

**Module: Cultural Geography**  
**Topic Content: Cultural Regions Based on Language**

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**Introduction**



Language is one of the primary characteristics that define a cultural region. A common language allows people to express ideas and beliefs, which, over time, evolve into shared cultural traditions that can unify a region. When a language barrier exists, it prevents effective communication and understanding, potentially dividing a region.

## Module: Cultural Geography

### Topic Content: Cultural Regions Based on Language

#### Latin America



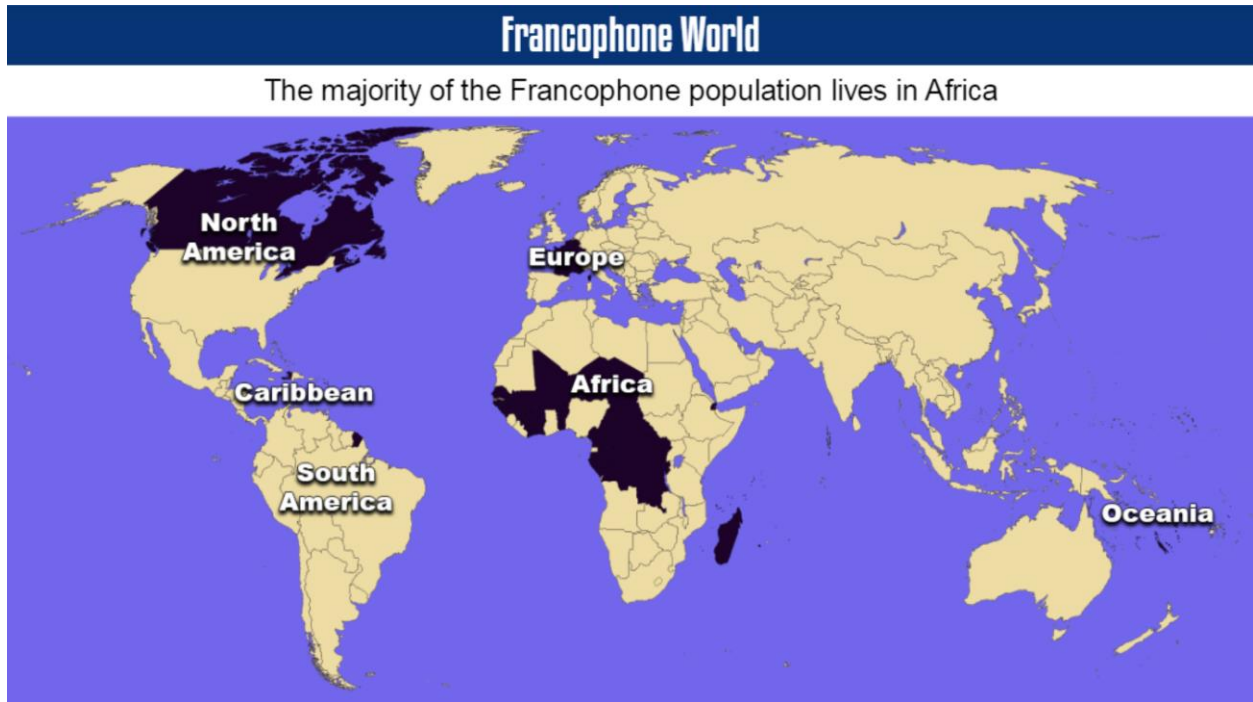
Latin America is an example of a cultural region unified by language. Latin America traditionally refers to Mexico, parts of the Caribbean, Central America, and most of South America. The term Latin American describes the primary languages spoken in this region: Spanish, Portuguese, and French. Spanish, Portuguese, and French are Romance languages, meaning they are derived from Latin, hence the term Latin America.

There is a distinct difference between Latin America and Hispanic America. Hispanic America is a term used to describe the Spanish-speaking countries in this region. Although most of Latin America speaks Spanish, one major exception is Brazil, where Portuguese is the official language. As the only Portuguese-speaking nation in the Americas, ethnically diverse Brazil is unified and distinguished culturally from the rest of Latin America. There is also a handful of French-speaking countries and territories in Latin America, like Haiti and French Guiana.

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### Francophone World



French is spoken around the world and is an official language in twenty-nine countries. These French-speaking countries and territories are collectively known as the Francophone world. This cultural region encompasses areas in Europe, North America, the Caribbean, South America, Oceania, and Africa. In fact, the majority of the Francophone population lives in Africa.

The country of Canada considers French an official language along with English. English is the dominant language in most of the country, but French is the dominant language in the province of Quebec. This cultural divide has created tensions between Quebec and the rest of Canada, resulting in secession attempts and even violence.

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### Arab World

#### Arab World

Arab refers to a shared linguistic and cultural background

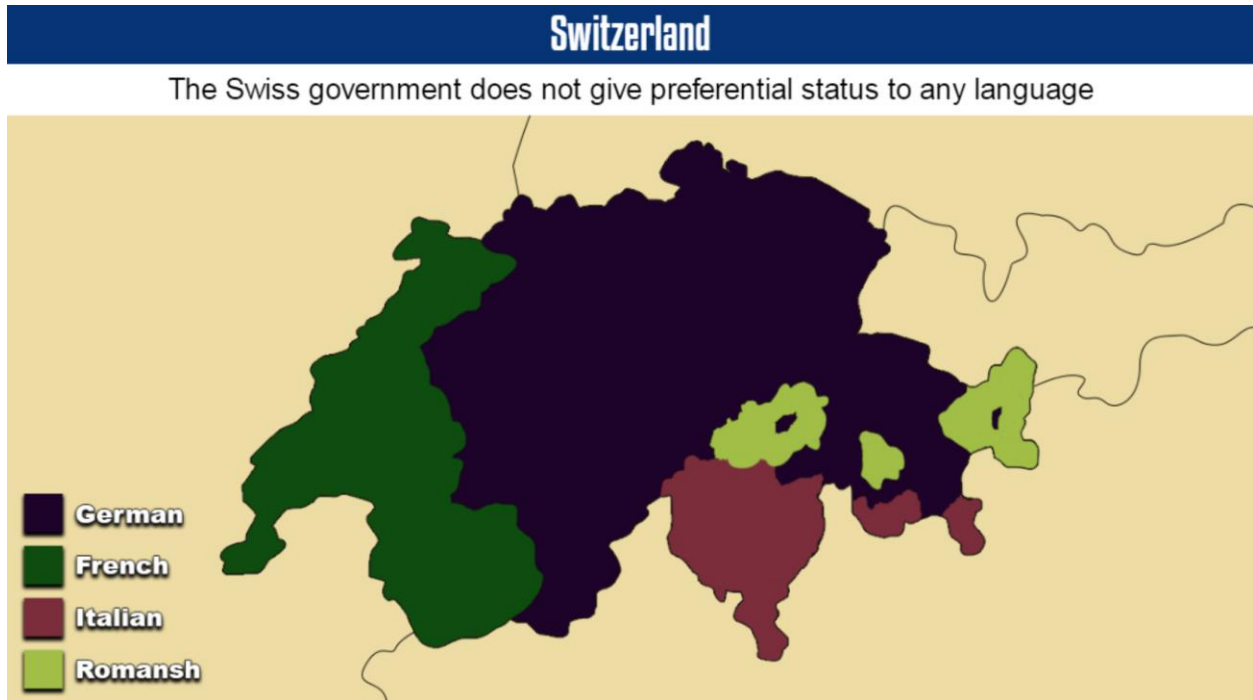


The Arab world is composed of twenty-two countries spanning North Africa and the Middle East. Arabic is the primary language spoken in this cultural region. It is important to note that the term Arab refers to a shared linguistic and cultural background, not a racial or religious background. Arab people are racially diverse, and although most people in this region practice the Islamic faith, there are many Christian, Jewish, and atheist Arabs.

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#### Switzerland

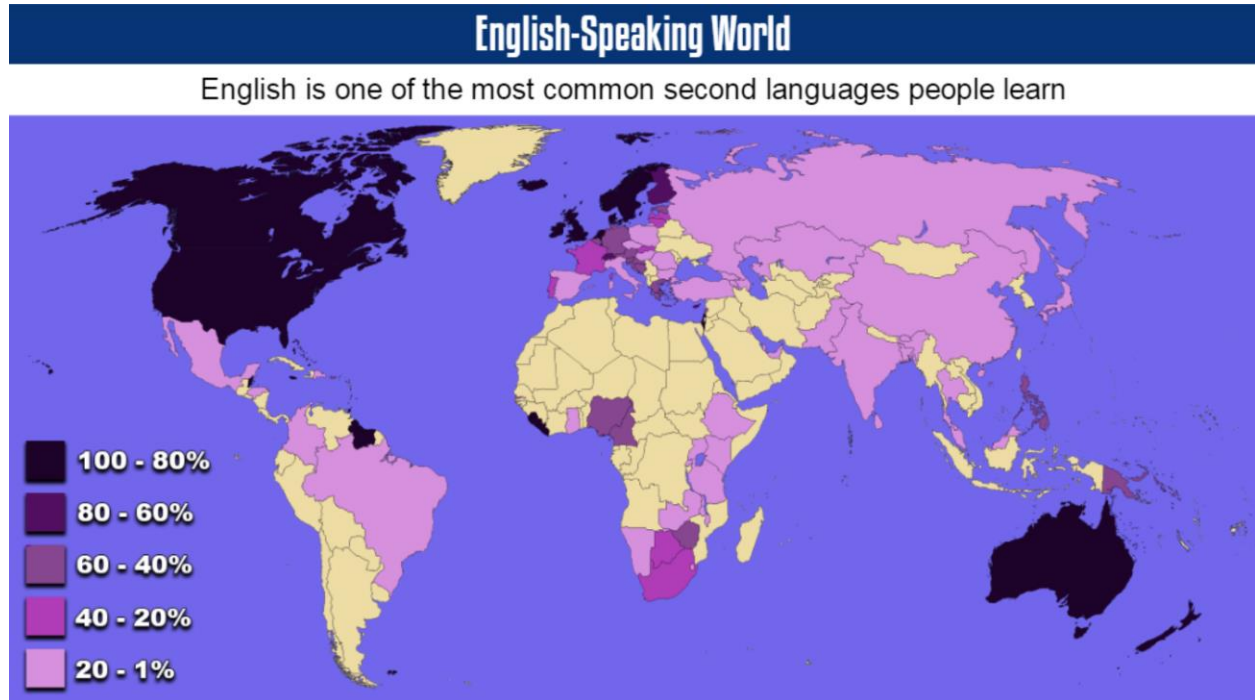


Different languages do not always result in a culturally divided region. Switzerland is a great example of a society that has embraced multiple languages. In fact, the country has four national languages: German, French, Italian, and Romansh. Romansh is a lesser known Romance language local to Switzerland. Although the Swiss government does not give preferential status to any individual language on the national level, the country is essentially divided into regions where a single language dominates.

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### English-Speaking World



English is one of the most widely-spoken languages in the world. In addition to its millions of native speakers, it is one of the most common second languages that people learn. English functions as an international language; it is one of the six official languages of the United Nations, and is the preferred language for international business, science communication, and the Internet. An international language can be used to overcome cultural differences through communication.