

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.

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The Language Myth

Why Language Is Not an Instinct

VYVYAN EVANS



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For Andrea Tyler

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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