

4

Language

4.1 LEARNING LANGUAGES

VOCABULARY: language learning

1 Some students are talking about learning languages. Match one of these terms to each sentence.

grammar foreign languages bilingual
native speakers accent dialect slang

- 1 'I want to learn street English, for example, the informal words that people use with their friends.'
- 2 'I'm OK with the grammar, but when I listen I find it really hard to understand the pronunciation of some native speakers.'
- 3 'I like to try and talk to people who were born in a country where English is the first language.'
- 4 'I love to find out the way language works and all the rules.'
- 5 'They are really hard to learn. Why can't everyone just speak the same language as me!'
- 6 'People with parents from different countries are really lucky because they can learn two languages from birth.'
- 7 'It isn't just the fact that their accent is different, but their English even uses different words and incorrect grammar!'

VOCABULARY: phrasal verbs (2)

2 Write the correct verb in each space. Change the verb form if necessary.

take pick catch fall keep let get

- 1 My poor English often _____ me down.
- 2 I'm quick to _____ on and learn new words.
- 3 She's currently _____ behind the rest of the class.
- 4 My friend _____ up languages really easily.
- 5 I'm not fluent but I can _____ by in French when I'm travelling.
- 6 I suggest you _____ up a new language in your free time.
- 7 Sorry, but I can't _____ up with you. Please speak more slowly.

PRONUNCIATION: linking

3a **1.17** When we speak in English, we often link a word ending with a consonant sound to the next word beginning with a vowel sound. Listen to these examples.

catch_up / I need to catch_up with my work.
picks_up / She picks_up languages quickly.

3b **1.18** Now listen to these sentences. Draw the links between words.

- 1 I can't keep up with the class.
- 2 Take up a hobby.
- 3 He catches on well.
- 4 She has a foreign accent.
- 5 I'm learning to drive a car.
- 6 Can I learn it easily?

3c **1.18** Listen again and practise saying the sentences.

EXTRA VOCABULARY:
phrasal verbs for studying

6 In each sentence, replace the words in bold with one of these phrasal verbs. Write the verb with the pronoun in the correct position.

write up note down write out read up on
read out look up

- 1 I don't know this word. I'll **find** it in my dictionary.
look it up
- 2 I'm going to put sentences on the board and I'd like you to **copy** them in your notebooks.

- 3 For homework I'd like you to **complete** the notes from today's class **in full**. _____
- 4 Pablo, can you **say** your answers for this exercise so the class can hear? _____
- 5 I didn't understand everything in class today on the present perfect. I think I'll have to **find out about** it from grammar book at home tonight.

- 6 Listen to the tape and **write down** any important words you hear. _____

READING

1 What is a dead language? Why do languages die out, do you think?

2a Answer the questions. Read the first two paragraphs of the article to check your answers.

- 1 Which of these languages is more than 2,000 years old?
a) French b) English c) Greek
- 2 What percentage of languages have died out in the last 500 years?
a) 1.3% b) 1.9% c) 4.5%
- 3 How many languages are in danger of disappearing now?
a) over 3,000 b) over 300 c) over 1,300

2b Read the rest of the article and answer the questions.

- 1 What four reasons are given in the text for languages disappearing?
- 2 Why do some people think there is no reason to worry about the death of languages?

3 According to the author, why should we care about languages dying out?

- 4 What do the following, mentioned in the text, claim about languages?
a) Steve Sutherland
b) The Ethnologue
c) Ani Rauhihi

3 Read the article again and find the following.

- 1 a verb and a phrasal verb meaning 'to stop existing' (lines 5 and 10)
- 2 a noun used for when something stops existing, usually used with plants, animals or volcanoes (line 7)
- 3 the noun related to one of the verbs in 1 (line 16)
- 4 the adjective related to the noun in 2 (line 21)
- 5 a verb meaning 'to damage something very badly' (line 30)
- 6 an adjective meaning 'very bad' or 'ending in failure', often used with the words *consequences*, *results* and *effects* (line 39)

LAST WORDS

There are around 6,000 living languages in the world – and at least half of those are in danger. In every part of the world, languages are disappearing. In fact, one scientist has said that languages are in more danger of extinction than birds or mammals. Professor Steve Sutherland of the University of East Anglia calculated that in the past 500 years 4.5 percent of languages have died out – compared with 1.3 percent of birds, and 1.9 percent of mammals.

Languages come and go, and thousands have done exactly that without leaving any trace. Only a very few – Basque, Greek and Latin among them – have lasted more than 2,000 years. But it seems that the pace of their disappearance is becoming quicker.

The Ethnologue, a database of all the languages spoken in the world, claims that 417 languages are spoken by so few people that they are in the final stages of becoming extinct. There is one living speaker of Luo in Cameroon, and a handful of people that speak the Saami Pite language in Sweden and Norway. If very few people speak a language, it will probably die out.

Languages may be lost through migration, as people move from small rural communities to urban centres, or when environments are destroyed by the search for oil or wood. Natural

disasters can also devastate populations, and along with them, their language – like the speakers of the Paulohi language in Maluku, Indonesia: only 50 survived after an earthquake and tidal wave some years ago. Governments also play a role in the extinction of languages. The need to establish 'official languages', for a country to educate its children, conduct its political affairs and carry out its business, had a disastrous effect on many small languages.

What is lost if a language is lost? Some people argue that languages die as the human race evolves. Obviously there could be great benefits if everyone in the world spoke the same language – some industries already reflect this, with English essential for pilots and air traffic controllers. But there are more important things than convenience. As languages are lost, whole ways of life and knowledge may be lost along with them.

Put simply, language expresses something about identity, about our place in the world. Ani Rauhihi, a Maori teacher in New Zealand's North Island, sums it up: 'If you grow up not speaking your language, you won't know who you are.'

From '50 facts that should change the world'
by Jessica Williams