

EVOLVE LEVEL 6, Unit Quiz 7B

- Nathan** Today in the studio we are discussing dying languages. With me is Mary Cooper who believes that we should let dying languages die. Welcome, Mary.
- Mary** Nice to be here.
- Nathan** When a language is about to die out, there is usually a public outcry and a campaign to save the language in question. Shouldn't we be saving dying languages, Mary?
- Mary** Not at all. Everything lives and dies. People, businesses, products, and languages. If a language is about to die, it is not serving its purpose as a tool for communication. Energy spent saving it would be better spent on learning something else.
- Nathan** But isn't language more than just a form of communication? Doesn't it also symbolize the culture it came from? If we lose a language, we lose the ability to express very specific thoughts and ideas, and that would be terrible, wouldn't it?
- Mary** I see it the other way. If the very people whose culture is closest to a language stop using it, then it clearly is not important enough for them. People don't stop communicating, they just find a vehicle that is better for them. An example: In Israel, there is a small village with a high percentage of deaf people, many of whom are born deaf. About 1,000 people use Al-Sayyid Bedouin Sign Language to communicate.
- Nathan** And I hear it's a fascinating language ...
- Mary** For academics to study, maybe, but for the local people, if they learn Israeli sign language instead, they can speak to hundreds of thousands of people outside their village rather than the same few hundred. This gives them an opportunity to meet new partners and get work outside their village. This must be a positive thing.
- Nathan** Not when a culture is lost, no. I don't think we're going to see eye to eye. Let's take a break...