



Reading Comprehension

LANGUAGES: THE PIRAHÃ

It is estimated that there are over 6,800 different languages in the world. Unfortunately, many of these languages are rapidly becoming extinct due to environmental destruction, war, epidemics, and globalization, among other reasons.

In the UNESCO *Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger*, South America is described as a textbook case of an area in which a high linguistic diversity is combined with a severe extinction rate. In fact, it is argued that all the indigenous languages in this part of the world are unstable and, therefore, vulnerable. This is the case for the Amazonian tribe known as the Pirahã, whose native language is currently spoken by less than 400 people. Pirahã can be spoken, but it can also be sung, hummed and whistled. The Pirahã have no words for colors, they have no past or future tense, and surprisingly enough, Pirahã has no numbers. In their language, the words for 'ear' (*xáooí*), 'skin' (*xaoói*), 'foreigner' (*xaoóí*), or 'hand' (*xaóoi*) are only distinguished by their tones. Interestingly, Professor Daniel Everett, who is one of the three outsiders who can speak the language, argues that Pirahã shows no evidence for recursion. In linguistics, recursion is defined as the ability to create never-ending sentences (e.g. *Mary said that David said that John saw Peter buying apples at the market which is...*). According to the most influential linguist in history, Noam Chomsky, recursion is the basis of all human languages. Pirahã, however, seems to break this fundamental rule. These are some of the remarkable features of Pirahã, which Everett discusses in a fascinating documentary called *The Amazon Code* (you can watch it on YouTube, if you are interested).

Sadly, the Pirahã community has recently been transformed. A few years ago, the Brazilian government built houses, toilets, and schools where children can now learn Portuguese. As a result of this environmental change, some argue that the unique culture and language of the Pirahã may now be lost. In line with Professor of psychology Steven Pinker, it is important to be aware of the fact that the loss of a language is also a loss of a source of data on how the human mind works, and, in general, the loss of a unique product of human creativity.



Exercise (see answers on page 283)

Exercise 1:

After carefully reading the above text, answer the following questions.

1) Only one of these statements is correct.

- a) There are approximately 6,800 families of languages on earth.
- b) The extinction or death of many languages is caused by economic factors, natural disasters like epidemics, etc.
- c) The number of languages in the world is rapidly increasing.
- d) The extinction of many languages happens over a very long period of time. That is, very slowly, many languages are becoming extinct.

2) When something is described as a *textbook case* of a situation, it means that.

- a) It is a clear and good example.
- b) It is not a very good example.
- c) It is a poor example.
- d) It is an irrelevant example.

3) Which of these statements is incorrect?

- a) Pirahã have no numeracy. That is, their language has no numbers.
- b) In Pirahã there are similar sounding words with a very different meaning which are only distinguished by their tones.
- c) Pirahã can be whistled as well as hummed.
- d) Pirahã, like the rest of human languages, has recursion.

4) Which of these statements is incorrect?

- a) Pirahã villages have suffered no transformation and still remain exactly the same.
- b) The Brazilian government recently provided the Pirahã with schools and houses.
- c) An environmental change (e.g. building houses, schools, etc.) may cause a cultural and linguistic change.
- d) Languages give us information about the way the human mind works.

5) To be aware of something means.

- a) To know that something exists.
- b) To forget that something exists.
- c) To worry about something.
- d) To believe in something.



Glossary

to estimate	v.	calcular, estimar
unfortunately	adv.	desafortunadamente
rapidly	adv.	rápidamente
to become extinct	v expr.	extinguirse
due to	adj. + conj.	debido a
textbook case/example	adj. + n.	claro ejemplo
severe	adj.	grave, serio, -a
extinction	n.	extinción
rate	n.	tasa, índice
in fact	adv.	de hecho
unstable	adj.	inestable
therefore (formal)	adv.	por lo tanto
vulnerable	adj.	vulnerable
currently	adv.	actualmente, en este momento
to hum	v.	tararear
to whistle	v.	silbar
surprisingly	adv.	sorprendentemente
to distinguish	v.	distinguir, diferenciar
outsider	n.	extranjero, -a, forastero, -a
never-ending	adj.	interminable
according to	prep.	de acuerdo con, según
influential	adj.	influente
basis (of) (pl. bases)	n.	base (de)
however	adv.	sin embargo
remarkable	adj.	notable, extraordinario, -a
feature	n.	característica
fascinating	adj.	fascinante
to transform	v.	transformar
unique	adj.	singular, único, -a
(to be) aware (of)	adj.	(ser) consciente (de)
loss	n.	pérdida
source	n.	fuente
data	n.	información, datos
creativity	n.	creatividad



Use of English

1. WORD ORDER: ACTIVE AND PASSIVE SENTENCES

The difference between the active and passive voice lies in the relation of the sentence to the action of the verb. The sentence *The Pirahā live in South America* is an active sentence. The subject "*The Pirahā*" is the agent of the verb "live". By contrast, the sentence *The Amazon code is studied by linguists* is a passive sentence. The subject "*The Amazon code*" is the theme of the action "study".

The Passive verb can have Simple Present or Simple Past forms, and appear in all types of sentences: affirmative, negative and questions.

- **Simple Present Passives**

The passive is formed by the auxiliary BE and the past participle of the verb:

Affirmative Form	Object + is/ are + past participle
Question Form	Is / Are + Object + past participle ?

Affirmative and interrogative

Chocolate is made from cocoa. (Present – singular)

Indigenous languages are found in South America. (Present – plural)

Is your house made of wood?

Are your books covered with plastic?

Negation

Chocolate is not made from nuts. (Present – singular)

Indigenous languages are not found in North America. (Present – plural)

Insertion of by + agent

That native language is spoken by less than 400 speakers. (Present – singular)

The new words are written by linguists in the Amazon Code. (Present – plural)

NOTE: If we want to show the person or thing doing the action, we use by, but sometimes it is not necessary. For example: English is spoken all over the world.

- **Simple Past Passives**

Affirmative Form	Object + was / were + past participle
Question Form	Was / Were + Object + past participle ?

Affirmative Form

Active: *The student corrected the mistakes.*

Passive: *The mistakes were corrected (by the student).*

Question Forms

Active: Did the student take exam?

Passive: Was the exam taken (by the student)?

Active: Did the teacher correct the mistakes?

Passive: Were all mistakes corrected (by the teacher)?

Negative Forms

Active: The author didn't find his pen.

Passive: His pen wasn't found

Active: The book didn't include any answers.

Passive: a) Answers were not included in the book.

b) No answers were included in the book.

Remember: Subjects are required in English.

a) When the subject is the agent of the sentence: Use an active sentence.

Present: Indigenous tribes speak different languages.

Past: George Gershwin composed many arias.

(Subject-Agent + Active Verb + Object)

b) When the subject is the theme of the sentence: Use a passive sentence.

Present: Indigenous languages are spoken by many tribes.

Past: "Summertime" was composed by George Gershwin in 1934.

(Subject-Topic + Passive Verb* + by Agent + Time Reference)

Pay attention: Verb to be + Past Participle (Passive Verb*)

Verb Forms

Tense	Active	Passive
Present simple	I clean my room.	My room is cleaned (by me).
Present continuous	I am cleaning my room.	My room is being cleaned (by me).
Past simple	I cleaned my room.	My room was cleaned (by me).
Past continuous	I was cleaning my room.	My room was being cleaned (by me).
Present perfect	I have cleaned my room.	My room has been cleaned (by me).
Present perfect continuous	I have been cleaning my room.	My room has been being cleaned (by me).
Past perfect	I had cleaned my room.	My room had been cleaned.



Exercises (see answers on pages 283-284)

Exercise 1:

Complete the following text with passive verb forms of the verbs given in parentheses.

Many languages (1) _____ (speak) today in Europe. Today, we (2) _____ (expect) to speak at least two foreign languages. Many new grammar books (3) _____ (write) to help students. At the beginning, we cannot pronounce a foreign language well even if we (4) _____ (tell) how to pronounce foreign words well. We (5) _____ (teach) our first words by our own parents when we are toddlers. As adults, we can also (6) _____ (help) by our foreign language teachers.

Exercise 2:**Fill in the gaps (Present Tense).**

1) My mother always made lunch.

_____ is always made by _____.

2) Peter never does his English homework.

_____ is never done by _____.

3) Somebody cleans the windows every week.

_____ are cleaned by _____.

4) I draw pictures very often.

_____ are drawn very often by _____.

5) My friend Louise writes very nice poems.

_____ are written by _____.

Exercise 3:**Match Questions with Short Answers.**

- 1) How is "fish" spelled?
- 2) Is English spoken there?
- 3) How many languages are spoken in Catalonia?
- 4) Were your parents raised in England?
- 5) Have you been promoted?
- 6) Was the window broken by the hooligans?

- a) Yes, I have.
- b) It is "f, i, s, h".
- c) Yes, it is.
- d) Two, at least.
- e) Yes, it was.
- f) No, they weren't. ➤



Exercise 4:

Fill in the gaps (Present Tense).

1) I opened the door with my keys.

_____ was opened by _____.

2) Mary has already downloaded the video.

_____ has been already downloaded by _____.

3) A burglar stole my laptop last week.

_____ was stolen last week by _____.

4) The President introduced the new government.

_____ was introduced by _____.

5) Amazon will deliver my book next week.

_____ will be delivered next week by _____.

6) The school must not give pupils too much homework.

_____ must not be given too much homework by _____.

7) Peter did not invite Cathy to the party.

_____ was not invited to the party by _____.

8) Someone repaired the heating last month.

_____ was repaired last month by _____.

9) The baker makes those delicious cakes.

_____ are made by _____.

10) Steven Spielberg directed Jurassic Park.

_____ was directed by _____.

2. DOUBLE OBJECT VERBS

Remember: Some verbs are followed by two objects (Indirect Object, Direct Object / Direct Object, Indirect Object).

Verbs: ask, promise, offer, give, etc.

Examples:

Active:

My boss has offered me a promotion thanks to my good results.
Subject I Object D Object

Passive 1:

I have been offered a promotion by my boss thanks to my good results.
Subject D Object

Passive 2:

A promotion has been offered to me by my boss thanks to my good results.
Subject I Object

Pay attention: Objects that turn into subjects agree with the verb.
I have been offered. / A promotion has been offered.



Notes



Exercises (see answers on page 284)

Exercise 5:

Change the active sentences into passive. More than one option is possible for the active sentences that have two objects (direct and indirect).

1) Her uncle left her a great amount of money.

Passive 1:

Passive 2:

2) Have you introduced Peter to your mum?

Passive 1:

Passive 2:

3) The teacher has shown me the school.

Passive 1:

Passive 2:

4) They have wished the newly married couple a happy future.

Passive 1:

Passive 2:

5) You must type these letters before 5 o'clock.

Passive:

6) I must have lent you the umbrella.

Passive 1:

Passive 2:

7) Andrew is watching the match right now.

Passive:

8) A large percent of the society thinks that tobacco is a drug.

Passive:

9) The fact that you lied about your job has surprised me.

Passive:

10) People usually train Labrador retrievers to be guide dogs.

Passive:

3. IMPERSONAL PASSIVES

Remember: The impersonal passive is characterized by the use of the impersonal form 'it is' and it can only be used with verbs of perception (intransitive) such as **say, perceive, think, notice, feel, discover, suppose**, etc. Consequently, this construction is formed by '*it is + past participle*'. In these cases the by-agent is not required in the passive sentence.

Examples: It is said that..., it is perceived that..., it is felt that..., it is supposed that..., it is noticed that...

Active:

They believe that tobacco kills.

Passive 1:

It is believed that tobacco kills. (Impersonal passive)

Passive 2:

Tobacco is believed to kill. (Impersonal passive with -to)



Notes



Exercise (see answers on page 284)

Exercise 6:

Change these active sentences into passive. Recall that you can omit the by-agent when it is unknown.

- 1) Everybody believes that tobacco kills.

Passive:

- 2) People give presents on birthdays.

Passive:

- 3) They have cleaned your room.

Passive:

- 4) A thief stole my car in the parking.

Passive:

- 5) People can visit the Louvre Museum in Paris.

Passive:

- 6) Many workers are building the new city hall.

Passive:

- 7) People know that teachers are one of the most important parts of education.

Passive:



Notes

Oral Skills

**READ AND LISTEN TO THIS CONVERSATION BETWEEN
A SECONDARY SCHOOL GIRL AND HER TEACHER MISS JOHNSON**

GIRL: Good morning, Ms Johnson. I have an enormous interest in languages and I'd like to know more about English.

MS JOHNSON: Absolutely. What would you like to ask?

GIRL: How many people speak English in the world?

MS JOHNSON: The English language is spoken by more than 360 million people.

GIRL: Are all of them native speakers?

MS JOHNSON: No, there are at least 400 million people who speak English as a second language and 700 million as a foreign language.

GIRL: That is awesome! How can English be so widely spread around the world?

MS JOHNSON: Well, the growth and extension of the English language is an extraordinary phenomenon. In the eleventh century only one and a half million people spoke it. In 1700 the number was eight million, but still many languages were more important than English in Europe for political and economic reasons: Spanish, French, Russian, German, and Italian. By 1900 the number of English speakers had increased to 123 million.

GIRL: I've heard that everything changed after the Second World War.

MS JOHNSON: Yes, when the economic power declined in Europe, the United States took the lead and English became the universal language throughout the world. You know, money speaks English.

GIRL: Oh! They say money speaks American English. But, apart from this country and, of course, the United Kingdom, where is English spoken?

MS JOHNSON: It's the most commonly spoken language in the UK, Canada, Australia, Ireland and New Zealand and it's widely spoken in some areas of the Caribbean, Africa and South Asia. We can say that English also has a strong impact on those countries where the influence of English and American cultures have been significant such as India, Pakistan, Puerto Rico, Nigeria, Jamaica, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Israel, Hong Kong, ..., so many.

GIRL: But, isn't English the only language spoken in the UK?

MS JOHNSON: No, they also speak Welsh in Wales, Cornish in Cornwall and Gaelic in Scotland, in addition to many different dialects such as Manx in the Isle of Man.

GIRL: Do many people speak Gaelic?

MS JONHSON: Gaelic is compulsory at school in the Republic of Ireland but only 1.1 % of the Scottish population over three years old can speak that language.

GIRL: Does Gaelic belong to the same family as English?

MS JOHNSON: No, Gaelic is a Celtic language and English is a West Germanic language, a dialect of old Anglo-Frisian.

GIRL: Wasn't Frisian the language spoken by the Angles, Jutes and Saxons when they came to our country?

MS JOHNSON: Yes, English has developed over the course of more than 1400 years. The earliest forms of English, a set of Anglo-Frisian dialects brought to Great Britain by Anglo-Saxon settlers in the fifth century are called Old English. Middle English began in the late eleventh century with the Norman conquest of England.

GIRL: I've heard that Shakespeare represents the transition between Middle English and Early Modern English, Ms Johnson.

MS JOHNSON: Yes he does, and Chaucer symbolizes the evolution from Old English to Middle English. Thanks to its flexibility, musicality and dynamism, English has become the most important language of international discourse and the lingua franca in many regions and in professional contexts such as science, computing, navigation, sports, business and law.

GIRL: However, people say it's a difficult language to learn.

MS JOHNSON: Totally, not only because of its large variety of vocabulary but because it relies on auxiliary verbs and word order and every grammar rule has many exceptions.

GIRL: Nevertheless, it is essential in international affairs and in many other aspects of modern life. Wherever you go, you will always find somebody who speaks English.

**READ AND LISTEN TO AN INTERVIEW WITH A UNIVERSITY
PROFESSOR ON A TV PROGRAMME**

INTERVIEWER: It is an honour to have Professor Jane Cadwell from the Department of Linguistics and Cognitive Science at the College of Arts and Science of the University of Delaware here on our programme to talk about the importance of Black English nowadays.

PROFESSOR: My pleasure. Thank you for having me.

INTERVIEWER: Professor Cadwell, it is believed that eloquent orators abound in African-American culture. Is that true?

PROFESSOR: Yes, and we are not only referring to Marin Luther King, Jessie Jackson or Barack Obama in the US, but also to well-known African orators such as Nelson Mandela or Desmond Tutu in Africa. Not to mention all those anonymous speakers at religious meetings, political rallies and other social gatherings who demonstrate dynamic, effectual discourses every day.

INTERVIEWER: Do you think this powerful verve is valued?

PROFESSOR: Certainly. Even political and social opponents of these outstanding black orators remark on the power and utility of their speaking skills.

INTERVIEWER: However, Professor, the influence of Black English goes beyond the political arena. Can you explain that?

PROFESSOR: Yes, first of all, we must point out that verbal art is an integral component of black culture. Its influence on popular culture, through rappers, hip-hop artists and slang expressions is obvious, but, in fact, it is much more than this. Its origins come from the oral tradition of the African slaves and it extends to every area of communicative activity within black culture.

INTERVIEWER: Thus, is it not ironic that African-American children are described as "language impoverished"?

PROFESSOR: It is quite clear that some African-Americans do not sound the same as Anglo-Americans when they speak. Centuries ago, when people from different cultures came together, the language reflecting those cultures mixed and adapted. And when groups are segregated, then language differences increase.

INTERVIEWER: It is also acknowledged that Black English often breaks rules and, at times, differs from standardized English speech patterns.

PROFESSOR: Yes, it is commonly said that African-Americans violate language patterns and use sentences such as "They didn't do nothing". Other languages such as French or Spanish use it "Je ne sais rien" (I don't know nothing) or "No hace nada" (He/she isn't doing nothing). So, why does African-American vernacular have to be put into question? Millions of people speak like that! It's absolutely contagious!

INTERVIEWER: Yes, that's very true and we're really happy to see how languages are always on the move. To finish this interview, I think African-American English should be recognized and appreciated for contributing to conversation with its creation of other ways of speaking that improve our lives.

PROFESSOR: And I'd like to add that we must try to deconstruct the relationships of social and political inequality that involve a particular kind of language and their speakers.

INTERVIEWER: Very much so. Thank you, Professor

An illustration of a book standing upright. The cover is white with the letters 'A-Z' at the top and 'GLOSSARY' written vertically down the side.

Glossary

awesome	adj.	sorprendente, increíble
widely	adv.	ampliamente
growth	n.	crecimiento
to increase	v.	incrementar
lead	n.	liderazgo
compulsory	adj.	obligatorio, -a
development	n.	desarrollo
settler	n.	poblador, -a; colono, -a; colonizador, -a
law	n.	derecho, ley
rule	n.	regla
fallacy	n.	falacia
meeting	n.	encuentro
rally	n.	mitín
gathering	n.	reunión
verve	n.	brio, empuje
outstanding	adj.	relevante; espectacular; destacado, -a
beyond	adv.	más allá



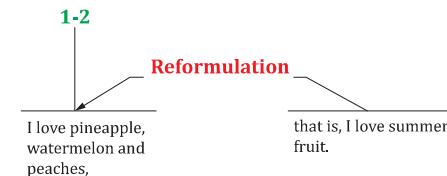
Writing Skills

Writing: Coherence and Cohesion (REFORMULATION)

Another discourse relation that can be found in texts is REFORMULATION. REFORMULATION includes two fragments: the second fragment rephrases the first one. In other words, both elements express similar information but with different words. For example:

"I love pineapple, watermelon and peaches, **that is**, I love summer fruit."

This example could be represented in this way:



With connectors, we can link both fragments to make a REFORMULATION. See for example the item in bold in the previous fragment.

More connectors of REFORMULATION:

1	in other words,
2	that is,
3	that is to say,
4	i.e.
5	to put it another way,

Pay attention: You can link two fragments in the same sentence (as in the previous example) but also two different sentences.

Example:

"I love pineapple, watermelon and peaches. **In other words**, I love summer fruit."



Glossary

reformulation	n.	reformulación
to rephrase	v.	reformular, parafrasear
to express	v.	expresar
pineapple	n.	piña
watermelon	n.	sandía
peach	n.	melocotón
that is	adv.	es decir
to link	v.	conectar
previous	adj.	previo, -a
in other words	adv.	en otras palabras
that is to say	adv.	es decir
i.e.	adv.	es decir
to put it another way	adv.	dicho de otro modo



Exercises (see answers on page 285)

Exercise 1:

Read the following conversation and mark the REFORMULATION connectors.

John: Excuse me, I'm a foreign student and this is my first day on campus. Do you speak English?

Ana: Yes, a bit.

John: Great! Could you help me to find the Faculty of Economics, please?

Ana: Yes, of course! You have to go straight down this road. After 100 meters turn right; then turn right at the next street, and turn right again. I know that this route seems like a maze! Well, to put it another way, in order to find the Faculty of Economics you should turn right at every point on the route.

John: Oh, thanks. You're very kind. Besides English, I speak Chinese and Vietnamese, that is, Asian languages, but I still don't speak Spanish. I'll try to learn Spanish during my stay here.

Ana: Yes, you should definitely do that. I hope you manage to do it. Good luck and nice to meet you!



Exercise 2:

Fill in the blanks in the following fragments with these words (only four words have to be used).

information	public	watermelon	linguistics
peaches	example	English	advantages

- 1) I have chosen subjects related to phonetics, morphology, lexicon and discourse, **that is**, subjects related to _____.
- 2) I have lived in England, in the USA and in Canada. **In other words**, I have lived in _____ speaking countries.
- 3) Online education allows students to organize their timetable themselves, study at home and have a job during the week. **To put it another way**, online education has many _____.
- 4) I go to university by bus or by metro, **that is to say**, I usually use _____ transport.

Exercise 3:

Match each fragment 1-4 with another fragment a-d to form a sentence with a REFORMULATION relation.

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1) That department is very prestigious because its researchers study Spanish, French and Italian, | a) that is, in different European countries. |
| 2) This university offers students the opportunity to study abroad in England, Germany and Netherlands, | b) in other words, this is a multicultural group. |
| 3) In this class there are students from India, Colombia, Russia and Egypt, among other countries, | c) To put it another way, I have always studied English. |
| 4) I started to learn English when I was a child. I continued learning it at school and university. Even now I do some English courses. | d) i.e. Romance languages. |



Notes
