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978-1-107-04396-1 - The Language Myth: Why Language is Not an Instinct

Vyvyan Evans

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The Language Myth

Language is central to our lives, the cultural tool that arguably sets us apart from other species. Some scientists have argued that language is innate, a type of unique human ‘instinct’ pre-programmed in us from birth. In this book, Vyvyan Evans argues that this received wisdom is, in fact, a myth.

Debunking the notion of a language ‘instinct’, Evans demonstrates that language is related to other animal forms of communication; that languages exhibit staggering diversity; that we learn our mother tongue drawing on general properties and abilities of the human mind, rather than an inborn ‘universal’ grammar; that language is not autonomous but is closely related to other aspects of our mental lives; and that, ultimately, language and the mind reflect and draw upon the way we interact with others in the world.

Compellingly written and drawing on cutting-edge research, *The Language Myth* sets out a forceful alternative to the received wisdom, showing how language and the mind really work.

Vyvyan Evans is Professor of Linguistics in the School of Linguistics and English Language at Bangor University.

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For Andrea Tyler

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The great enemy of the truth is very often not the lie,
deliberate, contrived and dishonest, but the myth, persistent,
persuasive and unrealistic.

John F. Kennedy

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