

# A1

## SEMINAR 1

### Language

#### QUOTES

**Task 1** – Read the quotes, then discuss your views about some of them in class.

- 1 “Conversation is the slowest form of human communication.” ~Author Unknown
- 2 “A different language is a different vision of life.” ~Federico Fellini, Italian filmmaker
- 3 “Learn a new language and get a new soul.” ~Czech Proverb
- 4 “Language is by its very nature a communal thing; that is, it expresses never the exact thing, but a compromise - that which is common to you, me, and everybody.” ~Thomas Earnest Hulme, *Speculations*, 1923
- 5 “He who does not know foreign languages does not know anything about his own.” ~Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Kunst and Alterthum*
- 6 “Words signify man's refusal to accept the world as it is.” ~Walter Kaufmann
- 7 “But if thought corrupts language, language can also corrupt thought.” ~George Orwell
- 8 “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 Why do you study foreign languages?
- 2 Are studies of foreign languages important at university? Why?
- 3 Why is it important for an academic to speak at least one or two world languages? (lingua franca – a language widely used beyond the population of its native speakers)
- 4 Which foreign language is the most important one for you personally?
- 5 Which foreign language is the most important one for you professionally?
- 6 What are your expectations for this course?
- 7 What are your priorities in studying English? (speaking, writing, reading, grammar, stylistics, etc.)
- 8 Which of these skills will you need most in your academic life / everyday life?
- 9 Is this course your only way of improving your English?
- 10 How much time are you planning to spend on self-study?

**Task 2** - Try to match the languages with the numbers of people speaking them.

A) Portuguese	1. 885 million speakers
B) Chinese (Wu)	2. 332 million speakers
C) Bengali Standard	3. 322 million speakers
D) Russian	4. 189 million speakers
E) German	5. 182 million speakers
F) Spanish	6. 170 million speakers
G) Czech	7. 170 million speakers
H) English	8. 125 million speakers
I) Chinese (Mandarin)	9. 98 million speakers
J) Japanese	10. 77 million speakers
K) Hindi	73. 12 million speakers

### READING – English in the World

How many people in the world speak English? In the first place, it is not simply a matter of taking all the English-speaking countries in the world and adding up their populations. America alone has forty million people who *don't* speak English -- about the same as the number of people in England who *do* speak English.

Then there is the problem of deciding whether a person is speaking English or something that is *like* English but is really quite a separate language. This is especially true of the many English-based creole or pidgin languages in the world. A second and rather more serious problem is whether a person speaks English or simply *thinks* he speaks it.

**Task 3** – Read the following examples and decide which one is correct English, which is creole/pidgin, and which is incorrect English.

- a) Dem plaan di tri.
- b) I even cannot say you how I have bad mood.
- c) I am having lunch with my friends tomorrow.
- d) It was written in the newspapers that the cinema doesn't play.
- e) I hope the above is convenient.
- f) Wanpela man i kam, sikspela man i kam.

### POLYSEMIES

We can talk about *fine* art, *fine* gold, a *fine* edge, feeling *fine*, *fine* hair, and a court *fine* and mean quite separate things. The condition of having multiple meanings is known as **polysemy**, and it is very common. The polysemic champion must be *set*. Superficially it looks like a wholly unassuming monosyllable, yet it has 58 uses as a noun, 126 as a verb, and 10 as a participial adjective. Its meanings are so various and scattered that it takes the *OED* [Oxford English Dictionary] 60,000 words -- the length of a short novel -- to discuss them all. A foreigner could be excused for thinking that to know *set* is to know English.

**Task 4** – Look at the following words and try to find as many meanings as possible.

BANK  
CHIP  
CONTROL  
FOUND  
LIE  
STAND

## CONTRONYMS

Sometimes, just to heighten the confusion, the same word ends up with contradictory meanings. This kind of word is called a **contronym**. *Sanction*, for example, can either signify permission to do something or a measure forbidding it to be done. *Certain* can mean something definite or something hard to specify (He had a certain feeling). Something that is *fast* is either stuck firmly or moving quickly.

**Task 5** – Think of the contradictory meanings of the following contronyms.

APPARENT  
CONSULT  
DUST  
OVERLOOK  
QUITE  
VITAL

## INFLECTIONS

Let us consider the parts of speech. In Latin the verb has up to 120 inflections and in Czech there are usually about 30 inflections; in English it hardly ever has more than five (e.g. *see, sees, saw, seeing, seen*) and often gets by with just three (*hit, hits, hitting*).

**Task 6** – Look at the following verbs and say which belong to the “hit type” and which to the “see type”.

DRIVE  
CUT  
WRITE  
THROW  
LET  
SPLIT

*How many inflections do the majority of verbs have?*

*How many inflections does the verb BE have?*

## VERB FORMS

**Task 7** – Fill in the gaps with the following expressions:

**present tense - participial - conditional - past tense - future**

According to any textbook, the present tense of the verb *drive* is *drive*. Every secondary school pupil knows that. Yet if we say, "I used to drive to work but now I don't", we are clearly using the present tense *drive* in the \_\_\_\_\_ sense. Equally if we say, "I will drive you to work tomorrow", we are using it in a \_\_\_\_\_ sense. And if we say, "I would drive if I could afford to", we are using it in a \_\_\_\_\_ sense. In fact, almost the only form of sentence in which we cannot use the \_\_\_\_\_ form for *drive* is, yes, the present sense. When we need to indicate an action going on right now, we must use the \_\_\_\_\_ form *driving*. We don't say, "I drive the car now", but rather, "I'm driving the car now". Not to put too fine a point on it, the labels are largely meaningless.

**Task 8 – International Mother Language Day** was proclaimed in the year 2000 by UNESCO to be observed on 21 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 to 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 are 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?

**Task 9 – Talking points:**

- 1 How would you feel if words from your language suddenly began to disappear?
- 2 Is it frustrating not to be able to communicate easily?
- 3 Why are native English speakers less motivated to learn foreign languages?

**Debate on the importance of English and other languages in the world**

**Student 1 arguments:**

- English is 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, 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 arguments:**

- 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.

**Task 10 – Punctuation Marks.** Match each of the following items with the correct letter near the text below.

abbreviation	apostrophe	asterisk	bracket
capital letter	colon	comma	full stop
hyphen	inverted commas	italics	question mark
small letter	stroke		

- a) The early records entitled *Calendar* are arranged chronologically. In some *Calendars* numbered items – h)  
b) e.g. grants, leases, warrants – appear within a i)  
c) “calendar” of no uniform duration. Dates are  
d) essential, therefore, in identifying the items\*. j)
- \* Great Britain. Public Record Office,  
e) *Calendar or State Papers, Domestic, of the Reign* k)  
f) *of Elisabeth*, vol. 4/1 (1566-69): *Calendar 1566* l)  
g) (17 November 1566), Elisabeth to Cecil's Wife (?). m) n)

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

## GRAMMAR EXERCISES

**Task 11 – 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 the 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      |



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 words known only to members of a certain group e.g. linguists or schoolboys (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.

## APPENDIX TO SEMINAR 1

### Formal Introduction to the Courses CJVA1B and CJVA1M

- 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 6-8 minute long presentation during the semester based on the seminar materials and presentation criteria.

- **course materials** will be updated throughout the semester and posted on the information system at IS → *Osobní administrativa* → Student → *Studejní materiály (CJVA1B)* → *Microsoft WORD verze IS* → *Personal administration* → Student → *Study materials (CJVA1M)* → *Microsoft WORD version*

- 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 seminars 2 & 3

- **grammar** – will be covered only minimally in class – not many 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).

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