

## Unit 3 - Skills Practice



**The objectives for this unit are:**

- reading: read a text about languages dying out.
- writing: write a report.

## Unit 3 - Skills Practice - Reading

The following words and phrases appear in the text you are going to read in this section:

**gaffe** an embarrassing mistake made in public  
He made a terrible gaffe in front of his bosses.

**handful** a small amount of people or things  
Only a handful of people came to the meeting.

**quirk** an aspect of somebody's personality or behaviour that is a little strange  
He has the quirk of staring at his food before he eats it.

**irrational** not based on, or not using, clear logical thought  
Being scared of the dark is irrational.

**prop up** help something that is having difficulties.  
The council has promised to prop up declining industry in the local area.

**subsidy** money that is paid by the government or an organization to reduce the costs of services or of producing goods so that their prices can be kept low.  
The government is thinking of reducing the agricultural subsidy.

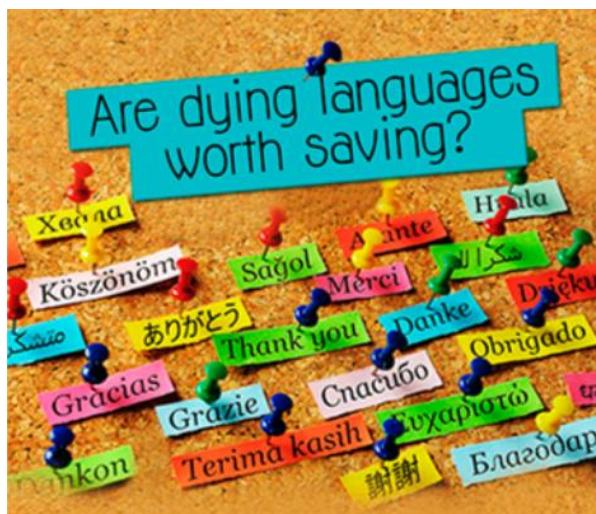
**in the public good** for the benefit of ordinary people  
Increasing the speed limit is not in the public good.

**viable** capable of developing and surviving independently  
There needs to be a viable population of this endangered species if it is to survive.

**doomed to fail** certain to have an unfortunate outcome  
We have outdated products and no money to develop new ones. This business is doomed to fail.

**handwringing** a display of worry or distress  
There's often a lot of handwringing before a wedding.





About 6,000 different languages are spoken around the world. But the Foundation for Endangered Languages estimates that between 500 and 1,000 of those are spoken by only a handful of people. And every year the world loses around 25 mother tongues. That equates to losing 250 languages over a decade – a sad prospect for some.

'Different languages will have their quirks which tell us something about being human,' says Nicholas Ostler, the foundation's chairman. 'And when languages are lost, most of the knowledge that went with them gets lost. People do care about identity, as they want to be different. Nowadays, we want access to everything, but we don't want to be thought of as no more than people on the other side of the world.'

Apart from English, the United Kingdom has a number of other languages. Mr Ostler estimates that half a million people speak Welsh, a few thousand Scots are fluent in Gaelic, about 400 people speak Cornish, while the number of Manx speakers – the language of the Isle of Man – is perhaps as small as 100. But is there any point in learning the really minor languages?

'I do think it's a good thing for a child on the Isle of Man to learn Manx. I value continuity in a community.' In Europe, Mr Ostler's view seems to command official support. There is a European Charter for Regional Languages, which every European Union member has signed, and the EU has a European Language Diversity For All programme, designed to protect the most threatened native tongues. At the end of last year, the project received 2.7 million euros to identify those languages most at risk.

For some, this is not just a waste of resources, but a misunderstanding of how language works. The writer and broadcaster Kenan Malik says it is 'irrational' to try to preserve all the world's languages.

Earlier this year, the Bo language died out when an 85-year-old member of the Bo tribe in the India-owned Andaman islands died. While it may seem sad that the language expired, says Mr Malik, cultural change is driving the process. 'In one sense you could call it a cultural loss. But that actually makes no sense because cultural forms are lost all the time. To say every cultural form should exist forever is ridiculous.' And when governments try to prop languages up, it shows a desire to cling to the past rather than move forwards, he says.

If people want to learn minority languages like Manx, that is up to them, but it shouldn't be backed by government subsidy, Mr Malik argues. 'To have a public policy that a certain culture or language should be preserved shows a fundamental misunderstanding. I don't see why it's in the public good to preserve Manx or Cornish or any other language for that matter.' In the end, whether or not a language is viable is very simple. 'If a language is one that people don't participate in, it's not a language anymore.'

The veteran word-watcher and *Times* columnist Philip Howard agrees that languages are in the hands of people, not politicians. 'Language is the only absolutely true democracy. It's not what professors of linguistics or academics or journalists say, but what people do. If children in the playground start using 'wicked' to mean terrific then that has a big effect.'

And Mr Howard says politicians make a 'category mistake' when they try to interfere with language, citing an experiment in Glasgow schools that he says is doomed to fail. 'Offering Gaelic to children of people who don't speak it seems like a conservation of lost glories. It's very romantic to try and save a language but nonsense.' But neither is he saying that everyone should speak English. 'Some people take a destructivist view and argue that everyone will soon be speaking English. But Mandarin is the most populous language in the world and Spanish the fastest growing.'

There are competing forces at work that decide whether smaller languages survive, Howard argues. On the one hand, globalization will mean that many languages disappear. But some communities will always live apart, separated by sea, distance, or other barriers and will therefore keep their own language. With modern communications and popular culture 'you find that if enough people want to speak a language they can'.

In short, there is no need for handwringing.

'Language is not a plant that rises and falls, lives, and decays. It's a tool that's perfectly adapted by the people using it. Get on with living and talking.'

Are dying languages worth saving? Read the text and answer the questions.

Complete the sentences with the correct endings.

1	Dozens of languages	if the communities that speak them live apart.
2	About one hundred people	died out recently.
3	The Bo language	speak Gaelic.
4	Languages stop being viable	if people don't participate in them.
5	Some children in Scotland are learning to	speak Manx.
6	Smaller languages will survive	are lost every year.

Are dying languages worth saving? Read the text and answer the questions.

Read the text again and answer the questions.

How many languages are in danger of dying out?

Nicholas Ostler says that when languages are lost

What causes languages to die out?

Kenan Malik says that governments .....

Philip Howard says that languages .....

Which language has the most new speakers every year?

## Unit 3 - Skills Practice - Writing

The following words and phrases appear in this section:

**facility** a special feature of a service, machine, etc. that makes it possible to do something extra  
The software has a facility for checking spelling.

**dispatch** send a letter, parcel, or message somewhere  
Goods are dispatched within 24 hours of your order reaching us.

**doorstep** a step outside the door of a building or the area that is very close to the door  
The police turned up on their doorstep at three o'clock in the morning.

**prior** happening or existing before something else  
Prior knowledge of statistics is not necessary.

**worthwhile** important, enjoyable; worth spending time, money, or energy on  
It's worthwhile finding a second buyer just in case.



## Reports: Match the paragraphs with their headings

Match these headings with parts 1-4 of the report :

### Introduction – Findings – Recommendations – Conclusions

1

This report reviews the performance of YP Logistics, the company we have used to deliver our orders for the past year. The findings are based on an analysis of delivery times, a survey conducted with key customers, and feedback from staff in our customer services department.

2

#### Efficiency

We found that 88% of deliveries arrived on time. Of the remaining deliveries, 5% arrived the following day, 4% arrived after two days, and 3% failed to arrive. Although these figures compare fairly well with competing logistics companies, they could still be improved. In fact, these results could have a negative impact on our brand image since we guarantee fast delivery times on our website.

#### Customer service

There have been a number of complaints from customers about orders that have been left on doorsteps or with neighbours without prior permission or subsequent notification. In addition, some orders have arrived damaged or have failed to arrive at all. The survey we conducted found that a significant majority of customers would prefer deliveries to be made in the early morning, before they leave for work.

#### Tracking

Staff from our customer services department are generally satisfied with the online tracking facilities provided by YP Logistics. When a client calls enquiring about the delivery they are able to find out when it was dispatched and can let the client know. However, they would also like to be able to find out the estimated time of delivery so that they can pass this information on to the clients. Other logistics companies are already able to provide this kind of information on their tracking systems.

3

The service provided by YP Logistics is satisfactory, although improvements could certainly be made. Before we renew a contract with them, it would be worthwhile looking into potential alternatives. In addition, it would be in our interests to ask for certain improvements in their performance before we commit to another year.

4

Before renewal of the contract, I recommend that the following steps be taken:

1. Research other logistics companies. Look into their costs, performance levels, reputation, etc.
2. Approach YP Logistics regarding contract renewal. Based on the research into other companies, attempt to negotiate a more cost-effective contract. As part of the deal, request the following:
  - an improvement in 'on-time' deliveries from 88% to 93%
  - improvements to their tracking website – we would like to see information on estimated delivery time
  - an option for early morning deliveries
  - a clear policy about what to do when the customer is not in to take the order.

## Reports: Read the text and check your understanding

Read the report and complete the sentences.

- 1 A survey of [ ] was carried out.
- 2 YP Logistics deliver approximately as fast as [ ] logistics companies.
- 3 The customer services department knows when a delivery is [ ]
- 4 Customers want deliveries to be made [ ] work.
- 5 YP Logistics would have to commit to improve their [ ] in order to get a new contract.
- 6 If the company signs a new contract with YP Logistics, they would want a [ ] on what to do when customers are not in.

## Reports: Linking words

Find the four linking words in the text.

- 1 Find a linking word which means 'but'. [ ]
- 2 Find a linking word which means 'despite the fact that'. [ ]
- 3 Find a two-part linking word which means 'in reality'. [ ]
- 4 Find a two-part linking word which means 'and'. [ ]

## Reports: Practice

Read the task and write your answer in the space provided

### Task:

Your company has started to use a new catering firm to run the staff restaurant. Their contract runs for another six months. Read your notes on a staff survey you carried out. Write a report about the situation for your boss. Include an introduction, findings from the survey, a conclusion, and recommendations for steps that can be taken.

### Survey findings:

Not as much choice as there was with previous company.

Quality of food is clearly lower - several complaints received about the quality of meat used.

Questions raised about the hygiene standards - plates seem unclean and salads in the salad bar appear old.

Fewer healthy options available - no fish and fewer vegetarian options, too many processed meat dishes offered (e.g. sausages, pies, burgers).

