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**WASHINGTON D.C. • DU 10 AU 13 JUILLET**

# If language shapes the world, what does it look like in French?

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## To begin with...

“A man who knows two languages is worth two men.”

*French Proverb*



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# Agenda of session

- Lost in translation...
- French IB schools? Did you say French?
- Let's do philosophy!
- Have we lost north?
- *Traduttore, traditore*
- Let's do some poetry!
- And if we learned a second language?



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# Lost in translation!

Would you buy these  
brands...?



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# ...if you were a Spanish speaker?



The famous Chevy Nova, which means in Spanish: "doesn't work"!

Source:  
<http://www.journaldunet.com/management/marketing/fl-op-des-marques>



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## ...if you were a Portuguese speaker?



The wonderful  
Ford Pinto, which  
means in  
Portuguese:  
"Small penis"!

Source:  
<http://www.journaldunet.com/management/market-ing/flop-des-marques>



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## ...if you were a Mandarin speaker?



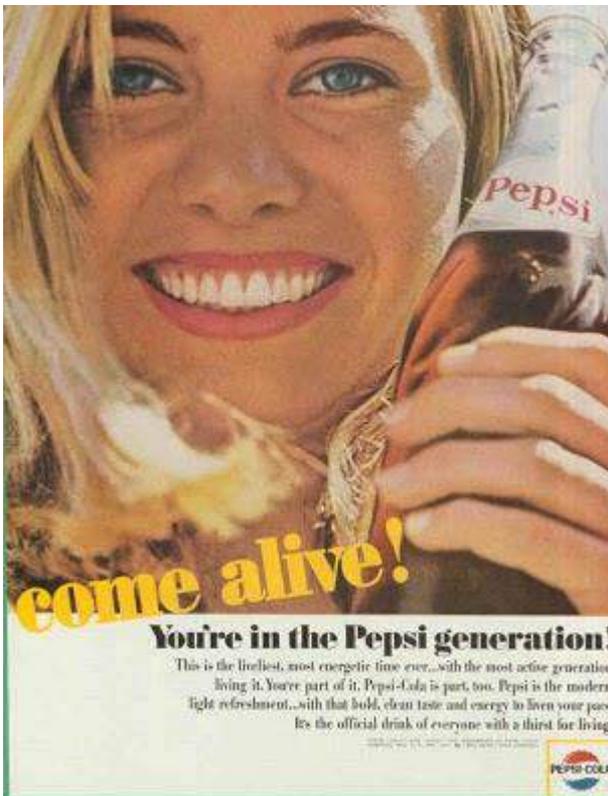
Translation in  
Mandarin: “ We'll  
eat your fingers  
off “.

Source: <http://www.businessinsider.com/worst-foreign-ad-translation-fails-2012-5?op=1>



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## ...if you were a Mandarin speaker?



Translation in Mandarin: "Pepsi bring your ancestors back from the dead!"



Source: <http://www.businessinsider.com/worst-foreign-ad-translation-fails-2012-5?op=1>



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## ...if you were a Spanish speaker?



Coors slogan "Turn it loose" in Spanish translates to "Suffer from diarrhea".

Source: <http://www.businessinsider.com/worst-foreign-ad-translation-fails-2012-5?op=1>



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## ...if you live in Africa?



Gerber used the same packaging in Africa as in the U.S.. In Africa it is traditional that the picture on the package matches what is contained inside.

Source: [http://zakta.com/zakta/view\\_1\\_978\\_2825\\_Lost\\_in\\_Translation](http://zakta.com/zakta/view_1_978_2825_Lost_in_Translation)



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## ...if you were an English speaker?



One of the most famous commercial failures in the English world. The French company Perrier with its orange soda named *Pschitt* .

Source:

<http://www.journaldunet.com/management/market ing/flop-des-marques>

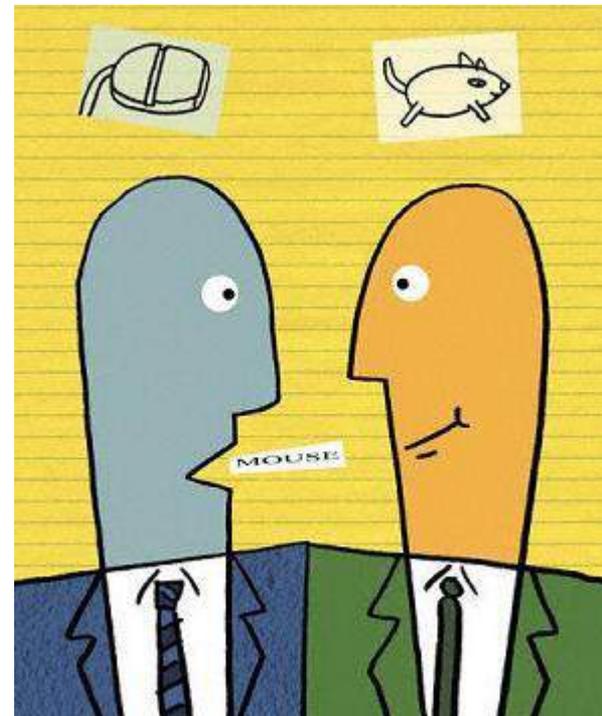


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# What do these failures teach us?

They teach us at least two things:

1. There is a diversity of languages in the world and every one of them has its own way of expressing ideas and emotions.
2. In every multilingual exchange, there are dangers of miscommunication.

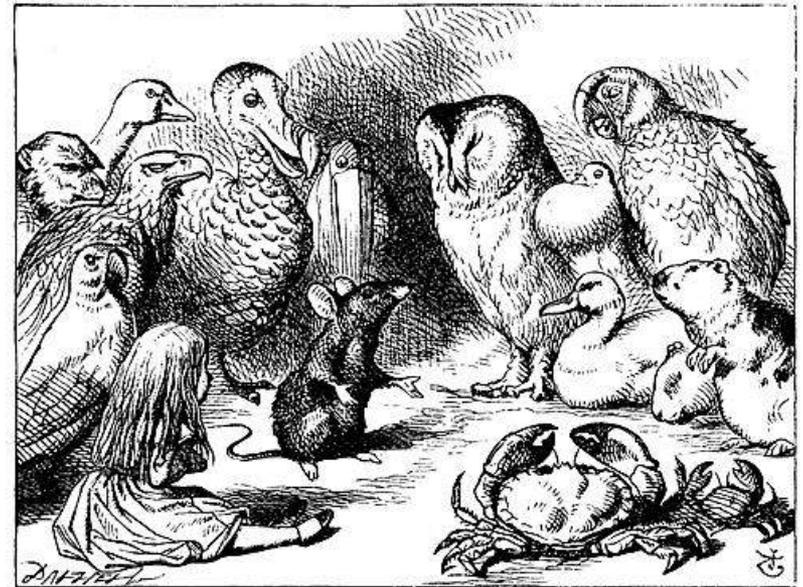




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By the way, how many languages are  
there in the world?

7 000!





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# French IB schools? Yes, there are!

Number of French schools members of SEBIQ:

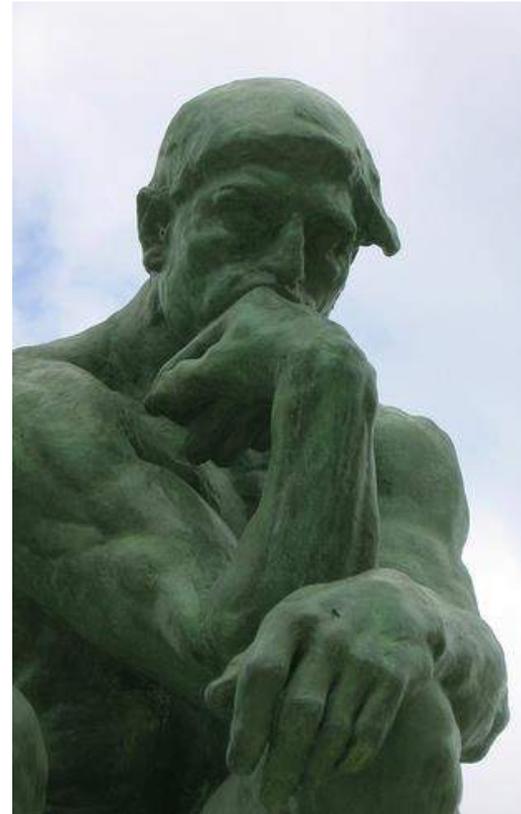
- **PYP** : 56 schools
- **MYP** : 127 schools
- **DP** : 41 schools
  
- Number of students (three programs):
- more than **50 000**



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# Let's do philosophy!

1. Do people think in language?
2. Does the language I speak influence the way I think?

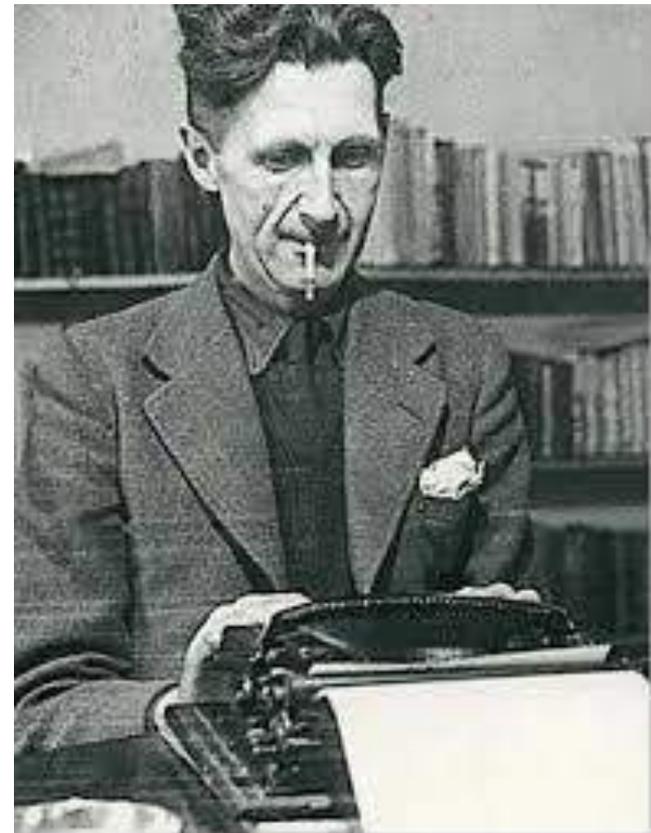




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# Do people think in language?

According to George Orwell, “thought is dependent on words.” In the novel *1984*, the famous author establishes an essential link between language and thought.





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# *The Principles of Newspeak*

Extract from 1984:

The purpose of Newspeak was not only to provide a medium of expression for the world-view and mental habits proper to the devotees of IngSoc, but to make all other modes of thought impossible. It was intended that when Newspeak had been adopted once and for all and Oldspeak forgotten, a heretical thought -- that is, a thought diverging from the principles of IngSoc -- should be literally unthinkable, at least so far as thought is dependent on words.

(...)

Newspeak was designed not to extend but to *diminish* the range of thought, and this purpose was indirectly assisted by cutting the choice of words down to a minimum.



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## My view on this question?

George Orwell is right! We, as educators, must develop our students' vocabulary. Of course, that doesn't mean that language is the only way to think. We can think with images for instance. But this is a very limited method...



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## A step further

Let's suppose that people think in language. Does that mean that they think in the *specific language (native tongue)* they speak?



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# A controversial issue...

## Linguistic determinism

Before 1960

The structure of a language affects the way we conceptualize the world and influences our cognitive processes.

Pushed to an extreme, two persons speaking different tongues would live in two different worlds.

## Linguistic universalism

1960-1980

All languages share the same underlying structure. Therefore, the influence of our mother tongue is superficial. The language we speak does not affect cognitive processes that are universal to all human beings.



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## Where is the truth?

Probably somewhere between these two theses. Nowadays, scholars believe that native languages influence thought, but in a more limited way.

**Nevertheless, we must not underestimate the influence of our native tongue.**



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## Language shapes four fundamental dimensions of human experience

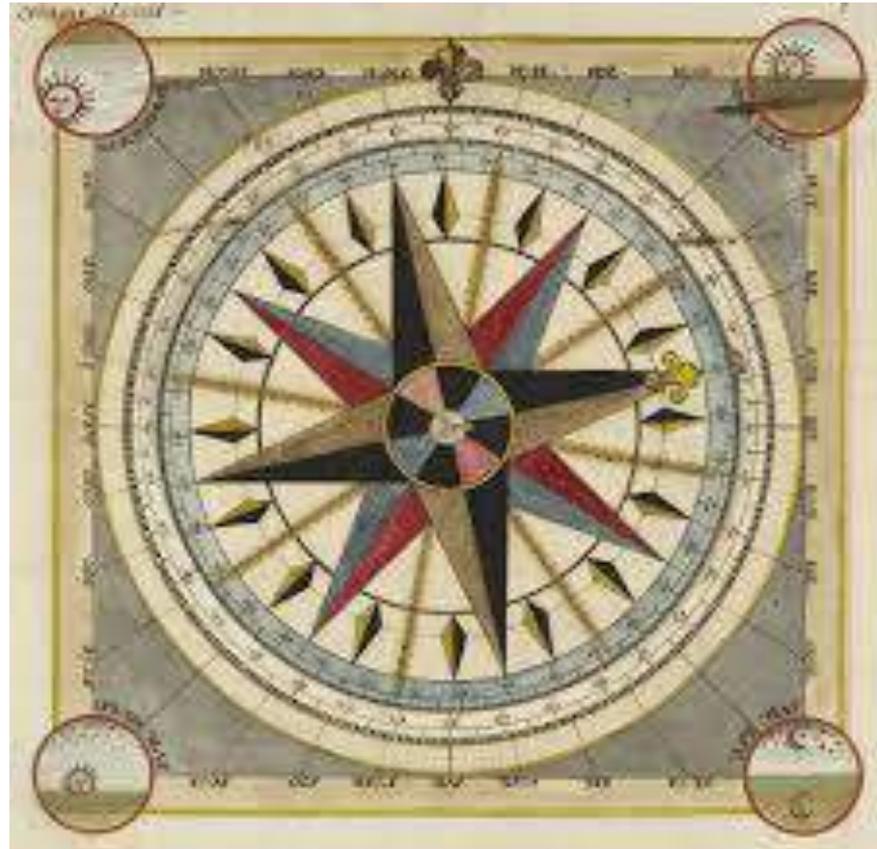
- Space
- Time
- Causality
- Relationships to others

Source: Lera Boroditsky, *How Language Shapes Thought*, Scientific American, February 2011.



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# Where is the north?





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## Where is the north?

Unlike most languages, the Kuuk Thaayorre language spoken in Pormpuraaw (a small Aboriginal community in Australia) does not use relative spatial terms such as left or right. Kuuk Thaayorre speakers talk in terms of cardinal directions (north, south, east and west). Example of Kuuk Thaayorre sentence: *the boy standing to the south of Mary is my brother.*

Consequence: the Pormpuraawers are able to point any cardinal direction without hesitation, no matter where they are!



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# Ahead and behind

French and English speakers consider the future to be *ahead* and the past to be *behind*. But in Aymara, a language spoken in the Andes, the past is said to be in front and the future behind.

Consequence: French and English speakers sway their bodies forward when thinking about the future and back when thinking about the past. This is the opposite with the Aymara speakers...



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## Extract from Lera Boroditsky's *How Language Shapes Thought*

*"Each language provides its own cognitive toolkit and encapsulates the knowledge and worldview developed over thousands of years within a culture. Each contains a way of perceiving, categorizing and making meaning in the world, an invaluable guidebook developed and honed by our ancestors. "*





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# Therefore a question! Is translation possible?





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# *Traduttore, traditore*

Translation of  
this Italian  
proverb:  
**translator,**  
**traitor!**





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# Is translation possible?

Yes, it is! Despite obvious differences in linguistic structure (grammar, vocabulary, etc.), meaning can be adequately expressed across languages. Translators use many linguistic tools (calque, borrowing, adaptation, compensation, paraphrase, and translator's notes) in order to compensate the problem of untranslatability.

Nevertheless, *possible* doesn't mean *easy*! For instance, is it possible to translate a poem?

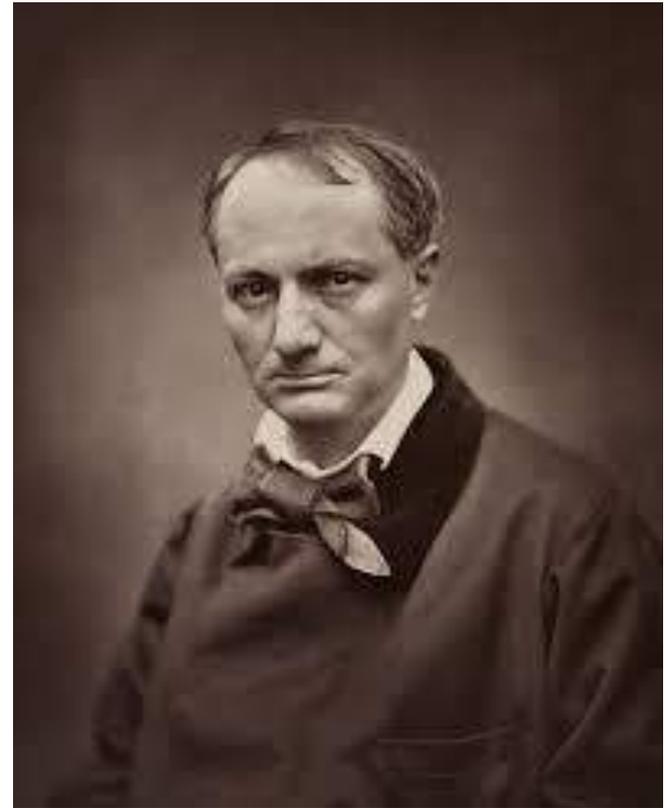


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# Let's translate Baudelaire

## Five translations of *Une charogne...*

Une Charogne (A Carcass) by  
Charles Baudelaire





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# Let's do some poetry!

According to the French author Michel Tournier: “The translation of a poem is another poem in another tongue “.





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## And if we learned a second language?

Translations may give us some insight into another culture and another way of life. But the benefits of learning a foreign language are enormous.



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## It gives a broader understanding of another culture

According to the French philosopher Michel Serres, when I learn German, I become German. When I learn English, I become English. And so on. Learning a new language gives an access to a whole new array of film, music and literature, and a greater understanding of the history and culture of a nation and ultimately a better understanding of the way the world works, including politics and security. Finally, it gives a greater global understanding of the world we live in.

Source: <http://www.omniglot.com/language/articles/benefitsoflearningalanguage.htm>.



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# It improves first language

When learning a new language, many people find they have a greater understanding of their first language. Second language education strengthens first language skills in areas of reading, vocabulary, grammar and communication skills. Learning a second language focuses our attention on the grammatical rules and structures of that language. This experience gives people a new insight into their own language and ultimately leads them to improve their mother tongue.

Source: Ministry of education, Alberta



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# It develops cultural sensitivity

Students learning a foreign language have superior cross-cultural skill and adapt better to varying cultural contexts. It fosters the development of citizenship.



Source: Ministry of education, Alberta



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# Conclusion

What does the world look like in French? Honestly, I don't know! The reason is simple: French is my mother tongue, it has been in me since the day I was born. It's hard to tell you how it is to be a French speaker. But if you learn my language, if you become familiar with my culture, come to me and tell me what you have learned. I'll be more than happy to learn from you!



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We'd like to hear  
it from you!  
we will answer your  
questions as best  
as we can!