

Language development



1 Pre-reading

Read the sentences about language development and write *T* (True) or *F* (False). Then check your answers by doing an Internet search for *language development*. You can use these websites to help you:

www.sciencemuseum.org.uk/WhoAmI/FindOutMore/Yourbrain/Whatisspecialabouthumanlanguage.aspx

www.historyworld.net/wrldhis/PlainTextHistories.asp?historyid=ab13

- 1 Animals and humans communicate in the same way. F
- 2 An average person says 370 million words during their lifetime.
- 3 Adults use about 15,000 words every day.
- 4 In humans, the right side of the brain usually deals with language.
- 5 Understanding intonation is just as important as understanding words.
- 6 Babies can differentiate between different sounds.
- 7 You learn around 60,000 words by the age of three.
- 8 Up until the age of seven, it's easy to learn foreign languages.

2 Vocabulary

Do an Internet search for *theories of language development* and match the words 1–10 with their definitions a–j. Which theory do you like most? You can use these websites to help you:

pandora.cii.wvu.edu/vajda/ling201/test1materials/origin_of_language.htm

webspace.ship.edu/cgboer/langorigins.html

news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/magazine/8352525.stm

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|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 the mama theory 2 the ta-ta theory 3 the bow-wow theory 4 the pooh-pooh theory 5 the ding-dong theory 6 the cultural evolution theory 7 the sing-song/la-la theory 8 the hey you! theory 9 the warning theory 10 the lying theory | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a language originated to express emotions b language developed gradually through interaction c language expressed a need for identity and belonging d language was preceded by gestures and movements e language emerged from play and enjoyment f language developed from the need to warn others g language developed from a need to deceive and lie h language attributed easy sounds to significant things i language began as imitations of animal sounds j sounds correspond to meaning in language |
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3 Vocabulary

Match these languages with some of the main language groups 1–7. Check your answers on the Internet. Add more languages for each group. Which group does your language belong to?

Arabic Chechen English Finnish Georgian Hebrew Hindi
Hungarian Japanese Mandarin Swahili Thai Turkish Xhosa

- 1 Indo-European English
- 2 Uralic _____
- 3 Altaic _____
- 4 Sino-Tibetan _____
- 5 Afro-Asiatic _____
- 6 Caucasian _____
- 7 Niger-Congo _____

4 Reading

Do an Internet search for how languages evolved. Then circle the correct words to complete the sentences. You can use these websites to help you:

www.historyworld.net/wrldhis/PlainTextHistories.asp?historyid=ab13 www.economist.com/node/18557572
www.bbc.co.uk/languages/guide/languages.shtml www.nytimes.com/2011/04/15/science/15language.html
www.bl.uk/learning/langlit/sounds/case-studies/minority-ethnic/

- 1 DNA evidence suggests that the origin of languages was probably in
a **Africa** b America c Europe
- 2 Today's languages are linked by
a grammar b sounds c words d a combination of these
- 3 Today's most widespread group of languages is
a Indo-European b Semitic c Finno-Ugric
- 4 An example of a romance language is
a English b Flemish c French
- 5 An example of a North Germanic language is
a Italian b Norwegian c Romanian
- 6 The languages spoken by ethnic communities
a have an impact on spoken English
b do not have an impact on spoken English
c will never change an existing language
- 7 English is very widely used globally because it is
a idiomatic b easy to speak c complex
- 8 Experts believe that English as we speak it today will
a change b disappear c remain the same



5 Project

Technology is changing the way language is evolving. Research and prepare a presentation on what impact cell phones, the Internet, and social networking sites are having on the English language. In your presentation you could include examples of:

- changes in meaning, grammar, and spelling
- use of symbols and images
- style of communication and use of slang
- any other relevant or interesting information

You can use these websites to help you:

news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/1235945.stm
news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/7910075.stm
www.guardian.co.uk/technology/2009/oct/23/net-contributions-language
www.telegraph.co.uk/comment/personal-view/6017629/Texting-is-making-English-a-foreign-language.html
thenextweb.com/socialmedia/2010/12/10/wtf-social-networking-is-good-for-language/
www3.open.ac.uk/media/fullstory.aspx?id=18269