

Scripts

0:11 The language I'm speaking right now is on its way to becoming the world's universal language, for better or for worse. Let's face it, it's the language of the internet, it's the language of finance, it's the language of air traffic control, of popular music, diplomacy -- English is everywhere.

0:33 Now, Mandarin Chinese is spoken by more people, but more Chinese people are learning English than English speakers are learning Chinese. Last I heard, there are two dozen universities in China right now teaching all in English. English is taking over.

0:52 And in addition to that, it's been predicted that at the end of the century almost all of the languages that exist now -- there are about 6,000 -- will no longer be spoken. There will only be some hundreds left. And on top of that, it's at the point where instant translation of live speech is not only possible, but it gets better every year.

1:16 The reason I'm reciting those things to you is because I can tell that we're getting to the point where a question is going to start being asked, which is: Why should we learn foreign languages -- other than if English happens to be foreign to one? Why bother to learn another one when it's getting to the point where almost everybody in the world will be able to communicate in one?

1:41 I think there are a lot of reasons, but I first want to address the one that you're probably most likely to have heard of, because actually it's more dangerous than you might think. And that is the idea that a language channels your thoughts, that the vocabulary and the grammar of different languages gives everybody a different kind of acid trip, so to speak. That is a marvelously enticing idea, but it's kind of fraught.

2:12 So it's not that it's untrue completely. So for example, in French and Spanish the word for table is, for some reason, marked as feminine. So, "la table," "la mesa," you just have to deal with it. It has been shown that if you are a speaker of one of those languages and you happen to be asked how you would imagine a table talking, then much more often than could possibly be an accident, a French or a Spanish speaker says that the table would talk with a high and feminine voice. So if you're French or Spanish, to you, a table is kind of a girl, as opposed to if you are an English speaker.

2:56 It's hard not to love data like that, and many people will tell you that that means that there's a worldview that you have if you speak one of those languages. But you have to watch out, because imagine if somebody put us under the microscope, the us being those of us who speak English natively. What is the worldview from English?

3:17 So for example, let's take an English speaker. Up on the screen, that is Bono. He speaks English. I presume he has a worldview. Now, that is Donald Trump. In his way, he speaks English as well.

3:34 (Laughter)

3:38 And here is Ms. Kardashian, and she is an English speaker, too. So here are three speakers of the English language. What worldview do those three people have in common? What worldview is shaped through the English language that unites them? It's a highly fraught concept. And so gradual consensus is becoming that language can shape thought, but it tends to be in rather darling, obscure psychological flutters. It's not a matter of giving you a different pair of glasses on the world.

4:13 Now, if that's the case, then why learn languages? If it isn't going to change the way you think, what would the other reasons be? There are some. One of them is that if you want to imbibe a culture, if you want to drink it in, if you want to become part of it, then whether or not the language channels the culture -- and that seems doubtful -- if you want to imbibe the culture, you have to control to some degree the language that the culture happens to be conducted in. There's no other way.

4:48 There's an interesting illustration of this. I have to go slightly obscure, but really you should seek it out. There's a movie by the Canadian film director Denys Arcand -- read out in English on the page, "Dennis Ar-cand," if you want to look him up. He did a film called "Jesus of Montreal." And many of the characters are vibrant, funny, passionate, interesting French-Canadian, French-speaking women. There's one scene closest to the end, where they have to take a friend to an Anglophone hospital. In the hospital, they have to speak English. Now, they speak English but it's not their native language, they'd rather not speak English. And they speak it more slowly, they have accents, they're not idiomatic. Suddenly these characters that you've fallen in love with become husks of themselves, they're shadows of themselves.

АУДИРОВАНИЕ

1. B, 2. B, 3. A, 4. A, 5. C, 6. C, 7. C, 8. A, 9. A, 10. B

ЛЕКСИКА

1. close, 2. depth, 3. demand, 4. lift, 5. conduct

ГРАММАТИКА

1. cast your mind back to
2. enter the room as long as
3. on the point of cancel(l)ing
4. what we did was book
5. No sooner had I woken up

УСТОЙЧИВЫЕ ВЫРАЖЕНИЯ

1. Whenever your parents say no to you, you always **blow your top!**
2. It was satisfying to know that my boss and I were **of one mind.**
3. Even though she expected the test to **be no picnic** she passed it on the first try.
4. She didn't want her animosity towards us to **be as plain as day.**
5. I tried reading a book on neuroscience once, which I thought would be difficult, but honestly it turned out to **be a piece of cake.**