

## Speaking English may make you poorer

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An economics professor has said English speakers may be poorer because of English grammar. Dr Keith Chen of Yale University suggested that

differences in the tenses of the world's languages may explain why people in some countries save more money than people in other countries. He told people at a presentation that the future tense in English could actually make people believe the future is not important now. He said English speakers might think the future is separate from the present, and that this may make people not think about their future. He explained this could stop people saving money for their retirement. He also suggested future tenses may make people smoke more and exercise less.

Professor Chen divided the grammar of countries into two – those with a "strong future-time reference" and those with a weak reference. He explained: "If I wanted to explain to an English-speaking colleague why I can't attend a meeting later today, I could not say 'I go to a seminar'. English grammar would [require] me to say 'I will go, am going, or have to go to a seminar'". He contrasted this with "weak future-time reference" languages" that can express the same meaning without future words like "will". Chen says speakers of these languages are those who save more money. He believes this could be because they do not separate the present time and future in their grammar or in real life.

Sources: BBC / Wall Street Journal / TED talks

### Writing

*Speaking English will give you a better future with more money. Discuss.*

### Chat

Talk about these words from the article.

*economics / professor / world languages / presentation / the present / future / exercise / grammar / colleague / attend a meeting / reference / save money / real life*

### True / False

- An economist said English vocabulary could make you poorer. T / F
- The economist suggested people save more because of their grammar. T / F
- He said English speakers think the future is not so important now. T / F
- He also said grammar could make people healthier. T / F
- The guy separated the world's languages into four types. T / F
- He couldn't go to a meeting about the future tense in English. T / F
- He said some languages talk about the future without special grammar. T / F
- He said speakers of "weak future-time" languages save more money. T / F

### Synonym Match

- |               |                      |
|---------------|----------------------|
| 1. suggested  | a. divide            |
| 2. explain    | b. work out          |
| 3. separate   | c. need              |
| 4. retirement | d. firm              |
| 5. exercise   | e. indicated         |
| 6. countries  | f. say               |
| 7. strong     | g. coworker          |
| 8. colleague  | h. nations           |
| 9. require    | i. give a reason for |
| 10. express   | j. golden years      |

### Discussion – Student A

- How is the grammar of your language different from English?
- Do you think your language's grammar is easier than English?
- What do you dislike about English grammar?
- Is grammar the most important thing to know to be able to speak?
- What things does your language's grammar let you do more of?
- What do you think of English vocabulary?
- Are you happy with your speaking level in English?
- What questions would you like to ask Dr Keith Chen?

## Phrase Match

- |                               |                       |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. economics                  | a. tenses             |
| 2. differences in the         | b. a meeting          |
| 3. the future is separate     | c. smoke more         |
| 4. stop people                | d. speaking colleague |
| 5. make people                | e. from the present   |
| 6. a strong future-           | f. the same meaning   |
| 7. explain to an English-     | g. professor          |
| 8. attend                     | h. saving money       |
| 9. languages that can express | i. life               |
| 10. in real                   | j. time reference     |

## Discussion – Student B

- What springs to mind when you hear the word 'grammar'?
- Do you think there's a link between grammar and money?
- What do you do to learn English grammar?
- What do you think of the future tense(s) in English?
- What are the different ways of talking about the future in English?
- Do you think the present and future are separate?
- Are you saving for your retirement?
- Is it possible that grammar could make people smoke more?

## Spelling

- economics rosesofpr
- seesnt of the world's languages
- people at a tneesinrtopa
- tarpaees from the present
- saving money for their eetrinmter
- reecseix less
- strong future-time errefcnee
- an English-speaking eollaecug
- datten a meeting
- go to a neiarsm
- He sertontdac this
- He eeselbvi this

### Answers – Synonym Match

1. e	2. i	3. a	4. j	5. b
6. h	7. d	8. g	9. c	10. f

## Role Play

**Grammar person** - You think studying grammar is most important if you want to learn a language. Tell the others three reasons why. Vocabulary isn't enough to speak properly; you really need grammar to read; and it's impossible to listen to and understand anything if you do not know grammar.

**Vocabulary person** - You think studying vocabulary is most important if you want to learn a language. Tell the others three reasons why. Grammar isn't enough to speak properly; you really need vocabulary to read; and it's impossible to listen to and understand anything if you do not know vocabulary.

**Reading person** - You think reading is most important if you want to learn a language. Tell the others three reasons why. Vocabulary isn't enough to speak properly; you don't need a lot of grammar to read; and it's impossible to listen to and understand anything if you do not know how to read.

**Listening person** - You think listening is most important if you want to learn a language. Tell the others three reasons why. Reading isn't enough to speak properly; you really need to listen to understand vocabulary; and it's impossible to understand anything if you don't know how to listen.

## Speaking

Rank these and share your rankings with your partner. Put the best at the top. Change partners often and share your rankings.

- |                 |              |
|-----------------|--------------|
| • money         | • career     |
| • travel        | • house      |
| • romance       | • friends    |
| • English level | • retirement |

### Answers – True False

a	F	b	T	c	T	d	T	e	F	f	F	g	T	h	F
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Answers to Phrase Match and Spelling are in the text.