



# A1

## SEMINAR 1 Language

### QUOTES

**Task 1** – Read the quotes and then discuss your views about some of them with a partner.

- 1 “Conversation is the slowest form of human communication.” ~ Anonymous
- 2 “A different language is a different vision of life.” ~ Federico Fellini (1920-1993), Italian filmmaker
- 3 “He who does not know foreign languages does not know anything about his own.” ~ Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832), *Kunst and Alterthum*
- 4 “If thought corrupts language, language can also corrupt thought.” ~ George Orwell (1903-1950), English author
- 5 “The day is approaching when all the people of the world will have adopted one universal language and one common script, in addition to their own native tongue.” One of the Bahai principles of unity

### DISCUSSION

- 1 Which languages are important to you? What foreign languages have you studied?
- 2 Do you have any study, work or travel experience with foreign languages?
- 3 Are studies of foreign languages important at university? Why?
- 4 Why is it important for people to speak one or more world languages? (lingua franca – a language widely used beyond the population of its native speakers)
- 5 Besides this course, what ways can you think of to improve your English?
- 6 Is it worthwhile learning a “minor language”?





## LISTENING

**Task 4** – You are going to hear a New Zealander talking about how he would go about learning Japanese. As you listen, write short answers to the questions.

1. What aspect of Japanese would Brent not try to learn?  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. What would he concentrate on instead?  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. What two areas of language does he say he'd try to learn, in order to hold a conversation?  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. Who does he think could help him to learn technical language?  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. What technique for learning does he think is important?  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. He has learnt some basic Japanese phrases already. Who from?  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. What kind of book would he definitely buy?  
\_\_\_\_\_
8. What advantage of one-to-one (private) lessons does he mention?  
\_\_\_\_\_
9. What advantage of learning in a class does he mention?  
\_\_\_\_\_
10. Which aspect of language does he think is important?  
\_\_\_\_\_

O'Connell, Sue. *Focus on Advanced English CAE*. Harlow: Addison Wesley Longman Limited, 1996.

**Task 5 – International Mother Language Day** was proclaimed in the year 2000 by UNESCO to be observed on the 21<sup>st</sup> of February to promote linguistic and cultural diversity and multilingualism. Languages are the most powerful instruments of preserving and developing our heritage. Promoting the dissemination of mother tongues will serve not only to encourage linguistic diversity and multilingual education, but also to develop fuller awareness of linguistic and cultural traditions throughout the world and inspire solidarity based on understanding, tolerance and dialogue.

- 1 How many living languages are there in the world today?
- 2 How many languages have fewer than 10,000 speakers?
- 3 What proportion of the world's 6000 to 7000 languages is in danger of extinction?
- 4 If these small languages were to become extinct, how would the diversity and cultural richness of the world be affected?

## DISCUSSION

- 1 How would you feel if words from your language began to disappear?
- 2 Is it frustrating not being able to communicate easily? Can you recall a particular incident?
- 3 Are native English speakers less motivated to learn foreign languages? Why?



**Task 6** – Read the text and choose which of the missing paragraphs (A-F) fits each of the numbered gaps (1-6) in the article.

### The Day a Language Died

This week another language died; Carlos Westez, more widely known as Red Thunder Cloud, the last speaker of the Native American language Catawba, died of a stroke at the age of 78. With him passed away the Catawba language. Those who want to hear the war songs, the hunting songs and the religious chants of the Catawba can apply to the Smithsonian Institute, where, back in the 1940s, Red Thunder Cloud recorded a series of them for posterity. Some earnest folk might even take the trouble to learn some of them by heart. But Catawba as something that lived and breathed and developed organically is gone for good.

Of the creatures alive on the planet, only Red Thunder Cloud's dog, which survived him and understood commands in no other language, still presumably has the sounds of Catawba rolling around his brain.

1 \_\_\_\_\_

Less obvious, but no less harmful is the impact of one powerful culture upon our languages and ways of life. We are witnessing the spread of English, carried by an American culture, delivered by Japanese technology. We are also witnessing the increasing dominance of a few great, transnational tongues: Chinese, Spanish, Russian and Hindi.

2 \_\_\_\_\_

One of those under threat is Aore, the language native to Vanuatu in the Pacific. Like Catawba (until this week) it is spoken by that island's only remaining native inhabitant. So, it, too, is bound to die out.

3 \_\_\_\_\_

In the Americas too, 100 languages, each of which has fewer than 300 speakers, are on their last legs. North America, which once had hundreds of languages, has only about 100 languages left.

4 \_\_\_\_\_

He was not actually born into the Catawba tribe, and the language was not his mother tongue, but he was a frequent visitor to the reservation in South Carolina and immersed himself in the language. The songs he recorded for the Smithsonian helped to start a craze for Native American music.

5 \_\_\_\_\_

Now he is gone and the language is dead – but what does it mean for the rest of us when a language disappears? To be the last remaining speaker of a language, like Red Thunder Cloud, or like Dolly Pentreath, who died in 1778, the last person to speak Cornish as her mother tongue, must be a peculiarly lonely destiny, almost as strange and terrible as to be the last surviving member of a dying species. What the rest of us lose when a language dies is the possibility of a unique way of perceiving and describing the world.

6 \_\_\_\_\_

His theory lacks scientific proof, but one's own experience as a language learner is that to speak another language is to become another person. Anyone who has learned to speak another language moderately well will have had the sensation of discovering a new personality, with new facial expressions and gestures to match.

**A.** Many other languages will share its fate; a large proportion of the languages of Ethiopia are used by tiny numbers of people. Two speakers of the Ethiopian language Gufat were fine until a well-intentioned language researcher took them out of their native jungle, whereupon they caught cold and died.

**B.** For speaking a language is a complex accomplishment. Understanding how we do it has occupied experts throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Recently, Mark Pagel, a biomathematician in the Zoology Department of Oxford University, has claimed that learning a language brings about permanent changes to one's brain.



**C.** It has become clear to all of us, over the past 20 years, how much damage modern industry can inflict on the world's ecology; how the destruction of the rainforest also brings about the death of untold species of plants and insects.

**D.** In his attempt to spread word of the tribe's language and culture, he came as far as Britain where, in 1992 he erected a tent in Edinburgh and gave demonstrations of story-telling.

**E.** With their rise as tools of culture and commerce have come the deaths of hundreds of other languages which are the losers in the competition for linguistic survival.

**F.** It was for this reason that Red Thunder Cloud's death this week made news around the world; if Native Americans face a peculiar and formidable threat to their languages, Red Thunder Cloud was one of the first to recognise this and to try to do something about it.

*O'Connell, Sue. Focus on Advanced English CAE Revised and Updated. Harlow, Addison Wesley Longman Limited, 1999.*

**Task 7** – Add your arguments to the following and then discuss.

Debate on the Importance of English vs. Other Languages in the World

**Student 1** argues for English as the most important language in the world:

- For people from different countries to get on they need to speak the same language, and as so many people already use English, that would be the best language to use.
- Children all over the world should be taught English at school.
- Other major world languages are also important, but it is not necessary to preserve the languages with less than 10,000 speakers.
- Governments should not get involved in preserving a language; if the language dies, it's because there's no one left to speak it, and so no one will miss it.
- Language is a barrier that can be manipulated by nationalists to cause a divide where none exists.

**Student 2** argues for the value of linguistic diversity:

- Each language in the world, no matter how small, is vitally important to preserve our cultural and social heritage.
- Governments all over the world should do more to preserve languages nearing extinction; each language that dies makes the world a less diverse and interesting place to live.
- Language is not a barrier, but rather, a cultural symbol which makes a particular group of people unique and gives them a feeling of unity.
- Once a language is lost, it is lost forever, and irrecoverable for future study.

For further information visit: [www.survival-international.org](http://www.survival-international.org) (Survival: The Movement for Tribal Peoples) and [www.unesco.org](http://www.unesco.org),  
<http://www.un.org/Depts/dhl/language>.

**GRAMMAR EXERCISES** – phrasal verbs and prepositions

**Task 8** – Fill in the gap with a suitable preposition, if necessary.

1. He speaks English well enough to get ..... in an English speaking country.
2. Have you ever been ..... the U.S.A.?
3. Let's discuss ..... this issue over lunch.
4. If you don't understand a word, look it ..... in the dictionary.



5. I'd like to introduce Mr Maiden ..... you.
6. We met ..... a conference two years ago.
7. She translates ..... Czech ..... English.
8. I need to take a course to brush ..... my German.
9. Excuse me, would you ..... any chance be Mr Atkinson?
10. I study Spanish and Portuguese ..... Masaryk University.

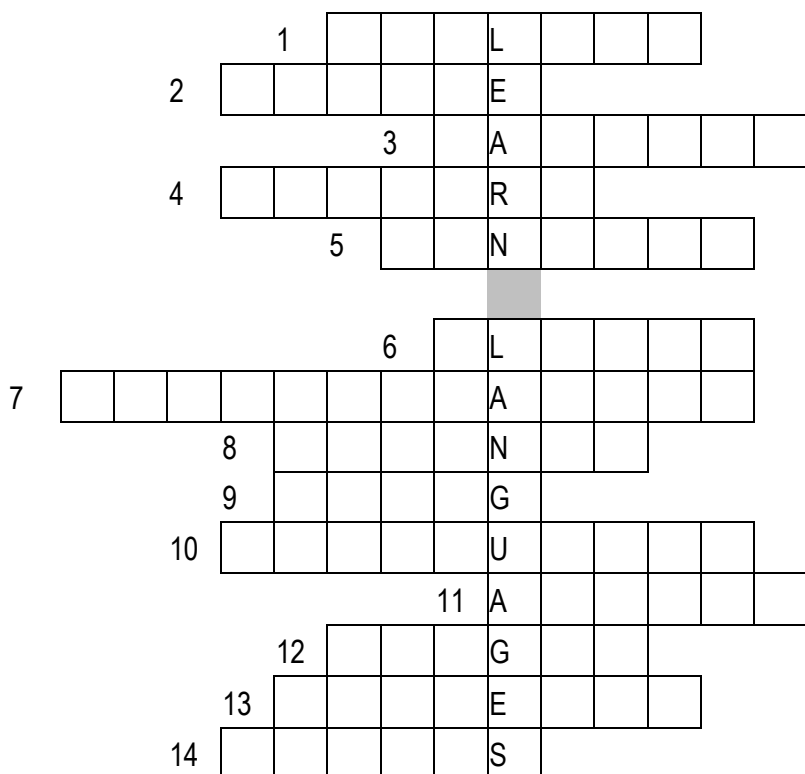
## WORD BANK

1. mother tongue/native language	mateřský jazyk
2. native speaker	rodilý mluvčí
3. broken English	lámaná angličtina
4. improve one's language	zlepšit si jazyk
5. brush up one's knowledge	oprášit si znalosti
6. have a good knowledge of a language	mít dobrou znalost jazyka
7. a good command of a language	dobrá znalost jazyka
8. language skills	jazykové dovednosti
9. mispronounce	špatně vyslovovat
10. misspell	psát s pravopisnými chybami
11. speak fluently	mluvit plynně
12. make/correct mistakes	dělat/opravovat chyby
13. speak a foreign language	mluvit cizím jazykem
14. language barrier	jazyková bariéra
15. limited/large vocabulary	omezená/velká slovní zásoba
16. extend one's vocabulary	rozšířit si svou slovní zásobu
17. consult a dictionary	vyhledat ve slovníku
18. look up a word	vyhledat si slovo
19. discuss a problem	diskutovat o problému
20. part of speech	slovní druh
21. get by	vystačit si
22. translate from English into Czech	překládat z angličtiny do češtiny

## APPENDIX TO SEMINAR 1 – Formal Introduction to the Course

- The course is primarily based on EAP (English for Academic Purposes) through readings, discussions and presentations.
  - Course requirements for CJVA1B and CJVA1M are to have completed a 5-7 minute long presentation during the semester based on the seminar materials and presentation criteria.
  - The majority of readings are to be done at home before the lesson
  - Class participation is an important part of the course (70% attendance)
  - Presentations will be done throughout the semester – more information in seminar 2
  - Grammar – will be covered only minimally in class with few detailed explanations
- You are responsible for knowing the grammar points in the materials and are expected to have intermediate general knowledge learned on your own time
- Vocabulary – you are responsible for knowing intermediate level vocabulary as well as some extra EAP/ESP words (i.e. the words that are in the vocabulary list at the back of your seminar notes)

## CROSSWORD



- 1 a variety of a language, spoken in one part of a country, different in some words or pronunciation from other forms of the same language (7)
- 2 a language; “Spanish is her mother .....” (6)
- 3 telling someone who’s done something stupid that he’s “absolutely brilliant” (7)
- 4 “Look before you leap” or “A friend in need is a friend indeed” (7)
- 5 “wealthy” is a ..... of “rich” (7)
- 6 expression used so commonly that it has lost much of its expressive force (6)
- 7 the accent of British English which has become the standard for teaching and learning is known as Received P ..... (13)
- 8 “pretty” is an ..... of “ugly” (7)
- 9 informal language used among friends but not suitable for good writing or formal occasions (5)
- 10 all the words known to a particular person (10)
- 11 a particular way of speaking, usually connected with a country, area, or class (6)
- 12 language that is hard to understand, especially because it is full of special or technical words known only to members of a certain group e.g. linguists or engineers (6)
- 13 a group of words that form a statement, command, exclamation, or question, beginning with a capital letter and ending with one of the marks (!./?) (8)
- 14 phrases which mean something different from the meanings of their separate words e.g. “make up my mind” (6)

Adapted from Misztal, Mariusz: Tests in English. Tématická slovní zásoba. Havlíčkův Brod: Fragment, 2002.