

Hello again and welcome to As It Is, from VOA Learning English! I'm June Simms in Washington.

The United States is a lot more ethnically and culturally diverse than it was a century ago. Immigrants have brought not only their culture and traditions, but languages from around the world. Today we hear about a new map that shows where those languages are spoken across the country.

And, then we take a trip to New York City to visit an art exhibit that deals mainly with sound.

## **Mapping Where Foreign Language Speakers Live in the US**

The United States Census Bureau recently released an online map that shows where non-English languages are spoken around the country. The bureau hopes the map will help target services to non-English speaking communities. Avi Arditti has more in this report from VOA's Jessica Berman.

The new Census Bureau map identifies groups of people throughout the country whose first language is not English. Each marking on the 2011 Language Mapper represents an area where one of 15 languages is the main language spoken in the home.

Camille Ryan collected the information for the Census. She says it is based on studies of people who reported that they spoke English “less than very well.” The map shows areas where such people live.

“As you zoom in to even smaller geographic areas, then the dots will represent less people -- be it 10 people or 75 or 50. So, it’s designed to kind of give you an overall visual of the patterns of people who speak a particular language other than English at home.”

Those other languages are Spanish, French, French Creole, Italian, Portuguese, German, Russian, Polish, Persian, Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Tagalog, Arabic and Vietnamese. More than 60.5 million people in the United States are speaking at home in at least one of those languages.

Two-thirds of the people in the report speak Spanish. Vietnamese saw the greatest increase in the number of speakers between 2005 and 2011. It rose seven times over the period!

The 2011 Language Mapper is based on information collected over the past seven years. But it includes population study material gathered over the last 30 years. During that time, the number of non-English speakers in the United States rose 158 percent.

Camille Ryan says the interactive map can serve many purposes.

“For example, if you are a business and you are looking to tailor your communication to a particular customer, you will know what languages you need to address for that particular community. In addition to that, if you are an emergency responder, you can actually use the mapper to figure out what languages you need to be able to communicate in with people in your particular community.”

She says the mapper is also useful for libraries and schools so they can offer classes to help improve English language skills. I’m Avi Arditti.

You are listening to As It Is. I’m June Simms.

## **NYC Modern Art Museum Showcasing Audio as Art**

When people think of an art exhibit, a painting or statue is usually what comes to mind. However, a new exhibit in New York City deals mainly with sound. VOA’s Adam Phillips recently visited the show at the Museum of Modern Art.

The exhibit is called “Soundings: a Contemporary Score.” Barbara London is the curator, overseeing the exhibit. She notes that most visitors expect modern art to be something to be seen, not heard.

“The museum-goer walks into a space, and because they are in MoMA they know they are going to see something traditional, like Picasso. But they are going to see something very unconventional and maybe surprising.”

Many museum-goers are at first not sure about Richard Garet’s work, which he calls “Before Me.” The work produces the sound of a glass marble spinning on the metal casing of a phonograph turntable.

Barbara London says there is a common theme or idea among the 16 artists represented at the exhibit.

“I think most of the artists in the show want you to stop and listen or pause and listen. They’re saying, ‘Hey, slow down! There are various forms of beauty and poetry in the world.’”

Norwegian artist Jana Winderen has created a sound montage. It is called “Ultrafield.”

She used special equipment to capture the ultrasonic radar made by bats. And she used ultra-sensitive underwater microphones to record the movements of sea beetles. She wants to bring attention to endangered environments. And she hopes to give listeners a chance to experience their magic.

“And I am actually hoping people can slow down and enjoy also the listening experience in itself, not necessarily thinking about what it is, or what kind of a message I have with it.”

At a distance of five meters or so, Tristan Perich’s “Microtonal Wall” produces “white noise.”

That is a sound containing so many sounds, or pitches, that no individual one can be recognized. Leaves blowing in the wind and ocean waves are both examples of this.

Tristan Perich has broken four octaves of the musical scale into 1,500 pitches. He also gave each pitch its own small speaker. Close up, or moving slowly past those speakers, one can hear their differences.

“My piece, with 1,500 speakers, each playing individual pitches, is still just a finite fraction of this infinite sound. It’s just a gesture towards this idea of the infiniteness of white noise.”

Susan Philipsz’ “Study for Strings” is perhaps the saddest piece in the show. It is based on a 1943 orchestral work by a Czech man, Pavel Haas. He wrote the piece while detained in a German concentration camp during World War II.

Soon after performing the music for a German propaganda film, Haas and his orchestra members were killed. The musicians in Philipsz' artwork play only two of parts of his work. This was done on purpose to show the loss of the other players.

The Museum of Modern Art's "Soundings" show continues through November 3<sup>rd</sup>.

And that is As It Is. I'm June Simms in Washington.

VOA world news is coming up at the beginning of the hour Universal Time. And, of course, I'll be back next weekend.