



WLL-277: LANGUAGE DIVERSITY AND LANGUAGE UNIVERSALS

So, the God punished humans for pride by making them speak different languages, right? (Tower of Babylon)

But how many languages did we end up with? And what does it really mean 'different languages'? How different a language can really be? What makes languages different / common? ...And was it really a punishment?

- Various estimates put the number of languages at 6000 to 7000. Apparently, it is difficult to even know the exact number of languages, this course will explore why it may be a problem.
- Studying language diversity / language universals we find and analyze the patterns that differ, or occur systematically in all human languages – language universals – similarities which have something to do with human physiology and human cognition.
- The loss of a language is the loss of unique human knowledge of the world. Language is central to preserving and transmitting cultural heritage, so language is central to human nature, it helps understanding how our brain works.
- So in this course we learn that language diversity is a good thing, and that the study of language diversity provides us with insights into how human cognition, human language and human culture work.