 mio.
- Language is much nearer to Latin American Spanish

# Spanish in Latin America

- Latin America was divided into Spanish and Portuguese colonies
- Independence came for most by 1825
- Still very similar to Galician dialect
  - More immigrants
  - Media



# Zones of Linguistic Prestige

- 1) Mexico, New Mexico and Central America
- 2) The Antilles, Venezuela and the Atlantic Coast of Colombia
- 3) Western Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia and Northern Chile
- 4) Central and Southern Chile
- 5) Argentina, Uruguay and Paraguay

# 1. Mexico , New Mexico and Central America

- Tend to use Mexican dialect
- Influenced by countries like Cuba
- Linguistic epicentre is Mexico City



## 2. The Antilles, Venezuela and the Atlantic Coast of Colombia

- Influenced by African immigrants
- Important centres are Cuba and Caracas

### 3. Western Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia and Northern Chile

- Influences by Inca-culture and Quechua
- Bogota-dialect well respected
- A lot of indigenous languages

## 4. Central and Southern Chile

- National Standard originated in Santiago
- Dropping of last syllables and /s/

## 5. Argentina, Uruguay and Paraguay

- Major influence from Italian immigrants
- Rio de la Plata is the linguistic epicentre
- Guarani co-exists with Spanish in Paraguay

# Spanish in the USA

- Spanish-speaking population of 30 Mio.
- Biggest influence from Mexicans
- Also Puerto Ricans and Cubans

# Development of the Languages

- Mixing of pre-existing languages with Castilian in Latin America
- Influence by the Real Academia Española

→ guarantees uniform written Spanish!

# Important Differences

## 1. Distinción/ceceo

- Castilian distinguishes between /s/ and /θ/ whereas most Latin Americans only speak the /s/

	Castilian	Latin Amer.
→ <i>casa</i> (house)	/kasa/	/kasa/
→ <i>caza</i> (hunt)	/kaθa/	/kasa/

# Important Differences

## **2. Aspiración de las eses**

- In Latin American Speech /s/ is left out or weakened when syllable-final
- This is often accompanied with the opening of the previous vowel or modification of the following consonant



# Important Differences

## 3. Use of 2<sup>nd</sup> Person forms

- Numerous Latin Americans only use the “formal” forms of the 2<sup>nd</sup> person pronoun: *vos/ustedes*
- Castilian speakers would say: *tu/vosotros*

(There is considerable regional difference in this point.)

**Latin American:** Qué hacéis vosotros?

**Galician:** Qué hacen ustedes?

- Spanish is pluricentric, as there is a gap between Castilian and Latin American dialects
- There is one general grammar and varieties in speech do not actually block understanding

Thank you, for your  
attention!