

VInt Follow-up Activities

Text type: TED talk

Week: 2

Title: 4 reasons to learn a new language

Author/Speaker: John McWhorter

Follow-up Writing:

1. Use reported speech to outline the main reasons why McWhorter thinks people should learn new languages. Remember to paraphrase (use your own words).
2. What kind of evidence does McWhorter use to support his argument? How convincing is it?

Follow-up Discussion Questions:

1. Do you think that the language someone speaks can have an influence on how they think? Or do you think that language is a reflection of the focus placed by the society?

For example, in English, there is only one word for "snow". However, in the Inuit language, there are several different words used to represent different types of snow, such as "dry fluffy snow", "wet heavy snow", "granular icy snow" etc. and speakers of this language easily make these distinctions, whereas English speakers do not. Do you think this is a result of the higher importance of snow in the Inuit society, and therefore a greater focus, reflected in the language?

2. Are there aspects of your own culture that you can describe more fully by using your first language than by using English? If someone learned your first language, would they be able to understand your culture better?
3. Do you think language and culture are linked together in an essential way? Can you fully understand one without the other?
4. Do you think apps such as Duolingo and Babbel have made language learning easier and more fun?