

LINGUISTICS WITH PROFESSOR ALICE HARRIS

TALKING POINTS

KNOWLEDGE

1. What is linguistics?
2. What are the similarities and differences between clitics and affixes?

COMPREHENSION

3. Why did the team decide to study a range of languages for their project?
4. Why are some languages more similar than others?

APPLICATION

5. How would you overcome the experimental challenges Alice mentions, such as Udi-speaking participants facing distractions?
6. Why do you think some languages are disappearing? What questions would you ask to find out more?

ANALYSIS

6. What are the challenges to researching a language one doesn't speak fluently? How do you think Alice and Jack overcame these challenges?
7. Alice says that the Udi language has a dictionary and grammar that are known to linguists. Why is this not sufficient for a full understanding of the language?

EVALUATION

8. The Udi language is classified as "severely endangered" by UNESCO's Red Book of Endangered Languages. If you were a linguist working with speakers of a language like Udi, how could you work together to conserve the language? Consider both its scientific and humanitarian value in your answer.

MORE RESOURCES

- Glottolog is a library of the world's languages, including many of the lesser-known languages. Research and map displays show the diversity and intricacy of languages around the world: glottolog.org
- The World Atlas of Language Structures gathers linguistic properties of languages from around the world (wals.info). Its downloadable interactive reference tool contains interactive maps, language families and more: www.eva.mpg.de/lingua/research/tool.php
- This article from *National Geographic* discusses how and why languages are disappearing, and the work that people are doing to save them: www.nationalgeographic.com/culture/article/saving-dying-disappearing-languages-wikitongues-culture

ACTIVITIES

Perform your own linguistic experiment, similar to that described by Alice and Jack. Follow these steps:

1. Create 2 lists, each with 10 commonly used words, one with prefixes and one with suffixes. None of the lists should contain words with a prefix and suffix such as *un-approach-able*. One list could begin with *unkind*, *anti-climax*, *microscope*, and the second list with *sadness*, *ownership*, *punishment*, for example.
2. Create two more lists that use the same affixes as your first pair of lists, but where the base word is not a real word. For example, list one could begin with *unflig*, *antiscrone*, *microglark* and the second list with *refness*, *bardership*, *mellishment*.
3. Copy your words into a spreadsheet. Make sure you keep a copy of your original lists, and randomly mix the words from all four lists.
4. Ask 10 classmates to contribute to your study. For each one, in turn, follow the following procedure:
 - a. Explain to the participant that they should aim to tell you if a word is real or fake as quickly as possible.
 - b. Work in pairs, with one person slowly and clearly saying the first word on the list while the second person starts a stopwatch.
 - c. When they say the answer, stop the stopwatch.
 - d. Record the time on the stopwatch and whether their answer was right or not. Do not tell the participant this information.
 - e. Repeat for the remaining 39 words.
 - f. Thank the participant for their participation.
 - g. Welcome the next participant. Make sure to randomly mix the words before beginning the procedure again.
5. Input your data into a spreadsheet.
6. Calculate the average time that participants took to say whether a word was real for words with prefixes and words with suffixes. Is there a significant difference between the average times?
7. Do the same for the level of accuracy for words containing prefixes or suffixes.
8. Write up your findings. Consider:
 - a. Potential hypotheses that explain your results.
 - b. Possible caveats of your experiment.
 - c. How you could expand this research in the future.