

3 Language learning

Activities

Essay structure and organization: thesis statements and line of argument

- 1 Write a definition of a thesis statement. Check Unit 3 of the Student's Book if you need to.
- 2 Look at this essay question and the opinions on it below (a–c). Then answer the questions (1–3) that follow.

A language is more than simply a means of communication. A language reveals features of its speakers' culture and society, and so language learners should be aware of these features. Discuss.

- a It is not important for language learners to know about and understand the cultural and social messages behind the language they are learning, as for many people, the goal of learning is simply to be able to communicate.
- b For some learners, a thorough understanding of the cultural and social implications of the language they are learning will be important. However, this is not the case for all learners, in particular those who learn the language without any intention of living in a country where that language is spoken.
- c It is vital that language learners are aware of the cultural and social connotations of the language they are learning, since these features may affect the way their message is received.

- 1 Which opinion agrees with the statement in the essay question?
- 2 Which opinion disagrees with it?
- 3 Which opinion neither agrees nor disagrees?

- 3 Read the two essay plans below (A and B). Which one would answer the essay question in Exercise 2 more successfully? Think about how closely the paragraphs are connected to the essay question and this thesis statement.

It is vital that language learners are aware of the cultural and social connotations of the language they are learning, since these features may affect the way their message is received.

| plan A | plan B |
|---|--|
| Para. 1: Definition of language: as a means of communication and way of describing reality, bonding with friends and family | Para. 1: Definition of language: as a means of communication. Give examples of gender, racial and cultural messages in English language. |
| Para. 2: What English language reveals about its speakers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● gender views ● cultural issues ● racial issues ● issues of power | Para. 2: Arguments why students should not learn about society and culture when learning a language, e.g. when students are just learning a language to pass an exam. |
| Para. 3: Reasons why learners need to know about these features of language, e.g. ability to form relationships using the language depends on understanding these issues. | Para. 3: Arguments why students should learn about society and culture when learning a language |

- 4 Look at a different thesis statement for the same essay question. Write a plan of the paragraphs this essay would need to maintain the line of argument.**

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Language focus: using past and present tenses

- 5 a Read these sentences from the Unit 3 text and underline the main verbs.**

- 1 Language is an important means of cultural transmission.
- 2 Recently, the city council in Farmers Branch adopted a resolution declaring English as the official language of that city.
- 3 The largest portion (over 10 per cent of the US population) of non-English speakers use Spanish at home.
- 4 The English language ignores women by using the masculine form to refer to human beings in general.

- b Label each sentence according to whether the verbs are used to express a:**

- a present state
- b general truth
- c past habit/action.

- 6 Choose three topics from the list below, and write sentences about each of them using information from the Unit 3 text. Focus on using the correct tense.**

- 1 Language and communication
- 2 Language, race and ethnicity
- 3 Language and gender
- 4 Language and social reality

Example:

Through language, children learn about their culture and history.

Extension Write an essay answering this question. You can use information from the Unit 3 text, as well as any of the texts in Unit 3 of the Student's Book. Use the ideas you have gathered as you have completed the exercises in this unit. Try to incorporate clear summaries of the ideas in the text, and focus on using correct verb tenses. Also pay attention to your thesis statement, and how you maintain your line of argument throughout the essay.

A language is more than simply a means of communication. A language reveals features of its speakers' culture and society, and so language learners should be aware of these features. Discuss.