**Language**

**Claim is that people of Africa's Zaire speak more than 200 different languages. *(L. M. Boyd)***

**Those who study animal languages conclude a grasshopper has far more chirps of significance than a pig has significant oinks. *(L. M. Boyd)***

**War is what happens when language fails. *(Margaret Atwood)***

**What's the native language of Australia? There are more than 100. *(L. M. Boyd)***

**There are no language barriers when you are smiling. *(Allen Klein)***

**The best way to learn a language is to sleep with someone from that country. *(David Sedaris)***

**By and large, language is a tool for concealing the truth. *(George Carlin)***

**My No. 7 Wonder of the World is a human child, any child. I used to wonder about childhood and the evolution of our species. It seemed unparsimonious to expend all that energy on such a long period of vulnerability -- one-sixth of a human lifespan! -- with nothing to show for it, in biological terms, beyond the feckless, irresponsible pleasure of childhood. Why didn't our evolution allow us to jump catlike from our juvenile to our adult and (as I thought) productive stage of life? I had forgotten about language, the single trait that marks us as specifically human, the property that enables our survival as the most compulsively, biologically, obsessively social of all creatures on the earth. I had forgotten what children do in childhood. Language is what childhood is for. *(Lewis Thomas, in Reader's Digest)***

**Every colloquial language was spoken before it was written, except one: contemporary Hebrew. *(L. M. Boyd)***

**Even if you do learn to speak correct English, whom are you going to speak it to? *(Clarence Darrow, attorney)***

**A language dies every two weeks. Of the seven thousand languages spoken in the world today, linguists claim half are in danger of extinction and likely to disappear during this century. *(Harry Bright & Jakob Anser, in Are You Kidding Me?, p. 184)***

**A different language is a different vision of life. *(Federico Fellini)***

**Color is its own divine language, creating meaning through combinations and arrangements. It makes existence feel. *(Colleen Louise Barry, poet)***

**\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*English is the native language in only 12 countries. But it's the official or semi-official language in 33 countries. So 21 countries adopted it, even though they didn't start out with it. Scholars call English the Latin of the modern world. *(L. M. Boyd)***

**About three-fourths of all the English that is spoken worldwide is used as a second language, not a first. In China alone, more than 300 million people are studying English, which is more than the number of Americans who speak it. *(The Washington Times, as it appeared in The Week magazine, January 14, 2005)***

**Why the English language is difficult to learn:**

**\* The bandage was wound around the wound.**

**\* He could lead if he would get the lead out.**

**\* The soldier decided to desert his dessert in the desert.**

**\* When shot at, the dove dove into the bushes.**

**\*The insurance was invalid for the invalid.**

**\* They were too close to the door to close it. *(Explore! Magazine)***

**How English took over the world: The future belongs to the English language, said John McWhorter. English is rapidly becoming what the creators of Esperanto had envisioned: a language spoken on every continent, and the primary medium for communication among different nations. Today, almost 2 billion people speak English to some degree, and soon one out of three people on Earth will be able to converse in it. Though China's population is the largest of any nation's, English is far more entrenched in global technology and media than Mandarin, which is extremely difficult for non-natives to speak and write. If a century from now, "the Chinese rule the world, they will likely do so in English.” In 2115, linguists estimate, only 600 of the 6,000 languages now spoken around the world will remain. Major languages such as Spanish, Hindi, Arabic, and Russian will continue to be used within nations, but when earthlings deal with the larger world online or in person, English will be the lingua franca. The passing of so many languages into antiquity is, no doubt, a shame. But "universal comprehension" is a powerful consolation. *(The Week magazine, January 16, 2015)***

**\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*Basque is linked to no other tongue. Finnish, Estonian and Hungarian are connected at their roots, but only to one another. All the rest of the languages in Europe are related. *(L. M. Boyd)***

**New research suggests that the geography and climate of a place can influence how language evolves. The languages of people who live in mountainous regions use words and sounds that have intense bursts of air. At higher elevations of lower air pressure, it is easier to form these sounds in the pharynx. Also, because consonant sounds do not travel well through heated air, tropical habits often produce languages with open syllables, such as in the word aloha. Even bird species in the tropics sing with fewer consonant sounds than birds in colder climates. *(The Daily Chronicle Extra)***

**Only 20 percent of American K-12 students are enrolled in foreign language classes, compared with a median of 92 percent of students in European countries. *(Pew Research Center, as it appeared in The Week magazine, September 7, 2018)***

**There's no such thing as a slack French face. I think it's because the French have to exercise their jaws and their mouths so much just to get the words out. The French language has a lot to do with the beauty of the French face. Speak in French and the whole inside of your face moves, whereas English leaves you slack. Look in the mirror. Now say "Che-rie!" Did you see all the exercise you got? Now try "Dear." No exercise there. *(Diana Vreeland, in D. V., edited by George Plimpton and Christopher Hemphill)***

**The symbolic language is the one foreign language that each of us must learn. *(Erich Fromm)***

**A man who is ignorant of foreign languages is ignorant of his own. *(Johann Wolfgang von Goethe)***

**Language is not just a creation of humanity. It is humanity. *(E. O. Wilson, biologist)***

**With every foreign language, you develop a tiny bit of insight into the people who speak it as you study it. As one small example, the Japanese word for "husband" is the same as the word for "boss," if you see what I mean. *(Florence Rome, in The Scarlett Letters)***

**Only by learning to speak your language could I discover how much I disagree with your ideas. *(Ashleigh Brilliant, in Pot-Shots)***

**Viennese filmmaker Otto Schenk said: "You always think another thing than what you actually say. ... It's not so much what you say that communicates, but how you hide what you don't say, your real feelings." He said this lying is central to language. *(L. M. Boyd)***

**A mind enclosed in language is in prison. *(Simone Weil)***

**As if things weren’t confused enough, our modern misuse of the English language is making things murkier than ever. Consider, this: “Economy size” means a large box of soap, but a small automobile. *(Bits & Pieces)***

**Language is mobile and liable to change, and a very large number of words have two or more pronunciations current, giving life and variety to language. It is a free country, and a man may call a vase a vawse, a vahse, a vaze or a vase, as he pleases. And why should he not? We do not all think alike, walk alike, dress alike, write alike or dine alike: why should not we use our liberty in speech also, so long as the purpose of speech, to be intelligible, and its grace are not interfered with? *(James Murray, lexicographer)***

**Music is the only language in which you cannot say a mean or sarcastic thing. *(John Erskine)***

**I personally think we developed language because of our deep inner need to complain. *(Jane Wagner)***

**While traveling in France on business, I managed to order lunch in French, relying on my translation dictionary. The waiter seemed impressed, then smiled as he thumbed through a few pages of my book. Later, when I paid my bill, I gave him a large franc note and motioned for him to wait while I scanned my guide for a comment appropriate for the wonderful meal. He leaned over and pointed to a certain French phrase. The English translation: “Keep the change.” *(Lisa Swanson, in Reader’s Digest)***

***\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\**The great enemy of clear language is insincerity. *(George Orwell)***

**If thought corrupts language, language can also corrupt thought. A bad usage can spread by tradition and imitation, even among people who should and do know better. *(George Orwell)***

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**It can hardly be a coincidence that no language on Earth has ever produced the expression "as pretty as an airport." *(Douglas Adams, science fiction writer)***

**It is of interest to note that while some dolphins are reported to have learned English -- up to 50 words in correct context -- no human being has been reported to have learned Dolphinese. *(Carl Sagan, astronomer) 129986***

**A mother mouse and her baby were scampering across a polished floor when they heard a noise. They hoped it would be a human being, but it turned out to be the family cat. Upon seeing the mice, the cat gave chase. Mama Mouse felt a swipe of paw and claw. She turned in her tracks and called out in her loudest voice: "Bow-wow!" The cat ran off. Gathering her baby to her, and catching her breath, Mama Mouse explained, "Now, my child, you see how important a second language is." *(Sandra J. Hulden, in Reader's Digest)***

**Among the most common languages in the United States, if English is first and Spanish is second, what is third? Sign. (*L. M. Boyd)***

**All people smile in thesame language. *(Bits & Pieces)***

***\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\**6 people who spoke several languages:**  
**1. District Court Judge John Pickering -- 20**  
**2. Friedrich Engels -- 8**  
**3. John Adams -- 7**  
**4. Jean Paul Getty -- 7**  
**5. Edgar Allen Poe -- 6**  
**6. Christopher Columbus -- 4. (World Features Syndicate)**

**Mandarin Chinese is spoken by 650 million, English is spoken by 358 million, Russian by 233, Spanish by 213, and Hindustani by 209 million. Fortunately, talk’s cheap. *(Bernie Smith, in The Joy of Trivia, p. 17)***

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**It's my belief we developed language because of our deep inner need to complain. *(Lily Tomlin)***

**Tools' impact on language: Our prehistoric ancestors' use of stone tools played an essential role in the development of language, a new study suggests. Some 2.5 million years ago, early hominids in East Africa began crafting rocks into sharp shards, or "flakes," that were used for butchering animals. These "Oldowan tools" spread throughout the continent over the next 700,000 years, and scientists now say that the skills required to make and use them may have provided the "evolutionary advantage" that led to the evolution of early languages -- and our ancestors' transition into Homo sapiens. Researchers conducted a series of experiments teaching contemporary humans the complex art of "Oldowan stone knapping," a technique that involves hammering a hard rock against a softer rock like basalt or flint. Participants who used words -- as opposed to imitation or nonverbal gestures -- proved the most efficient at teaching the method. Researchers speculate that hominids developed primitive words -- such as "yes" and "no" or "here" and "there" -- to push their tool-making lessons along. "Our findings suggest that stone tools weren't just a product of human evolution but actually drove it as well," researcher Thomas Morgan tells ScienceDaily.com. "You learn so much faster when someone is telling you what to do." *(The Week magazine, January 30, 2015)***

**I wonder what language truck drivers are using, now that everyone is using theirs? *(Beryl Pfizer, in Ladies' Home Journal)***

**A different language is a different vision of life. *(Federico Fellini)***

**A mind enclosed in language is in prison. *(Simone Weil)***

**My six-year-old was dazzled the first time he heard the Welsh language being spoken. “Mom,” he said, “it sounds like they’re scribbling with their tongues.” *(Mickey Miller Regal, in Reader’s Digest)***

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