

# Parrot Time

The Thinking of Speaking

Issue #13 January / February 2015

## Chatting in Languages

Part one of an introduction to practising languages in online chats

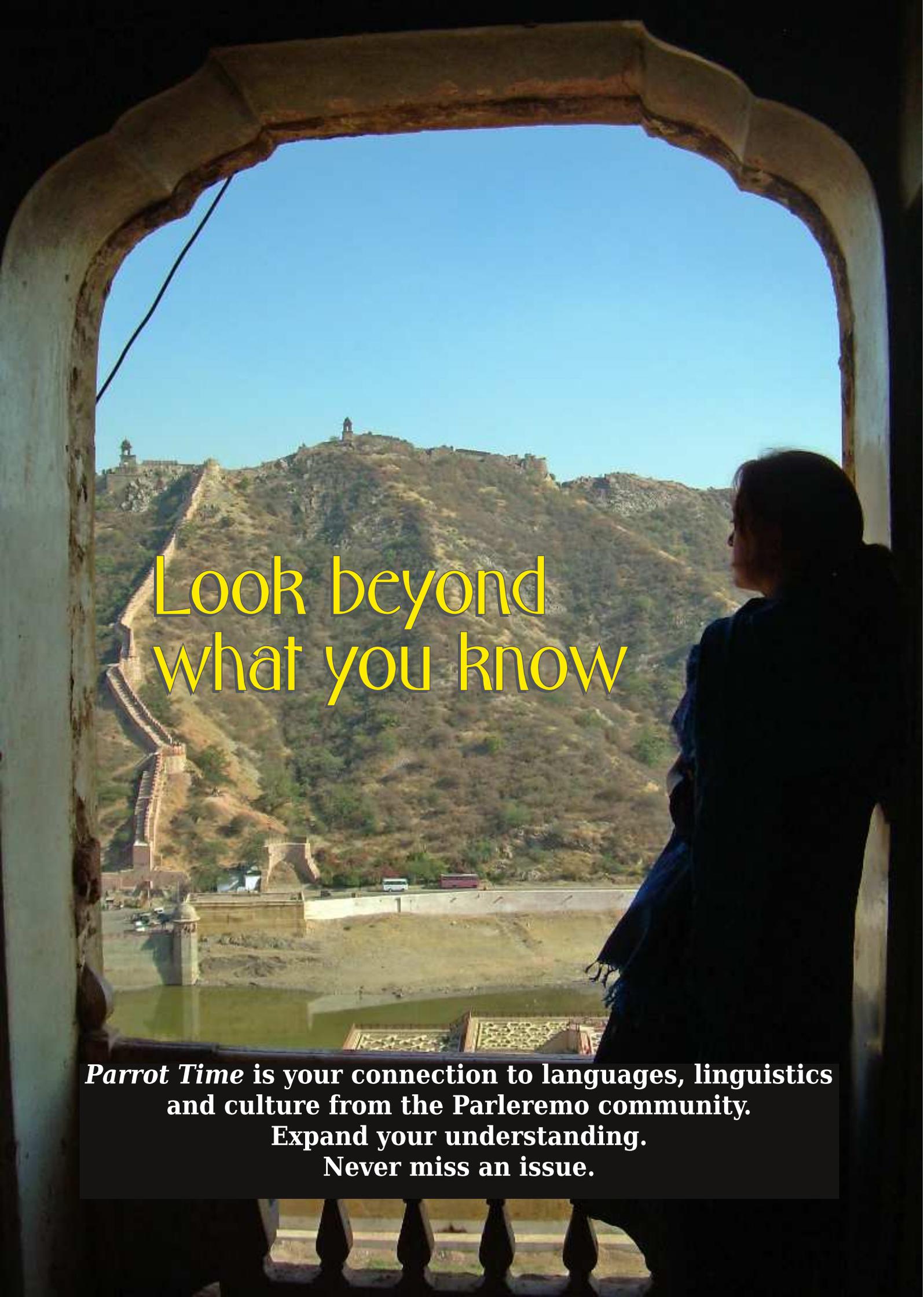
## Why Do People Learn Languages?

Some reasons people study another tongue

## The Question of Practice

A look back at Esperanto's creation



A woman in silhouette is looking out from an arched window. The view outside shows a hillside with a fort on top, a long wall leading up the hill, and a dry well in the foreground. The sky is clear and blue.

Look beyond  
what you know

***Parrot Time* is your connection to languages, linguistics  
and culture from the Parleremo community.  
Expand your understanding.  
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# Parrot Time

Parrot Time is a magazine covering language, linguistics and culture of the world around us.

It is published by Scriveremo Publishing, a division of Parleremo, the language learning community.

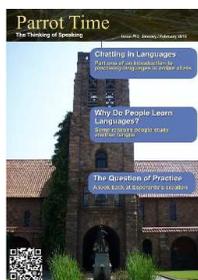
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**Cover:** St John's College Tower. St John's College is a private school for boys in South Africa, situated in Houghton, Johannesburg, Gauteng, South Africa. They offer a number of language courses to students.

## Features



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Practising a language with another person is a crucial part in the learning process, and using various text chat methods online can greatly help this. However, there are also some issues that come with these online chats rooms.



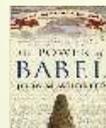
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क्या आप हन्दी बोलते हैं?

*Learn a language,  
Make friends,  
Have fun!*

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# Thirteen

This is the thirteenth issue of *Parrot Time*. This is significant because it means we have passed the two year mark and are still up and running. Many publications fail after just a few issues, so having our first dozen completed is a pretty important milestone.



The number thirteen, however, is considered bad luck in some countries. People go out of the way to avoid anything with a count of thirteen, including the number of people or items in a group, the day of the month, and the number of a room. Many buildings not only don't have rooms numbered thirteen, but even don't have a floor numbered thirteen. Even the group of thirteen treasure seeking dwarves in J.R.R. Tolkien's classic "The Hobbit" sought out an extra member so as not to have evil befall them. There is even a name for the fear of the number thirteen: triskaidekaphobia.

There are a few possible reasons for this belief that thirteen will bring bad luck. One is that at the Last Supper, where Jesus Christ sat with his Apostles, there were thirteen in attendance. Since one of them betrayed him, the number thirteen could be blamed.

Thirteen was certainly bad luck for the Knights Templar, who were ordered to be arrested by King Philip IV of France on Friday 13, 1307. Most of them were later tortured and killed. Friday the Thirteenth is still feared as day when terrible things will happen.

Not all countries consider thirteen to mean ill fortune. They have their own bad luck numerals. In Italy, some fear Friday the 17th, because if you rearrange the Roman numeral for it, XVII, into VIXI, you get the Latin word for "my life is over".

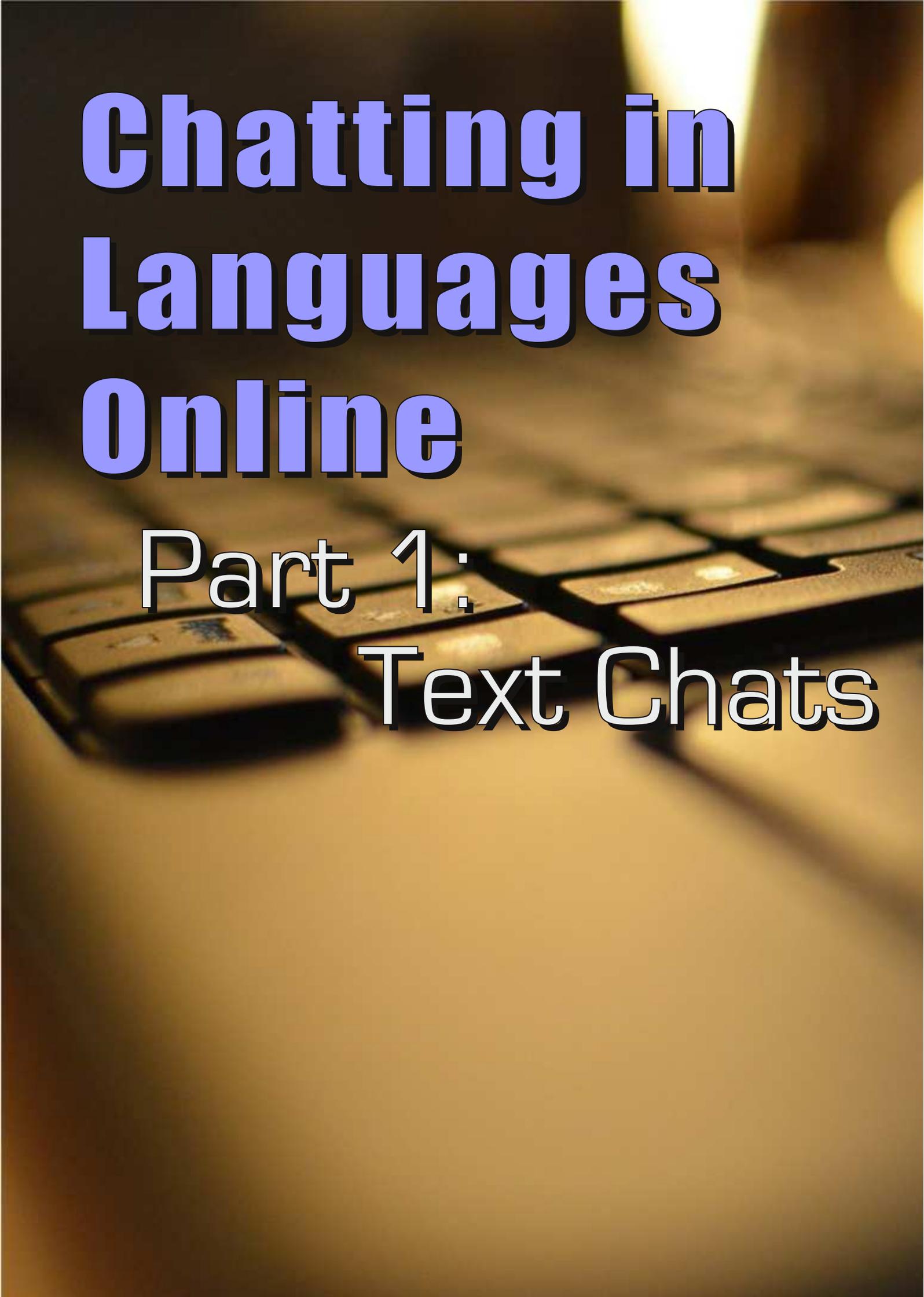
In China, the pronunciation of the number four is very similar to the one for death, and so many buildings in China omit the fourth floor, similar to the practice in the United States with the thirteenth floor. This also happens in Japan, where four (shi) and "death" are similar in pronunciation. This also occurs with the words for "nine" (ku) and "torture or suffering".

In Afghanistan, thirty-nine is the evil number. It is translated as "morda-gow", which literally means "dead cow". Because there was a pimp nicknamed "39" (after his license plate number), the term has become slang term for a pimp, and thus linked to prostitution.

Perhaps the most evil number comes from the Biblical "number of the beast", 666. It is believed to be the mark of the devil. I admit, even I get a little nervous when I see that number.

We hope that this issue is lucky for us, in that it represents a promise of continuation of the magazine. We also hope we don't have to worry about this again until the six-hundred and sixty-sixth issue, which should be released in another hundred and nine years.

*Erik Zidowecki*  
ERIK ZIDOWECKI  
EDITOR IN CHIEF



# Chatting in Languages Online

Part 1:

Text Chats

**T**o truly gain fluency in a language, a person needs to actually use that language with other people. In traditional classes, that was normally only possible with other classmates. Unless you had other people in your family or neighbourhood who also spoke it, you had a hard time practising the conversational aspect. You might establish a penpal relationship, in which you could write letters to individuals in other countries, but that meant waiting for days and weeks between practice sessions, which was certainly not the same as a discussion.

The advent of the internet changed all that, however. It not only has given people a way of getting information from all over the world, it has given them a means to communicate freely with people of all races and ethnicity. It allows the students of a German class to actually talk to other German students around the world as well as native Germans, often without even leaving their house.

First, people could use electronic letters and get responses back in hours, sometimes minutes. Public forums, which gave learners a chance to post messages and receive answers in many languages also became prevalent, allowing for rapid feedback on their progress.

The real innovation,

however, came in the form of real-time chats in which any number of people that were online at the same time could write something and have a reply instantly, like a face-to-face conversation. The only thing this lacked was the physical presence of the person.

### The IRC

One of the first and certainly the most popular widely used text chats is the Internet Relay Chat, or IRC. It is a system that is run on various computers called *servers* over the internet, allowing for people from all parts of the globe to connect. It normally requires a person to download a program, called a *client*, to connect. However, there are now web page based applications, called *gate-*

*ways*, that allow people to get into the IRC without any other software being installed.

The IRC is actually a series of several interconnected servers sharing the same setup, creating multiple IRC networks. Each network is maintained by a group of administrators. These networks contain several chat areas, called channels, in which people can gather for discussing particular topics. Most networks allow people to make and moderate their own channels. Think of the IRC as a city, and each network is a single building. In that building, each room is a place for people to meet and talk. Now, imagine that the number of buildings is largely unlimited, as is the number of rooms each can contain, and you can appreciate just



All it takes is a computer, the internet, and some effort, and you can practise language with people around the world.

We now have the power to talk to people in the local coffee shop, or on the other side of the world.



how powerful the IRC can be as a means of broad communications. Moreover, since the most basic chat system is all text, even the least advanced computer is likely to be able to join.

I first started using the IRC when in college, before the web was created. The World Wide Web (WWW) is the graphical interface that sits on the internet. Before that, the common method of using the internet was using terminals (essentially, keyboards and monitors that were linked into a large, singular computer called a *mainframe*). We used it to communicate with other

parts of the campus as well as other universities. At that time, most people used it for playing adventure games. It began to show its real power during the Gulf War, when it was used to give updates instantly from those close to the action without having to go through the conventional media. It was also a major component in getting out information during the attempted Soviet coup attempt in 1991 during a media blackout. Now, we look to Twitter and Facebook to fill those roles, but it first started with the IRC.

### Practise in Text Chat

Many places over various networks of the IRC have been created over the years. Many of these are open channels for practising many languages as well as discussing learning languages in general. Specific channels, allowing the people in those to focus on a single language, have also become commonplace. These allow people at all levels of study to participate and help each other. In this way, they are providing the groups of learners that were normally reserved for traditional classes. An added bonus is that these channels never close; people can use

*Now, imagine that the number of buildings is largely unlimited, as is the number of rooms each can contain, and you can appreciate just how powerful the IRC can be as a means of broad communications.*

them at any time, regardless of time zones and locality. Enter into one whenever you have a chance and instantly be able to converse with someone in your language of study.

The IRC is not the only place to have text chats now. As the browser interfaces became more powerful, it was possible to create software based chats on individual websites. This has the positive aspect of keeping more control over the chat situation, such as only allowing members of website to join. It also has the downside of possibly using a lot of a website's resources and not being as accessible to as many people. For example, having an IRC based chat makes it easy for people to find and join, while a web based chat will likely require people to find the site and become a member before they can talk to others.

Using a text chat can not only help you in learning a language by talking with others, but it can also help you meet people in other cultures and learn more about the world in general. I have also personally met a number of people in "real life" that I had only previously talked to via the IRC. Some of these became very strong friendships that never would have happened without access to such a communication tool.

### Trolls

However, just like any other gathering of people, you are going to meet people that are there to cause problems, maybe even become abusive. These are commonly referred to as "trolls", and if allowed to



Trolls are people that just like to stir up trouble. The best thing is to ignore them.

disrupt the channel for too long, they will drive users away. Over the years, I have had to deal with many trolls, and it is never an easy situation. While you do not want to restrict people's interactions, some level of civility has to be maintained, and that falls to the administrators. Sometimes, when a person who is being disrupted is reprimanded or even removed, other members may get angry, not at the individual but at the moderator who removed them. These protesting members would like to

believe that everyone will just get along nicely without any kind of intervention. Oddly enough, they are likely to change their mind if a troll directly goes after them.

### Domination

There are other language related issues that can affect a chat. One complaint I have heard in a few different multilingual chats is the way a certain language will sometimes dominate the channel. I am not referring to English, which is normally the common language that most

users change. There will sometimes be a group of people that either all come from the same country, all are learning a specific language, or a combination of those, which will seem to take over. For example, in one chat, it was common for Dutch speakers to all start speaking Dutch at once, making those who did not speak it feel left out. This caused a backlash against Dutch itself by some.

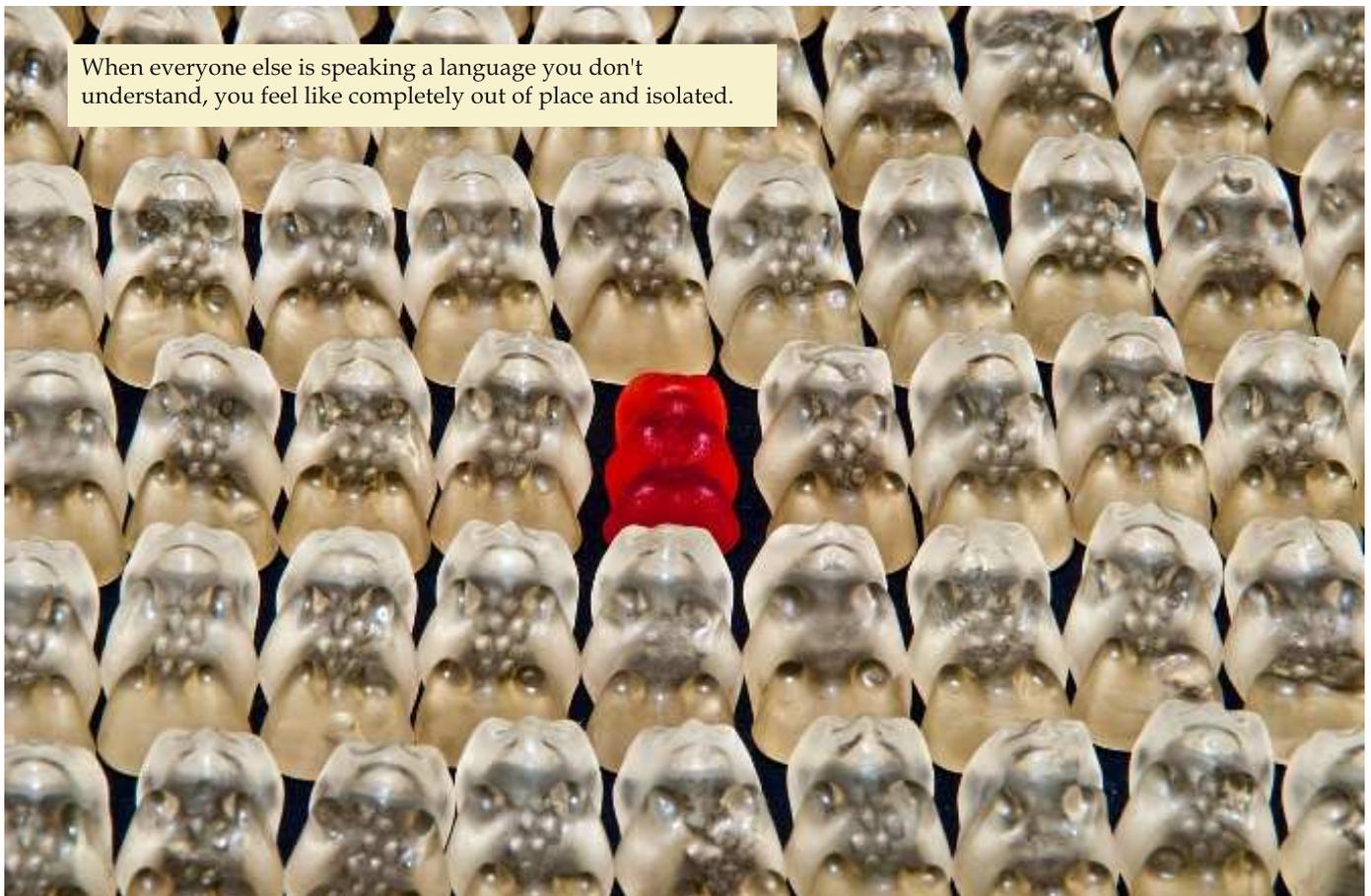
You would think that this sort of activity would actually make people excited. After all, is not this what language learning really is about: being able to come together as a group and all start speaking the same language with each other? That is what these language channels are created for and it is encouraged

that you speak whatever you want. Sadly, though, some of those people that did not understand it felt imposed upon. It was common enough for a few people to start speaking the same language in a channel, just that when it reached a certain number of speakers that the complaints would begin to come. This is something I have never really understood myself, because it seems rather petty. After all, if the languages was one that the complainers knew, they would be enjoying the big conversation like everyone else and would be offended that someone did not like them doing it.

### Tongue Envy

Another problem is related to the people who know a great number of languages, nor-

mally referred to as hyper-polyglots. When a new person joins the chat, they are usually instantly asked what languages they know and what languages they are studying. This is normally a positive situation, with a few people perking up at the list and perhaps even attempting to speak in one of those languages to the new person. The problem can arise if someone feels threatened by this new person's list. The member might feel they need to challenge the person publicly and, if they doubt their abilities, may start to speak these doubts to other members of the chat, while the new person is present or when they are absent. Like any other accomplishment, language enthusiast can be impressed and inspired by



When everyone else is speaking a language you don't understand, you feel like completely out of place and isolated.



Even in a chat room full of talkers, a loner can seem to be lost in space.

another person's abilities or feel themselves inadequate by comparison. Even if this does not happen immediately, it is a feeling that can poison the atmosphere of any group, often leading to an eventual confrontation.

One example I can give of this is when a female joined a multilingual chat and told everyone how many languages she knew. For most there, she became something like a demigod; they doted on her and treated her very well. She was even made a moderator of the channel, so great was this awe of her abilities.

I did not pay much attention to this situation because I had other things I was focusing on until one member of the chat spoke to me privately. I was told that some people doubted this wo-

man's abilities, and that when she used some of the languages she knew, she made some mistakes.

Now, "knowing" a language does not mean you are a fluent speaker, nor does it mean you will never make a mistake. Most people make mistakes when using their native language at one point or another. And of course, there was no rule in the chat that a person had to speak all languages they claimed to know fluently. If that were the case, most of the chatters would be in violation. I did not get complaints from any other members regarding this, but to me, this was obviously a case of "tongue envy".

### The Loner

A third situation I have seen a few times is when there is a

chatter who only speaks one specific language, and it is not English. This person can speak some English, but rarely does so. This is not a problem; many people do not feel confident enough in English, which is one reason they come to the chats: they wish to improve their English speaking capabilities.

What can happen is that there may be only one or two other people that this singular speaker will converse with. When those people are not in the channel, the singular speaker never speaks.

This should not be a problem, but some people do get frustrated. They may feel that this person should be more willing to interact with other chatters. This tension is escalated if the singular language used is one that few

others know, leading to the feelings of being left out again. Here is a person that seems to only have “secret” conversations with a few certain people. While it isolates that member, it makes others uncomfortable.

### Lurkers

There is a more general chat issue that occurs when there are a number of people in a channel that rarely or never interact with anyone else. They are in their all the time but do not contribute to the channel. These individuals are called “lurkers”.

Lurkers affect the morality of a channel in different ways. They might upset some people since they appear to be zombies: lifeless, but still there. Soulless bodies. If you focus on them, they can be-

gin to really disturb you, like standing in a party with only a few people talking, the rest just staring out into space. Creepy!

On the other hand, lurkers can also make a channel seem more full of people, and thus giving chatters a sense of a larger community and thus making them feel more at home. They envision the large party but ignore that many are not active. They are too busy talking with those who are involved.

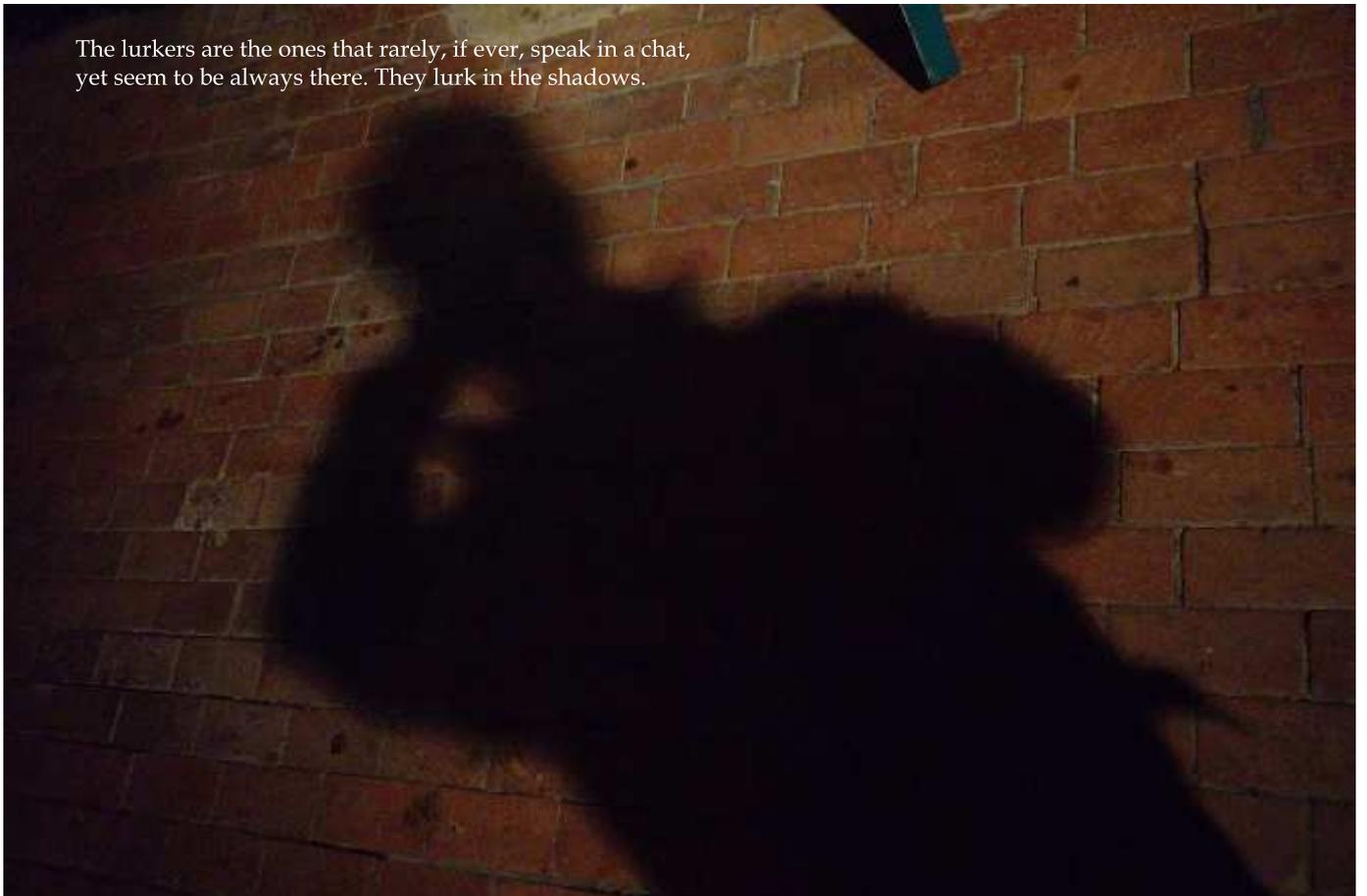
What are lurkers there for? Many like being able to read the chat, either while they are doing other thing or at a later time if they are logging what is said. They do not want to participate for whatever reason, but do like being part of it in this way. Some actually sit in many

channels at the same time for this reason, so while they might be a lurker in one channel, they might be active in another. Some lurkers never say anything or even leave the channel. They remain mysteries to everyone.

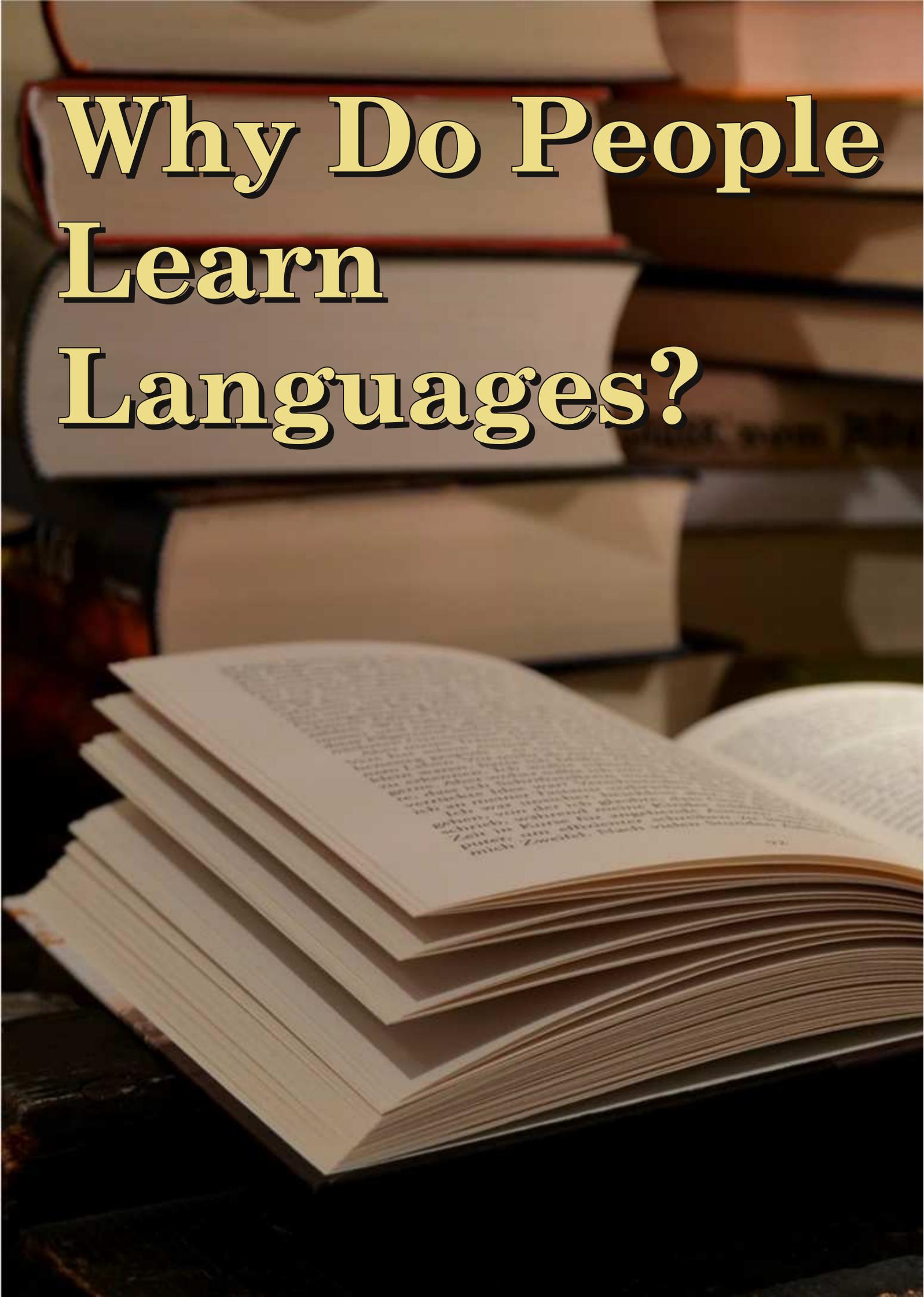
These are some of the issues that must be taken into consideration when planning to practise your new language in a text chat online. Some are applicable to much of basic communication online, and they also can play a part in using voice chat systems as well. I will talk about voice chats in the second part of this article in the next issue.

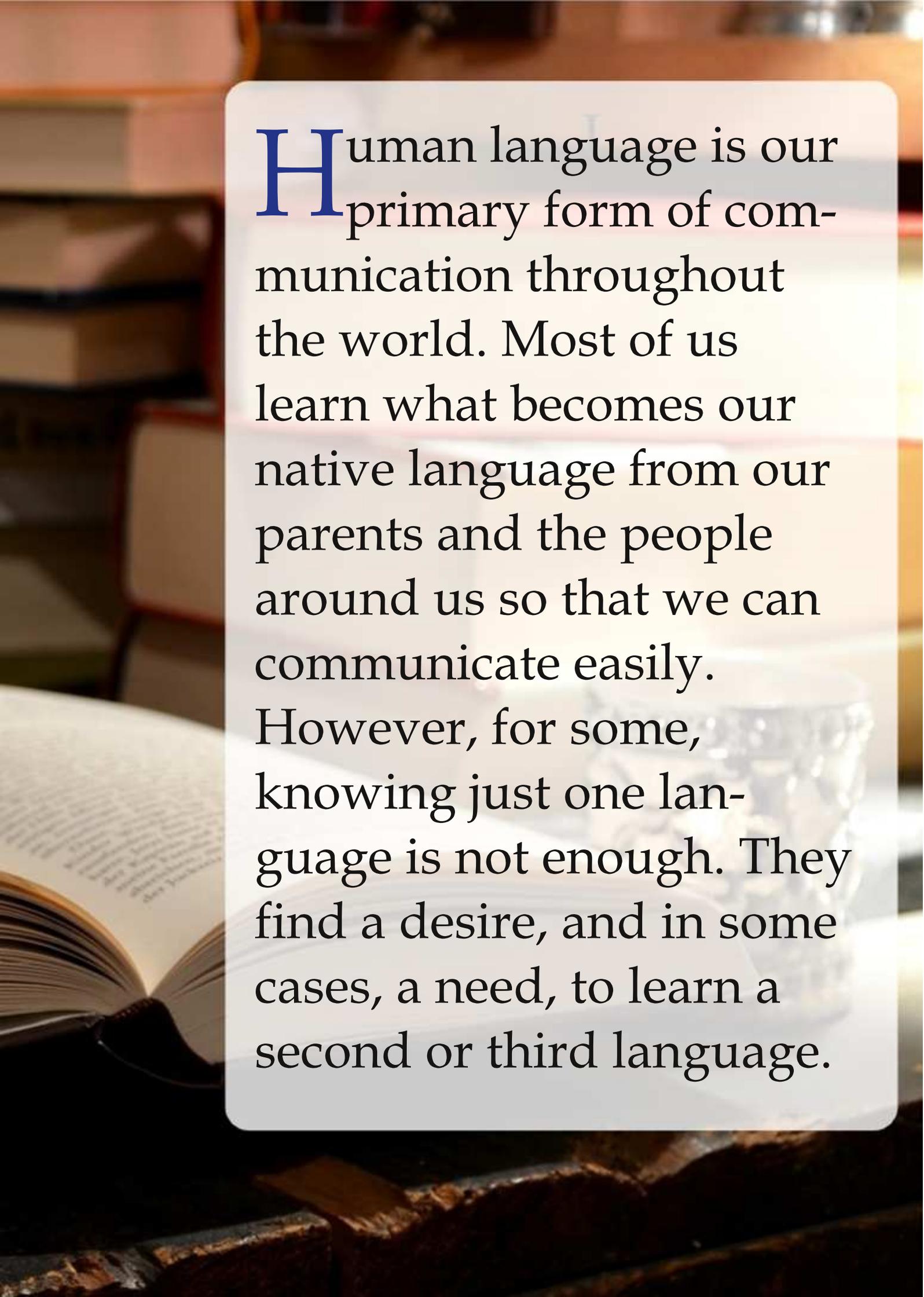
**PT**

The lurkers are the ones that rarely, if ever, speak in a chat, yet seem to be always there. They lurk in the shadows.



# Why Do People Learn Languages?

The background of the image shows a stack of several books. The top book has a red cover, and the pages of the books below are visible. In the foreground, an open book is lying flat, showing its pages. The text on the pages is in German, with words like 'Lern', 'Zurück', and 'Lernen' visible. The lighting is warm and focused on the books, creating a scholarly atmosphere.

The background of the image shows a blurred library or study area. On the left, there are shelves filled with books. In the foreground, a desk is visible with an open book, a black pen, and a clear glass. The text is overlaid on a semi-transparent white box in the center of the image.

**H**uman language is our primary form of communication throughout the world. Most of us learn what becomes our native language from our parents and the people around us so that we can communicate easily.

However, for some, knowing just one language is not enough. They find a desire, and in some cases, a need, to learn a second or third language.

## Why Do People Learn Languages?

The reason for doing this is not easy to explain to a non-learner. They might suggest that learning another language is useless. After all, there is already technology in use, like Google Translate, to convert any text needed, right? In that situation, it is tempting to respond that with that attitude, many things are unnecessary. “We have spelling checkers, so no one needs to learn to spell.” They would probably agree with you on that. “We have frozen dinners and canned food, so no one needs to learn to cook.” They might not like that one as much. “We have video games, so no one needs to do sports like football.” That might get you punched in certain parts of the world.

And of course, the one question that is likely to make any language lover want to draw blood: “Why learn another language? Everyone speaks English already!”

### Why Learn?

Part of the population may have gone on to actually use a language they acquired, or they may have been raised with a second language, making them bilingual. It might help them in their daily lives, such as in communicating with family members or dealing with others in their business. To them, it is not useless, but they do not really think of it beyond that.

For the serious language learner, the one that actively

strives to master not just one new language but several, there is never really a question as to the usefulness or practicality of what they learn. It is a quest that justifies itself, in the same way that a cook can learn to feed himself but a chef views cooking as an art, something to be perfected. If you ask one of these people why they do it, they might give you a variety of answers, but they are really saying to you “How can you even ask that?”. To them, you are the odd one for *not* learning more languages.

The main reason that I have found people learning several languages is that they want to communicate with many different people that would normally be outside of their cultural group. Sounds obvious, right? Actually,





there are millions of people that do not want to talk to anyone outside of their own neighbourhood, never mind outside of their language, culture, or country. I'm not talking just about the United States either. Despite the stereotype, there are plenty of non-Americans who are just as provincial, if not more so. They are caught up in their own daily lives and have no need or desire to explore anything beyond it.

While in college, there was a possibility for me to visit the USSR with a group of students in one of my Russian history classes. To me, this was a fantastic opportunity that I was definitely not going to pass up. The trip was going to cost each student one thousand dollars, but that seemed like a bar-

gain. I wanted to visit the beautiful onion domes I had only seen in pictures, to walk the streets of an entirely different culture and way of life. I was never one that was caught up in the cold-war

*They might find themselves drawn to a culture or people without having visited it, but through their exposure in other ways, like art and media, they desire to learn the language.*

dramas, so there was no fear in my mind of what was behind the "Iron Curtain". I even decided I had better learn to drink Vodka, so as not to offend anyone.

When I shared my enthusiasm with some fellow class-

mates, I was met with looks of confusion and a bit of fear. No matter how I tried to explain how great this opportunity was, they just gave me blank stares. One asked me how much it was going to cost, and when I told him, he gasped. "Do you know how many floppy discs you could buy with that amount?" he asked me incredulously (I was in a geek school, obviously). Then it was my chance to stare. While they could not grasp why I would ever want to visit another country (in my case, again, because by then I had already visited Japan, Canada and Italy) while I could not understand why they *would not* want to.

Perhaps for that difference of view, we never got to make the trip. Although we

## Why Do People Learn Languages?



tried twice to organize the trip with my Russian history professor, we were never able to get more than a few people committed to going, and making the trip with just a handful of students was not economically feasible. Soon after that, the Soviet Union collapsed, removing forever the chance to see that empire.

Another reason that people love learning new languages is for the challenge as well as the beauty of it. For some people, there is a particular draw to the sound and flow of another tongue.

Wanting to learn about other cultures is the third

reason. The language and culture of a country are closely tied together. An often used example of this is the relationship of Eskimos with snow: “The Eskimos have fifty words for snow”. While the number given is often changed, and even the term “eskimo” itself relates to a few different languages, it does show how the world around us, our culture and lifestyle, are reflected in our language.

Many people have travelled to another country, fallen in love with it and the people, and thus endeavoured to then learn the language in order to better relate to it all. They might find

themselves drawn to a culture or people without having visited it, but through their exposure in other ways, like art and media, they desire to learn the language.

My grandmother acted as a missionary to Japan for a number of years, and she also taught advanced English. When I was twelve, she was invited to return to visit friends, and so most of my family and her travelled around Japan for two weeks. I loved the experience. It was my first real experience in a completely foreign country. I have family in Canada, but to someone from the United States, Canada does not really feel like a foreign

*If you ask one of these people why they do it, they might give you a variety of answers, but they are really saying to you "How can you even ask that?"*

country.

While there, we met many people, stayed with different families, and got pulled into the entire culture. I helped make decorations for the Tanabata festival, learned to eat with chopsticks, and even wore a traditional boy's costume at times. It also gave me my first exposure to *Anime*, the Japanese cartoons.

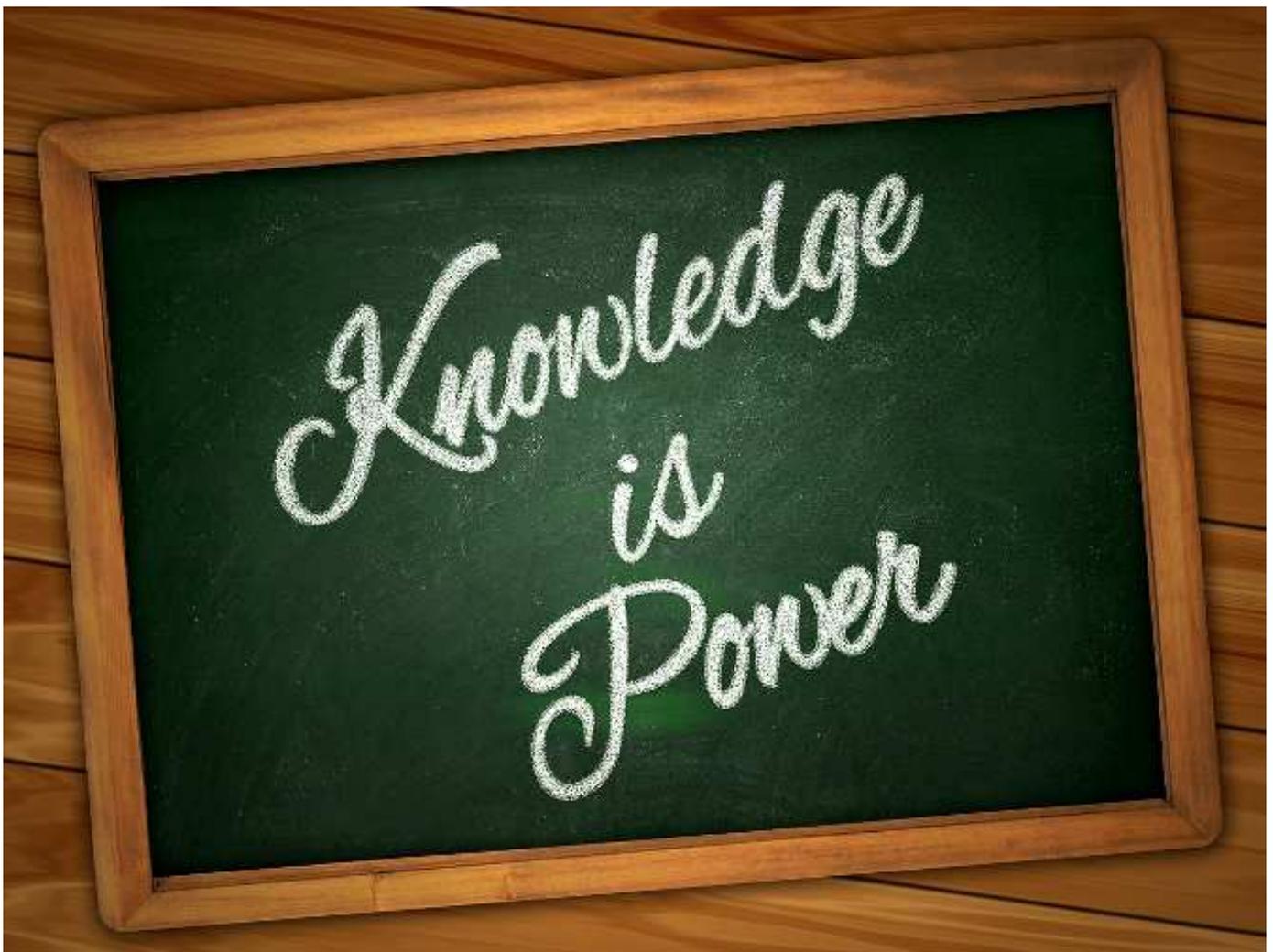
I was too young to understand the concept of “ugly American”, the term often used to describe how we act when abroad: demanding things be in English, wanting everything like it is in “back home”, and generally just rude and ignorant. I em-

braced it all, and did my best to learn some Japanese. I was able to use the basic greetings and polite phrases, which pleased the people I met greatly. I wanted to understand more of this great country and the wonderful people I met, so learning even a little of the language was just the normal thing, to me, to do.

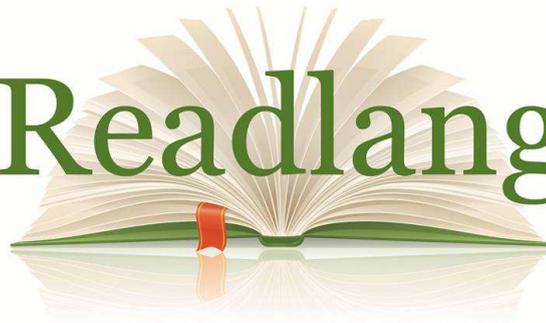
Some people I have met since who are learning Japanese they are doing so in order to watch Anime without subtitles or dubbing, so it may even be a small part of the cultures that inspires someone to study the language.

### And You?

If you are reading this article, you are probably one of those people that is learning another language. You may be studying one now, or have already learned a few to the point you can converse with others. If that is the case, then I am sure you have your own reasons for learning. Perhaps for you it is a practical reason, like for a job position. More likely, however, it is because you feel drawn to them. For you, exploring a new language is a passion that you cannot ignore. Whatever your reason is, don't let anyone stop you from following your drive to learn. **PT**



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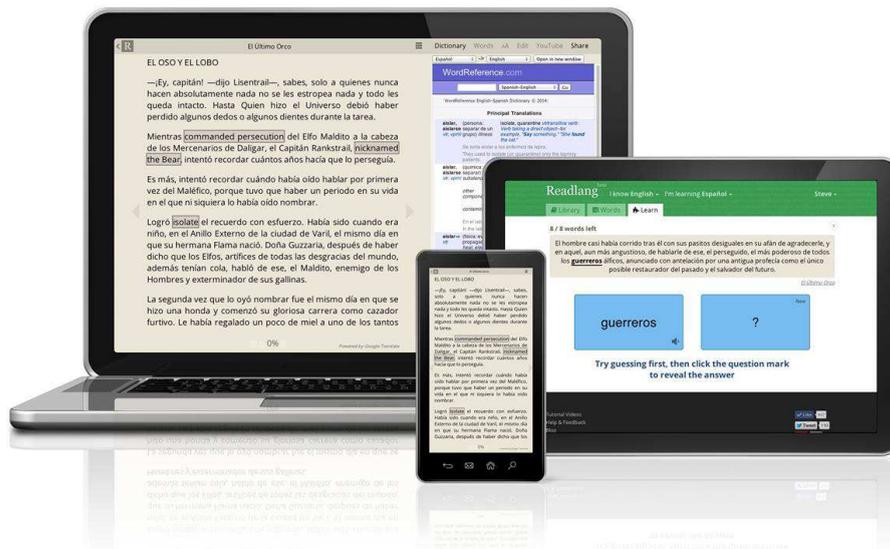


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Presisto : A. LAJOIE, 19, Rue de Tivoli.

Abonoj : E.-J. CAUDRY-ALLE, 102, Rue de la Paix  
Boulogne-sur-Mer (FRANCE)

Jara abono : Francujo, 6 Francs.  
Eksterlando, 10 Francs.

## Letero de D<sup>o</sup> Zamenhof al S<sup>o</sup> A. Michaux, pri "Tutmonda Ligo Esperantista"

Kara Sinjoro, Laŭ mia promeso, mi sendas al vi nun la projekton de Tutmonda Ligo Esperantista, kiun mi intencas proponi en la Kongreso al la voĉdonado de la delegitoj de ĉiuj grupoj esperantistaj. Por ke la delegitoj havu la eĉlon bone prijuĝi la proponon kaj pretigi sian voĉon, mi petas vin, volu kiel eble plej baldaŭ presigi tiun ĉi mian leteron en via *Revue de l'Esperanto*.

Antaŭ ĉio mi diros kelkajn vortojn pri la kaŭzo kaj celo de mia projekto. Jam longe mi venis al la konvinko, ke por la tute sukcesa progresado de nia afero estas necese ke ĝi estu absolute senpersona. Tial la esperantistoj tion scias mi jam de tre longe fornelis de mi ĉian ordoneman aŭtoritatecon kaj lasis al mi nur la volon de konsilanto. Tamen tia foresto de absoluta aŭtoritateco montrigis malhelpa por la libera disvolvigo de nia afero; tial ia aŭtoritateco devas esti kreita; sed la absoluta aŭtoritateco devas aparteni ne rigide al unu persono, sed al institucio, libere elektata de la esperantistaro mem.

Tre multe da personoj komprenas nun la tutan gravecon de nia ideo kaj tre volonte servus al ĝi, sed multajn el ili forpelas la timo, ke per tio ĉi ili servus al unu homo, ke ili fariĝus kvazaŭ regatoj de tiu homo, dependus konstante de liaj kapricoj k. t. p. Ili aliĝos al ni nur tiam, kiam ili scias, ke nia afero prezentas nur absolute senpersonan ideon kaj ke en nia afero ekzistas nenia *majstro* (1), kies arbitrajn decidojn ili devas humile obeadi.

Se la sorto de nia afero estos ligita kun unu homo, ĝi estos ĉe mi en danĝero. Morgaŭ mi povas morti, perdi la prudenton aŭ sanon, subfali al ia neantaŭvidata malhelpo (kiel ekzemple antaŭ ne longe, kiam mi subite ricevis la ordononiri Mandjurujon), kaj la afero tiam subite eksuferus tre serioze, ĉar ĝi restus subite sen gvidanto. La estonteco de nia afero estas plene garantiita nur tiam, kiam ĝi absolute nenion dependos de la sorto de unu homo.

Mi scias, ke tre multe da esperantistoj havas la fortan konvinkon, ke por Esperanto estos plej bone, se en la daŭro de mia tuta vivo mi persone restos la sola kaj plej alta aŭtoritato en nia afero, ĉar neniaj eĉ plej saĝaj komitatoj povas per malvarma, mullkapa kaj blinde palpanta rezonado trovi la efektivajn bezonojn de nia lingvo tiel ĝuste kaj bone kiel ili trovas per sia *sento* kaj *sperto* tiu persono kiu kreis la lingvon kaj laboris por ĝi kaj en ĝi tutan vivon. Mi konfesas ke en rilato *praktika* tiu ĉi opinio havas en si multe da praveco. Sed ĝuste por tio, ke mia aŭtoritateco alportu al nia afero utilon anstataŭ malhelpo, estas necese ke ĝi estu libervole kaj konsecie akceptata, sed ne lege altrudata. Se la esperantistoj trovos, ke mia aŭtoritateco estas utila por nia afero, kiu do malpermesos al ili ankaŭ poste rigardadi min kaj miajn verkojn kaj konsilojn kiel aŭtoritatajn? Kiu malpermesos al la Centra Komitato klarigadi al la esperantistoj, ke pro la bono de nia afero estas dezirinde, ke la esperantistoj kiel eble pli im tadu mian stilon? La diferenco estas tia, ke ne la esperantistoj *propravole* kaj *konsecie* rigardados min kiel aŭtoritato, tiam ili *volonte* penos ĉiam im tadi mian stilon, kaj nia lingvo multe gajnos de tio ĉi, ĉar unueo kaj unu spiriteco estas por ĉiu lingvo multe pli grava ol la plej severa logikeco, se tiu ĉi logikeco, ne estas absolute senduba kaj egala ĉe ĉiuj sed se mia aŭtoritateco estos *altrudata de mi mem* kaj se ĝi estos nur « necesajo » sekvo de foresto de la plej alta juĝantaro, tiam oni sekvas mian ekzemplon kaj konsilojn nur *tre nevolonte*, kaj kiel ajn mature pripensita estas ĉiu mia ago, ĉiam multaj personoj trovos ĝin erara, nelogika kaj senseca, kaj ni havas konstantan disputon kaj opozicion. Oni ordinare respondas al mi, ke la nombro de la disputemuloj estas tre malgranda, ke la plimulto da esperantistoj preferas blinde obei min, ol elekti al si ian estraron, ke estas danĝere se mi ellasus el miaj manoj la gardadon k. t. p. Sed ho ve, ĉio tio ĉi estas nur parolado *teoria*: en la praktiko la afero estas tute alia. Tuj samaj personoj (kiuj pensas kaj konstante ripetas al mi, ke miaj vortoj estas por ili lego) tiuj samaj personoj postulas, ke mi altrudu mian volon nur al *aliaj* personoj; sed kiam mi faras ion, kio ne plaĉas al ili, aŭ kiam mi ne volas subskribi mian nomon sub io, kion ili proponas, ili koleras min, ili turmentas min per sia insistado, ili (sen konsecie kaj en la plej bona intenco) komencas eĉ opozician agitadon kontraŭ miaj faroj.

Ne vole la libera disvolvigo de nia afero, sed eĉ mia persona laborado por nia afero multe suferas de tio, ke ne ekzistas ia plej

(1) Uzante la okazon, mi nun ripetas publike tion, kion mi jam ofte diris kaj skribis private: mi kore petas ĉiujn esperantistojn, ke en siaj leteroj al mi aŭ en sia buŝa parolado kun mi ili neniam uzu la vorton « majstro », kiu estas al mi tre malagraba, sed ili ĉiam uzu simple la vorton « sinjoro ».

alta juĝantaro. Tre ofte oni petas min, ke mi donu *oficiale* novajn vortojn, regulojn k. t. p.; mi tamen nenion povas fari, ĉar ĉiu simila paŝo de mia flanko estus arbitraĵo kaj elvokus grandan kaj ĝustan malkontenteron, senfinan disputadon kaj malpacon. Sed, se ekzistos ia plej alta institucio, elektita de la tuta esperantistaro, tiam miaj manoj estos liberigitaj, kaj ĉion kion mi trovos utila, mi povos kurage proponi al la decido de tiu institucio, kaj ĉio, kion tiu institucio decidos, povos esti kurage farita, kaj neniu havos la rajton protesti aŭ disputi.

Pro ĉiuj supre montritaj kaŭzoj, mi decidis proponi al la esperantistoj ke ili fine kreas al si ian institucion, kiu estos periode reelektata de la esperantistoj mem kaj prezentos plej altan juĝantaron por ĉio, kio koncernas nian aferon. Tiu ĉi institucio estos la « Centra Komitato » pri kiu mi parolos malsupre. Sed ĉar la « Centra Komitato » devas esti elektata de ĉiuj esperantistoj, tial estas necese ke la esperantistoj antaŭe unuigu kaj organizigu. Tiu organizacion mi volas nun proponi sub la formo de « Tutmonda Ligo Esperantista ».

Malsupre mi donas la projeklatan de mi regularon de la Ligo kaj mi petas ke ĉiuj esperantistoj volu bone pripensi kaj prijuĝi en siaj grupaj kunvenoj tiun ĉi regularon, ĉar en la Kongreso en Boulogne-sur-Mer mi intencas proponi tiun ĉi regularon al la voĉdonado de la kongresanoj. Nun mi volas nur fari la sekvantan rimarkon: intencante proponi al la Kongreso mian projekton, mi *tute ne deziras* ke mia projekto estu la sola en la Kongreso; kontraŭe mi es os tre ĝoja se ankaŭ aliaj esperantistoj ellaborus projektojn de organizacio kaj prezentus ilin al la Kongreso por ke ni povu elekti. *Forte eraras* tiuj esperantistoj, kiuj pensas, ke ili faros al ni agrablajn se ili forprenos ĉiun alian projekton krom la mia, aŭ ke ili faros al mi malagrablajn se ili akceptas ian alian projekton anstataŭ la mia. Mi estas tre malbona organizisto kaj mi prenis sur min la ellaboron de organizacia projekto *nur tial*, ĉar mi timis ke aliaj, pli lertaj personoj tion ĉi ne faros. Se pro foresto de alia pli bona projekto oni decidus akcepti mian, tiam mi tute ne deziras, ke oni ĝin akceptu blinde kaj senkritike; kontraŭe, ju pli oni kritikos kaj plibonigos mian projekton, des pli kontenta mi estos; mi deziras nur ke la kritikado estu ne negativa, sed pozitiva, t. e. ke la kritikantoj ne limigu sin per simpla sencela mallaŭdado, sed ke anstataŭ ĉio malbona ili proponu ion *pli bonan* precizan kaj facile akcepteblan per voĉdonado; tiam ni povos esperi ke la prijuĝado de la afero en la Kongreso donos al ni efektive ian bonan kaj fortikan organizacion esperantistan.

La ĉefa ideo de mia tuta regularo estas: « Ni devas havi Centran Komitato kiu estos elektata de la esperantistoj mem kaj tenos en siaj manoj la tutan sorton de nia afero ». Ĉiuj aliaj paragrafoj de mia Regularo estas nur provizoraj kaj tre facile povos esti ŝanĝitaj, elĵetitaj aŭ alplenigitaj per la decidoj de la Centra Komitato mem. Sekve kvankam mi mem konfesas ke mia proponata Regularo estas ne perfekta, tamen la esperantistoj tute ne devas timi, ke akceptante ĝin (se aliaj personoj ne proponas ion pli bonan) oni ricevos ian danĝeron: ĉar nia Regularo donas al la Centra Komitato *plenan liberecon*, tial ĉio, kio en mia Regularo montrigos nebona povos tre facile kaj en ĉiu tempo esti ŝanĝita, elĵetita aŭ alplenigita. Ĉiuj paragrafoj de mia Regularo, se ili en la nuna aŭ ia ŝanĝita formo estos akceptitaj de la Kongreso, devos nur servi kiel *provizora gvido* por la Centra Komitato ĝis tiu tempo, kiam la Komitato mem ellaboros al si gvidon kaj regularon pli bonan.

Mi estas konvinkita ke la Centra Komitato elektita inter la plej seriozaj, kompetentaj kaj sindonaj esperantistoj faros nenian facilaniman kaj ne sufiĉe pripensitan paŝon, kiu povus malutili al nia afero. Sed ĉar la komitatoj estos nur homoj kaj povos erari, tial por eviti ĉiun danĝeron, mi aranĝis la regularon tiamaniere ke super la decidoj de la Centra Komitato ekzistos ankoraŭ ĉiuj

Esperanto: 1905 La Revue de l'Esperanto  
1905-05-18 - Letter from Esperanto creator  
Zamenhof to Alfred Michaux, the President  
of the Boulogne Esperanto group.

ke tio ĉi tro malfruigas la publikigon de la projekto, kaj ĉar mi publikiga nur ne mian *decidon*, sed nur mian *intencon*, kiun mi ĝis la Kongreso povas ja ankoraŭ ŝanĝi, se la diritaj personoj montrons al mi iajn gravajn erarojn en mia projekto, tial mi decidis ne perdi nun tempon por tro longa korespondado kun *apartaj* personoj, rezervante al mi tamen la rajton fari ankoraŭ en mia projekto diversajn ŝanĝojn, se tio ĉi montrigos necesa

# Revisited

## The Question Of Practice — An International Language Is Possible

[The following is an excerpt from "International Language - Past, Present & Future" by W. J. Clark, 1907. It gives us a look at how the International Auxiliary Languages situation was when they were first introduced.]

The man who says a thing is impossible without troubling to find out whether it has been done is merely "talking through his hat," to use an Americanism, and we need not waste much time on him. Any one, who maintains that it is impossible to transact the ordinary business of life and write lucid treatises on scientific and other subjects in an artificial language, is simply in the position of the French engineer, who gave a full scientific demonstration of the fact that an engine could not possibly travel by steam.

The plain fact is that not only one artificial language, but several, already exist, which not only can express, but already have expressed all the ideas current in social intercourse, business, and serious exposition. It is only necessary to state the facts briefly.

First—*Volapük*.

Three congresses were held in all for the promotion of this language. The third (Paris, 1889) was the most important. It was attended by Volapükists from many

different nations, who carried on all their business in Volapük, and found no difficulty in understanding one another. Besides this, there were a great many newspapers published in Volapük, which treated of all kinds of subjects.

Secondly—*Idiom Neutral*, the lineal descendant of Volapük.

It is regulated by an international academy, which sends round circulars and does all its business in *Idiom Neutral*.

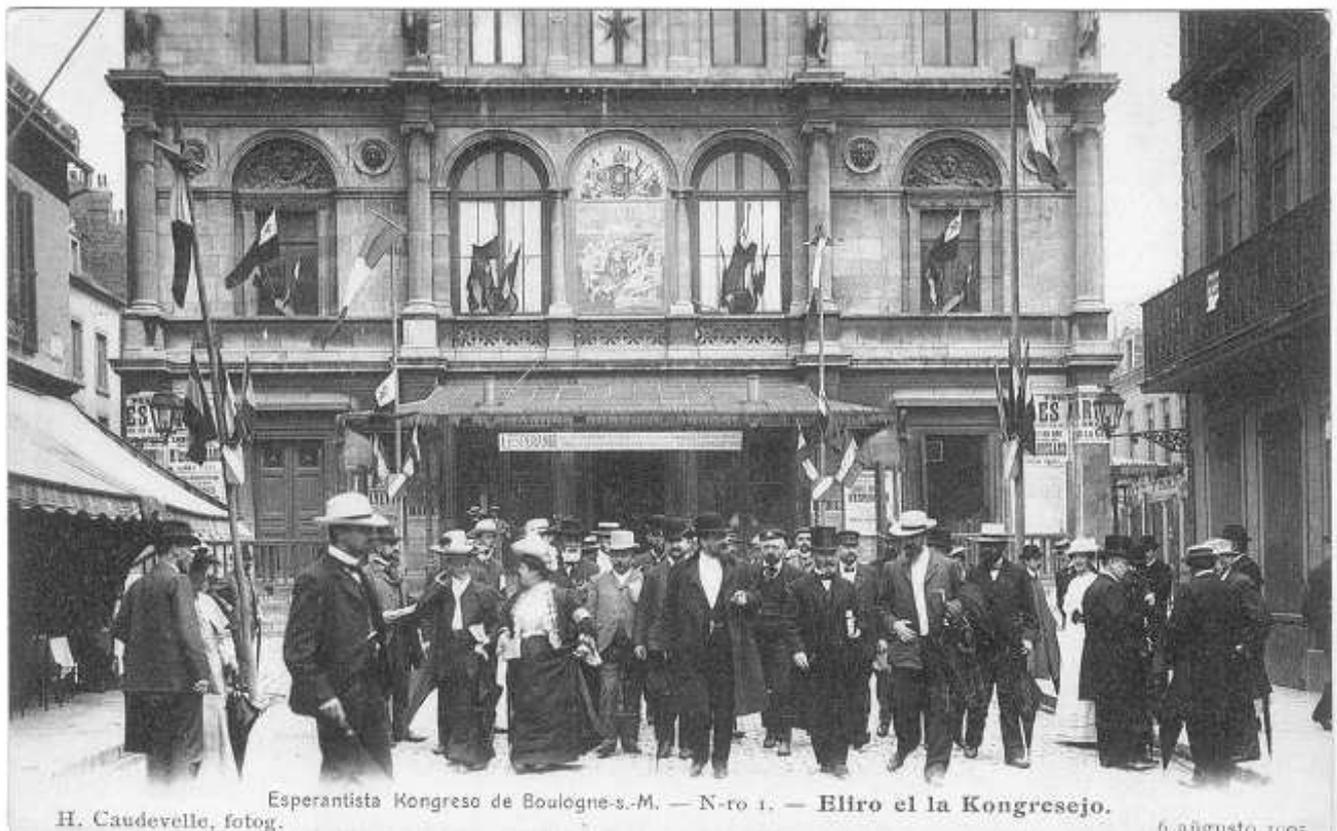
Thirdly—*Esperanto*.

Since the publication of the language in 1887 it has had a gradually increasing number of adherents, who have used it for all ordinary purposes of communication. A great number of newspapers and reviews of all kinds are now published regularly in Esperanto in a great variety of countries. I take up a chance number of the *Internacia Scienca Revuo*, which happens to be on my table, and find the following subjects among the contents of the month: "Rôle of living beings in the general physiology of the earth," "The

carnivorous animals of Sweden," "The part played by heredity in the etiology of chronic nephritis," "The migration of the lemmings," "Notices of books," "Notes and correspondence," etc. In fact, the Review has all the appearance of an ordinary scientific periodical, and the articles are as clearly expressed and as easy to read as those in any similar review in a national language.

Even more convincing perhaps, for the uninitiated, is the evidence afforded by the International Congresses of Esperantists. The first was held at Boulogne in August 1905. It marked an epoch in the lives of many of the participants, whose doubts as to the practical nature of an artificial language there, for good and all, yielded to the logic of facts; and it may well be that it will some day be rather an outstanding landmark in the history of civilization. A brief description will, therefore, not be out of place.

In the little seaport town on the north coast of France had come together men and women of more than twenty



The first World Esperanto Congress in Boulogne-sur-Mer—the exit of the convention hall, 6 August 1905.

different races. Some were experts, some were beginners; but all save a very few must have been alike in this, that they had learnt their Esperanto at home, and, as far as oral use went, had only been able to speak it (if at all) with members of their own national groups—that is, with compatriots who had acquired the language under the same conditions as to pronunciation, etc., as themselves. Experts and beginners, those who from practical experience knew the great possibilities of the new tongue as a written medium, no less than the neophytes and tentative experimenters

who had come to see whether the thing was worth taking seriously, they were now to make the decisive trial—in the one case to test the faith that was in them, in the other to set all doubt at rest in one sense or the other for good and all.

The town theatre had been generously placed at the disposal of the Congress, and the author of the language, Dr. Zamenhof, had left his eye-patients at Warsaw and come to preside at the coming out of his *kara lingvo*, now well on in her 'teens, and about to leave the academic seclusion of scholastic use and emerge into the larger

sphere of social and practical activity.

On Saturday evening, August 5, at eight o'clock, the Boulogne Theatre was packed with a cosmopolitan audience. The unique assembly was pervaded by an indefinable feeling of expectancy; as in the lull before the thunderstorm, there was the hush of excitement, the tense silence charged with the premonition of some vast force about to be let loose on the world. After a few preliminaries, there was a really dramatic moment when Dr. Zamenhof stood up for the first time to address his world-audience in the world-

*It was impressive to see people from half the countries of the world rise from different corners of the hall and contribute their share to the discussion in the most matter-of-fact way.*

tongue. Would they understand him? Was their hope about to be justified? or was it all a chimera, “such stuff as dreams are made on”?

“*Gesinjoroj*” (= Ladies and gentlemen)—the great audience craned forward like one man, straining eyes and ears towards the speaker,—“*Kun granda plezuro mi akceptis la proponon...*” The crowd drank in the words with an almost pathetic agony of anxiety. Gradually, as the clear-cut sentences poured forth in a continuous stream of perfect lucidity, and the audience realized that they were all listening to and all understanding a really international speech in a really international tongue—a tongue which secured to them, as here in Boulogne so throughout the world, full comprehension and a sense of comradeship and fellow-citizenship on equal terms with all users of it—the anxiety gave way to a scene of wild enthusiasm. Men shook hands with perfect strangers, and all cheered and cheered again. Zamenhof finished with a solemn declamation of one of his hymns (given as an appendix to this volume, with translation), embodying the lofty ideal which has inspired him all through and sustained him through the many difficulties he has had to face. When he came to the end, the fine passage beginning with the words, “*Ni inter popoloj la murojn detruos*” (“we shall throw down the walls between the peoples”), and ending “*amo kaj vero ekregos sur tero*”



Image on propaganda postcard for the 2nd World Congress of Esperanto.

(“love and truth shall begin their reign on earth”), the whole concourse rose to their feet with prolonged cries of “*Vivu Zamenhof!*”

No doubt this enthusiasm may sound rather forced and unreal to those who have not attended a congress, and the cheers may ring hollow across intervening time and space. Neither would it be good for this or any movement to rely upon facile enthusiasm, as easily damped as aroused. There is something far more than this in the international language movement.

At the same time, it is impossible for any one who has not tried it to realize the thrill—not a weak,

sentimental thrill, but a reasonable thrill, starting from objective fact and running down the marrow of things—given by the first real contact with an international language in an international setting. There really is a feeling as of a new power born into the world.

Those who were present at the Geneva Congress, 1906, will not soon forget the singing of the song “*La Espero*” at the solemn closing of the week’s proceedings. The organ rolled out the melody, and when the gathered thousands that thronged the floor of the hall and packed the galleries tier on tier to the ceiling took up the opening phrase—

En la mondon venis nova  
sento,  
Tra la mondo iras forta  
voko,

they meant every word of it. It was a fitting summary of the impressions left by the events of the week, and what the lips uttered must have been in the hearts and minds of all.

Into the world has come a  
new feeling,  
Through the world goes a  
mighty call.

As an ounce of personal experience is worth a pound of second-hand recital, a brief statement may here be given of the way in which the present writer came to take up Esperanto, and of the experiences which soon led him to the conviction of its absolute practicability and utility.

In October, 1905, having just returned from an absence of some years in Canada and the Far East, he had his attention turned to Esperanto for the first time by reading an account of the Congress of Boulogne. He had no previous knowledge of, or leanings towards, a universal language; and if he had thought about it at all, it was only to laugh at the idea as a wild and visionary scheme. In short, his attitude was quite normal.

But here was a definite statement, professing to be one of positive accomplished fact. One of two things: either the newspaper account was not true; or else, the facts being as represented, here

was a new possibility to be reckoned with. The only course was to send for the books and test the thing on its merits. Being somewhat

*The plain fact is that not only one artificial language, but several, already exist, which not only can express, but already have expressed all the ideas current in social intercourse, business, and serious exposition.*

used to languages, he did not take long to see that this one was good enough in itself. A letter, written in Esperanto, after a few days' study of the grammar at odd times, with a halfpenny Esperanto-English key enclosed, was fully understood by the addressee, though he was ignorant up till then of the very existence of Esperanto. This experience has often been since

repeated; indeed, the correspondent will often write back after a few days in Esperanto. Such letters have always been found intelligible, though in no case did the correspondent know Esperanto previously. The experiment is instructive and amusing, and can be tried by any one for an expenditure of twopence for keys and a few hours for studying the sixteen rules and their application. To many minds these are far simpler and more easy to grasp for practical use than the rules for scoring at bridge.

After a month or two's playing with the language in spare time, the writer further tested it, by sending out a flight of postcards to various selected Esperantists' addresses in different parts of the Russian Empire. The addressees ranged from St. Petersburg and Helsingfors through Poland to the Caucasus and to far Siberia.



Sign at the Esperanto Park in Pécs (Hungary), set on occasion of the 22nd International Youth Congress of Esperanto in 1966.



20th Colombian Congress of Esperanto, held between the 1st and 3rd of November 2014 in the city of Medellín.

In nearly every case answers were received, and in some instances the initial interchange of postcards led to an extremely interesting correspondence, throwing much light on the disturbed state of things in the native town or province of the correspondent. From a Tiflis doctor came a graphic account of the state of affairs in the Caucasus; while a school inspector from the depths of Eastern Siberia painted a vivid picture of the effect of political unrest on the schools—lockouts and “malodorous chemical obstructions” (*Anglice*—the schools were stunk out). Many writers expressed themselves with great freedom, but feared their letters would not pass the censor. Judging by the proportion of answers

received, the censorship was not at that time efficient. In no case was there any difficulty in grasping the writer’s meaning. All the answers were in Esperanto.

This was fairly convincing, but still having doubts on the question of pronunciation, the writer resolved to attend the Esperanto Congress to be held at Geneva in August 1906. To this end he continued to read Esperanto at odd minutes and took in an Esperanto gazette. About three weeks before the congress he got a member of his family to read aloud to him every day as far as possible a page or two of Esperanto, in order to attune his ear. He never had an opportunity of speaking the language before the congress, except once for a few

minutes, when he travelled some distance to attend a meeting of the nearest English group.

Thus equipped, he went through the Congress of Geneva, and found himself able to follow most of the proceedings, and to converse freely, though slowly, with people of the most diverse nationality. At an early sitting of the congress he found himself next to a Russian from Kischineff, who had been through the first great *pogrom*, and a most interesting conversation ensued. Another day the neighbours were an Indian nawab and an abbé from Madrid. Another time it was a Bulgarian. At the first official banquet he sat next to a Finn, who rejoiced in the name of Attila, and, but for the civilizing influence of a

universal language, might have been in the sunny south, like his namesake of the ancient world, on a very different errand from his present peaceful one. Yet here he was, rubbing elbows with Italians, as if there had never been such things as Huns or a sack of Rome by northern barbarians.

During the meal a Frenchman, finding himself near us English and some Germans, proposed a toast to the “entente cordiale taking in Germany,” which was honoured with great enthusiasm. This is merely an instance of the small ways in which such gatherings make for peace and good will.

With all these people it was perfectly easy to converse in the common tongue, pronunciation and national idiom being no bar in practice.

And this experience was general throughout the duration of the congress. Day by day sittings were held for the transaction of all kinds of business and the discussion of the most varied subjects. It was impressive to see people from half the countries of the world rise from different corners of the hall and contribute their share to the discussion in the most matter-of-fact way. Day by day the congressists met in social functions, debates, lectures, and sectional groups (chemical, medical, legal, etc.) for the regulation of matters touching their special interests. Everything was done in Esperanto, and never was there the slightest hitch or misunderstanding, or failure to give adequate



Alfred Michaux and Zamenhof in postcard published approximately 1906 with fake autograph.

expression to opinions owing to defects of language. The language difficulty was annihilated.

Perhaps one of the most striking demonstrations of this return to pre-Babel conditions was the performance of a three-part comedy by a Frenchman, a Russian, and a Spaniard. Such a thing would inevitably

have been grotesque in any national language; but here they met on common neutral ground. No one's accent was “foreign,” and none of the spectators possessed that mother-tongue acquaintance with Esperanto that would lead them to feel slight divergences shocking, or even noticeable without extreme attention to the point. Other

theatrical performances were given at Geneva, as also at Boulogne, where a play of Molière was performed in Esperanto by actors of eight nationalities with one rehearsal, and with full success.

In the face of these facts it is idle to oppose a universal artificial language on the score of impossibility or inadequacy. The theoretical pronunciation difficulty completely crumbled away before the test of practice.

The “war-at-any-price party,” the whole-hoggers à tous crins (the juxtaposition of the two national idioms lends a certain realism, and heightens the effect of each), are therefore driven back on their second line of attack, if the Hibernianism may be excused. “Yes,” they say, “your language may be possible, but, after all, why



A 25 Steloj Coin  
Esperantis Currency - 1965

not learn an existing language, if you've got to learn one anyway?"

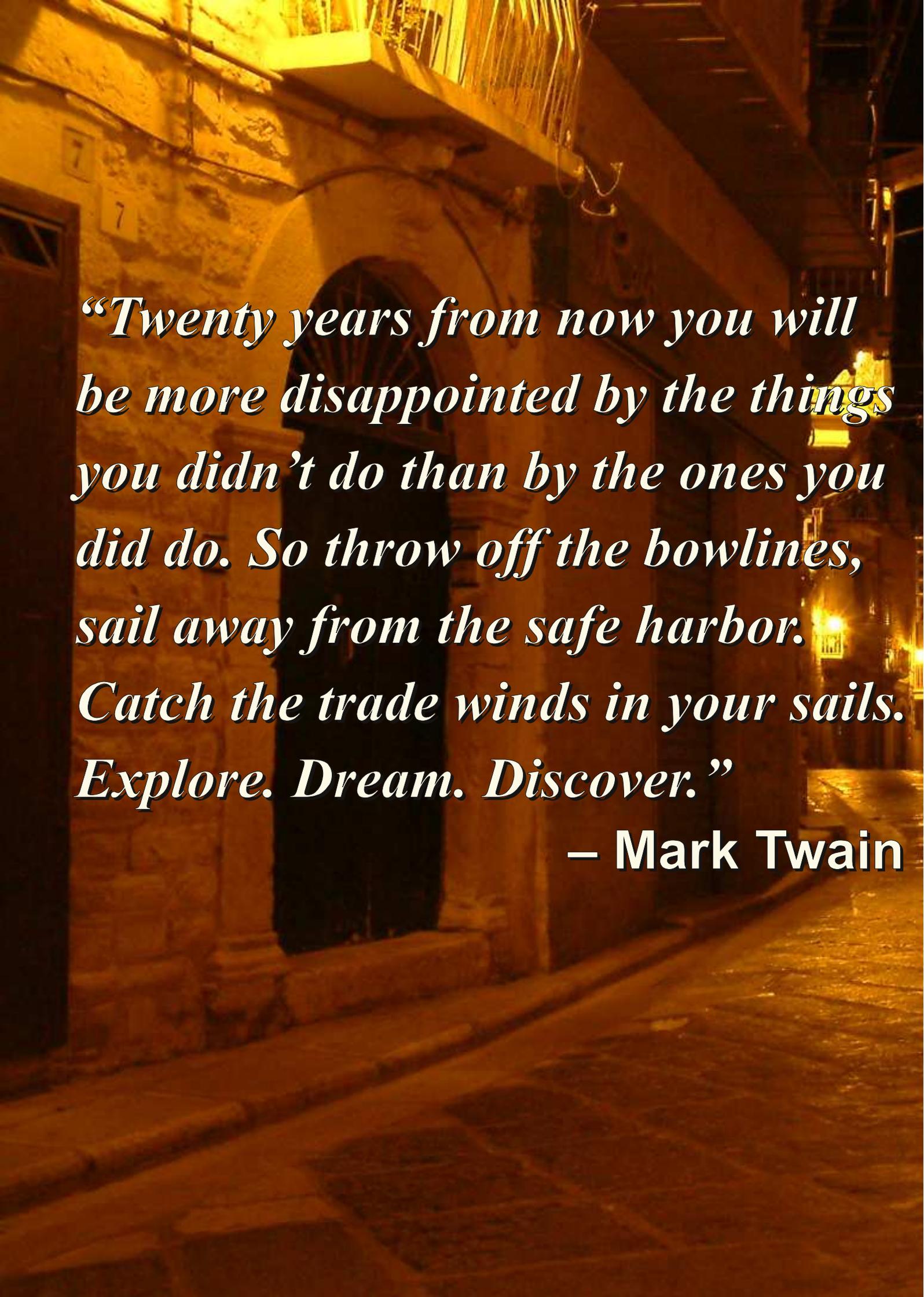
Now, quite apart from the obvious fact that the nations will never agree to give the preference to the language of one of them to the prejudice

of the others, this argument involves the suggestion that an artificial language is no easier to learn than a natural one. We thus come to the question of ease as a qualification. **PT**

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*“Twenty years from now you will be more disappointed by the things you didn’t do than by the ones you did do. So throw off the bowlines, sail away from the safe harbor. Catch the trade winds in your sails. Explore. Dream. Discover.”*

**– Mark Twain**



Italia

# At the Cinema

## Chinese Puzzle



### Chinese Puzzle

R -117 min

Comedy / Drama / Romance

16 May 2014 (USA)

Country: France / USA / Belgium

Language: French / English / Spanish / Chinese / Yiddish

*This third film finds Xavier and Wendy, married and living in France with two kids, at the end of their marriage.*

The film *Chinese Puzzle* is the third film in a romance comedy trilogy. The first was *L'auberge Espagnole*, which is one of my favourite films [reviewed in Parrot Time #1], in which we meet our main character, a Frenchman named Xavier, and follow his life for a year as he studies in Barcelona. The second film, *Russian Dolls*, sees Xavier a few years later, meeting up with some of his old friends and finding romance with Wendy, an English woman he met in the first film.

This third film finds Xavier and Wendy, married and living in France with two kids, at the end of their marriage. They have “fallen out of love”, as Xavier narrates. Wendy has announced that she has met someone in New York, and moves there to be with her new man, taking their kids with them.

This devastates Xavier’s world. While he accepts the marriage is over, he doesn’t want to lose contact with his kids, so he moves to New York as well. There, he moves in with his Belgian lesbian friend, Isabelle, who is now living in New York, and her partner, Chinese woman Ju.

Xavier finds several obstacles he must overcome in order to keep seeing his kids. Just to get visitation rights, he needs to hire a lawyer, which is ex-

pensive. Without a work permit, he must find a job that pays “under the table”. With just a visa, he cannot remain in New York for more than a few months.

He takes care of the job issue by becoming a bicycle courier, a position introduced to him by black New York native and divorced father, Ray. He gets around the immigrant status by marrying a Chinese naturalized citizen, Nancy.

While all this occurs, he is also reunited with his childhood sweetheart from France, Martine, who is also single now, raising two kids, and happens to be doing some business in New York.

Like the previous films, there isn’t a plot or storyline so much as view of scenes over the course of a time period, showing how life is for these characters.

From a language point of view,



Xavier getting married to Nancy to stay in the US. In front are his kids.

this film offers a few things. First is the number of languages being used in the film, as in the previous two. Xavier narrates in French, but there is interaction with various characters in French, English, Chinese, and even Spanish and Yiddish.

Two scenes also are wonderful bits of language fun. First is during a business meeting between Martine and the directors of a tea company with which she does business. Xavier is there with her, for moral support, but is completely stunned when Martine starts speaking fluent Chinese. She asks them to stop using pesticides to grow their tea, mainly because organically grown products are more in demand.

After she speaks, the head man replies to her, in Chinese, that the Chinese people have been growing tea for 4000 years, and that she, a foreigner, has no right to tell them how to grow their tea. If they don't use pesticides, they will get fewer crops.

Martine is stunned by the response and rebuke and pauses briefly. Then she begins speaking again, but this time, her Chinese has a very different, drawn out, tone, while her expression is almost comical.

She is reciting a famous Chinese poem, "Climbing Stork Tower", which is recited in a lyrical way. The poem is about putting in an effort to achieve a greater goal, and so she is telling the company that they must change their ways to get better sales. The room is stunned not only by her ability with Chinese, but also by her understanding of both Chinese culture and literature.

The other scene occurs when Xavier is applying for the job as courier. A Spanish guy, Miguel, is very upset that they are hiring him, protesting that he is a foreigner.

Jefe, the Mexican boss, gets angry at this and



Xavier sitting with his three women: Isabelle, Wendy, and Martine.

bursts out, "I'm a foreigner. You're a foreigner." He gestures to the Chinese man in the room behind him, "He's a foreigner". Then he addresses the room, "Who in here isn't a foreigner?"

Ray chimes up with "Whoa, whoa. I'm not a foreigner. I'm an American."

Miguel isn't satisfied, and swears about Xavier in Spanish. Xavier responds by swearing back in Spanish. Stunned, Miguel asks if he can speak Spanish. After that, there is no more problem. When someone speaks your language, they are no longer a foreigner.

To be honest, I was disappointed by this film. I don't think it had to do with the film itself, but rather with two of the main characters. I found their actions so wrong that I became angry.

First is Wendy. In the first film, she was the sweet English girl who was trying to help everyone get along as well as keep their shared flat clean. However, she was also cheating on her English boyfriend with an American tourist, an action the entire group of roommates help her cover up in one of the funniest scenes of the film. In *Russian Dolls*, she is having problems with an abusive boy-



Xavier and Martine at a business meeting with a tea company in New York.



Martine and Xavier looking out over New York with their four kids.

friend, so her character is more sympathetic. In *Chinese Puzzle*, however, she is completely selfish, arrogant and just plain nasty. She is the one that has thrown away their marriage, dragged them all to New York and essentially destroyed Xavier's life, yet she acts to him and her new boyfriend, John, like she is some kind of victim, even getting upset with John when he tries to point out Xavier's side. John actually treats Xavier far better than Wendy.

The second problem is Isabelle. Now Isabelle is pregnant, after getting Xavier to donate sperm, because she and Ju want to have a baby. Ju is very considerate, not complaining when Xavier lives with them for a while. She also aids Xavier by giving him her old flat and she also helps him and Nancy fool the immigration official during a random check to see if they are truly married. Yet Isabelle cheats on Ju by having a sexual affair with the babysitter they hire. There isn't a problem between Isabelle and Ju; Isabelle is just that kind of person.

Even the peripheral characters - Ju, Nancy,

Ray, and John - are better people than the two people who have got so much out of Xavier and claim to be his friends. I can't help wondering if that might have been one of the underlying themes of the film: that strangers can be better than people we have known for years.

Actually, of the three long-time female friends of Xavier, Martine turns out to be the best. This is odd, considering that in the previous films, she was such an immature, whining, selfish woman (greatly reminding me of my Italian ex-girlfriend). Now, she is a successful business woman, raising two children alone. She also helps Xavier a lot with dealing with things while she is in New York. I hated her in the previous film, but in this one, she is the one that shines.

Many people claim this film is the finest of the three, and you don't need to have seen the previous ones to enjoy this one. If you could only watch one of the three, though, I would still suggest *L'auberge Espagnole*. **PT**



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# Celebrations

# Fastelavn

**F**astelavn is a very old traditional Danish celebration. In early days, Fastelavn was the beginning of a time of fasting to prepare oneself for Lent by eating very little. Fastelavn was also a time to have a lot of fun: playing games, dressing up and partying. Now, most people no longer fast on Fastelavn. However, children still wear costumes and play the traditional Fastelavn games. One is "knocking the cat out of the barrel" game. In



medieval times, this game was taken very seriously, and involved placing a live cat in a barrel. The barrel was then beaten with sticks until it broke and the cat escaped. The cat was then chased out of the town, and it was believed that it would take the collective bad luck and evil spirits of the town with it.

Now, fortunately for cats, the game is symbolic and no longer includes any live animals. Instead, a barrel (usually with a drawing of a black cat on it) is filled with candy and hung from a ceiling or a tree. Children then take turns hitting it with a wooden stick or club until the barrel finally breaks. The child that makes the barrel finally break (hence, "knocking the cat out of the barrel") is then crowned "The King (or Queen) of Cats" and is given a golden paper crown.

One of the popular Fastelavn treats is a special bun that is covered with icing. This is also incorporated in the tradition by ways of the children singing a song "demanding" the buns from their neighbours and "threatening" to make trouble if they don't get any. They also collect candy or money, which is similar to the American Halloween. **PT**



# ITCHY FEET

A travel & language comic by Malachi Ray Rempen



ITCHY FEET is a weekly comic about travel, life in foreign countries, and learning new languages. Readers can expect an astonishing array of exaggerated facial expressions, humorous situations involving foreigners and foreign lands, and ordinary silliness.

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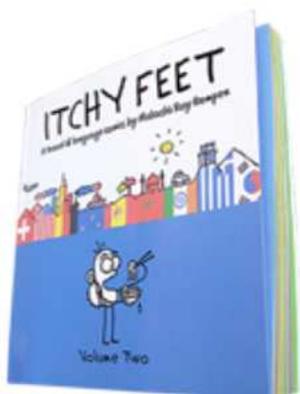
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Front of a shop in France, showing a variety of cheese in shrink wrap.



La cave du fromager  
VALENCAY AOP  
LACTO OUI DE CHEVRE  
PIECE  
5€83

EN PROMO  
Sainte Marie  
de Tourne AOC  
1kg  
3€90

La cave du fromager  
LE CHEVROY 2006  
FROMAGE FINE LACTO OUI DE CHEVRE  
PIECE  
5€24

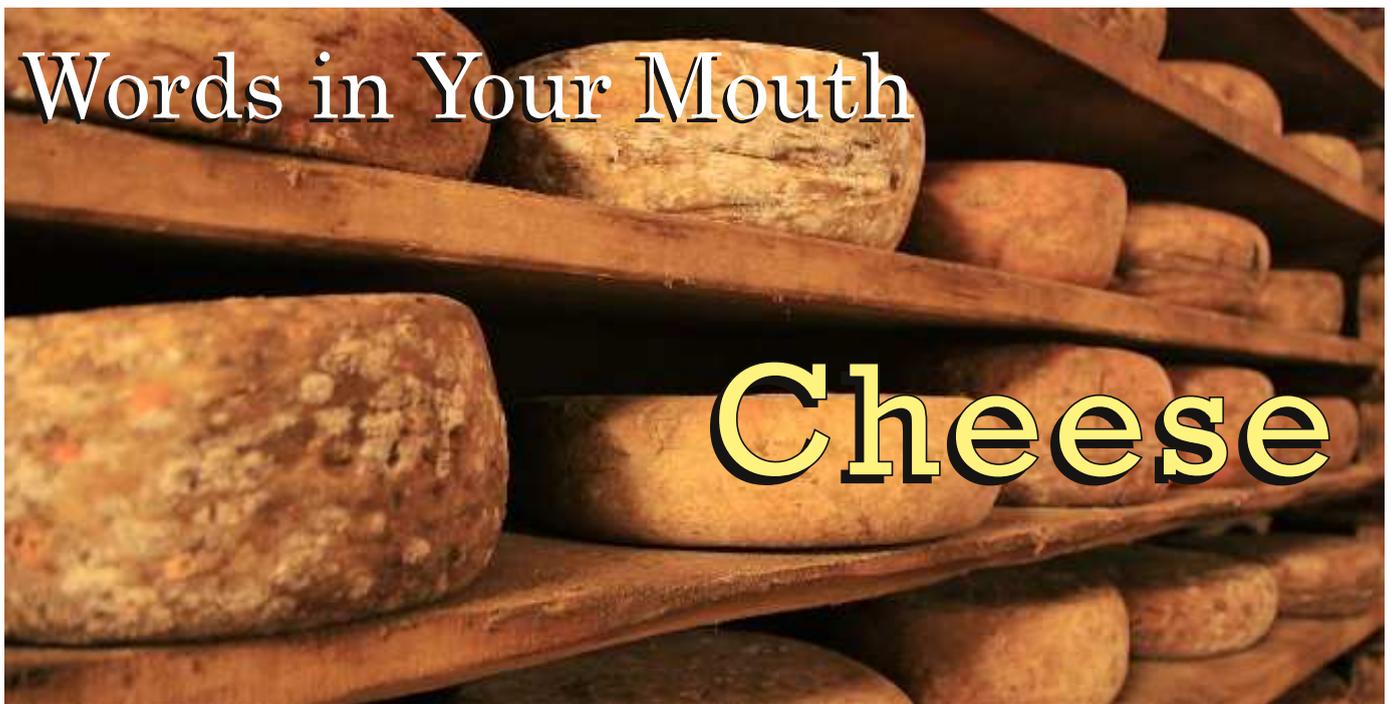
La cave du fromager  
POULIGNY ST  
PIERRE  
AOC  
LACTO OUI DE CHEVRE  
PIECE  
6€43

FROMAGE ROULE  
AUX PINES HERBES  
1kg  
11€

FROMAGE de TROY  
Liberté  
70% fromage  
30% matières  
grasses

FROMAGE FONDU  
NOIX ET NOISETTES  
1kg  
11€

Envies fraîches  
FOURRE NOIX  
1kg  
11€



Topping this month's article off with a slice of cheese.

So far, we have discussed some basic foods that are common to most cultures: sausage, bread, and milk. This time we are looking at another one, cheese, which has the distinctive feature of being not only a basic food, but also one which we add to other foods.

For example, what do you add to your pasta dish to make it tastier? Some grated cheese, of course. What do you add to your hamburgers and other sandwiches for more flavour? Cheese again! And when you are enjoying a snack in the afternoon of wine and crackers, what tops it all off? Cheese!

While cheese is quite appealing to our palates, the description of how it is made may not be. The Encyclopedia Britannica describes it as:

*“When milk sours, it forms*

*both a protein-rich gel, or curd, and a lactose-rich fluid, or whey. Coagulation is often facilitated by adding rennin, an enzyme that acts on the milk's chief protein, casein. The resulting curd is then cut or broken to release most of the whey. Ripening and curing are affected by moisture content, acidity, presence of micro-organisms, and other factors. Products vary accord-*

*ing to fat content of the milk, heating or pasteurization, and addition of enzymes or cultures of bacteria, molds, or yeasts.”*

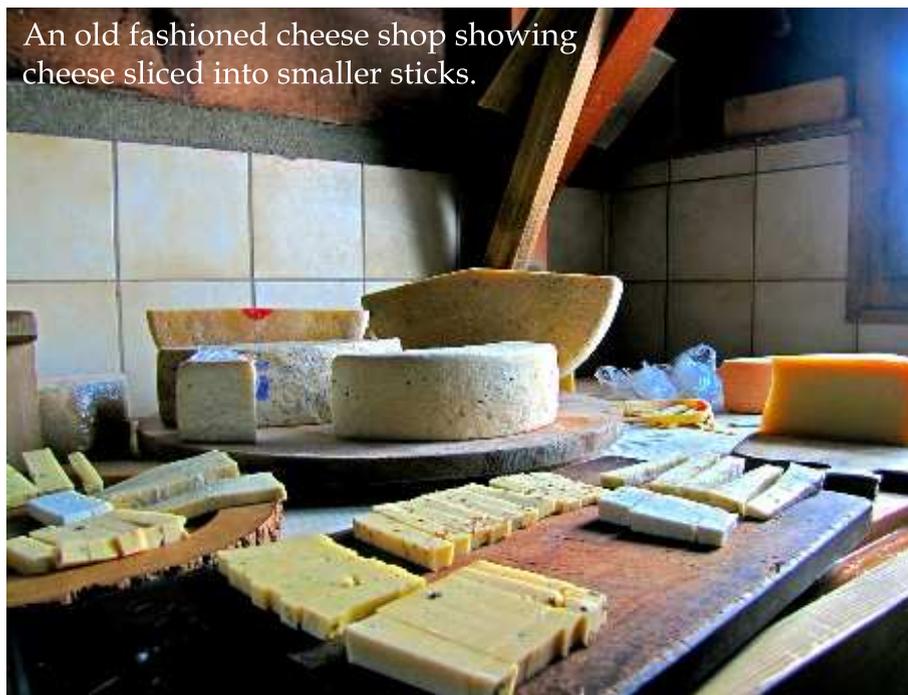
See? Bacteria in coagulated sour milk. Yum! Just be glad I never went into the details about how sausages are made.

The etymology for cheese is rather odd. Normally, we



A counter of a cheese market with several types of cheese on display.

An old fashioned cheese shop showing cheese sliced into smaller sticks.



have found a clear-cut division of where the words originated from, with the Italic language words coming from Latin and Germanic words coming from Latin or Old English. This time, however, it seems to be a jumble of borrowing and changing the words in a seemingly random order.

The basic English “cheese” is taken from the Old West Germanic “kasjus,” which in turn got it from the Latin “caseus.” The Latin was probably obtained from the Proto-Indo-European [PIE] “kwat,” meaning “to ferment, become sour.” You can see how the other West Germanic languages are similar: Dutch (*kaas*), German (*Käse*), and Yiddish (*kez*). The Latin root also provides the Spanish (*queso*) and Portuguese (*queijo*).

Now, this is where it gets odd, as I mentioned. The Italian and French dialects do NOT take their words directly from the Latin root, as did the

Spanish, but instead seem to take it from a Latin phrase “formaticus caseus” or “shaped cheese.” Latin “formaticum” means “shape,” so by a meaning transfer from cheese to the definition of it, the French got “formage,” which later became “fromage.” From this, other Italic languages got their words: Italian (*formaggio*), Catalan

(*formatge*), and Wallon (*froumadje*). While these cover most of the Italic languages’ words, Romanian’s “brânză” is still a mystery.

While the Latin “caseus” may have come from the Proto-Indo-European word meaning “to become sour,” there was another PIE word for simply “sour,” which was “syr” or “sir,” referring to the milk used in the making of the cheese. This was adopted by the Slavic languages as their base: Polish (*ser*), Russian (*сыр [syr]*), Serbian (*cup [sir]*), Slovenian (*sir*). It seems the Baltic languages also took their words from this base: Latvian (*siers*), Lithuanian (*sūris*), Sudovian (*sūris*), and Prussian (*suris*).

Now, this is largely a guess on my part, but it would appear that the Northern Germanic languages also adopted the “syr/sir” base, with their own adaptation. First, a “t” was added, giving a more palatalised sound. I am not familiar enough with

A plate of cheeses: Raclette, Gouda, and Emmental.



linguistical transformations to explain the attaching of the “o”, however. If this is what happened, it would explain the North Germanic words like Danish (*ost*) and Faeroese (*ostur*).

Japanese “チーズ” [CHI-I-ZU] comes directly from the English “cheese,” as the Korean “치즈” [chijeu] is also likely to be. The Japanese also have another word, “乾酪 [kanraku],” but I am told it’s not commonly used in the modern language. The first character, 乾, means “dry, cured,” and the second character, 酪, means “dairy product, whey.”

## Cheese Types

For most of the varieties, the names of cheeses stem from where they are made. Roquefort is from a village in the southwest of France. Stilton and Cheddar are from places in England. Parmesan, Romano, and Gorgonzola are from Italy (Parma, Rome, and Gorgonzola, respectively). Gruyère is a Swiss town, and I assume you know where “Swiss cheese” comes from. Gouda and Edam are towns in Holland. Limburger is from Limburg, a province in north-east Belgium. Muenster is from Münster, a mountain valley in Alsace. Neufchatel, a type of soft, white cheese, is from Neufchâtel, which is a small town in Normandy.

## Slang

When someone is having his or her picture taken, he or she is often told to say “cheese.” Perhaps this is because saying it causes your mouth to form into a smile and your teeth to be exposed.

Or perhaps it relates to another slang term, “cheesecake,” which is used to describe a sexy young woman, as in “Wow! Look at that cheesecake!” Another cheese reference to young women is “make cheeses.” This was when a schoolgirl would spin around rapidly so her petticoats blew out in a circle, then she would drop down quickly, causing the skirt to rest while inflated, resembling a wheel of cheese.

A person in charge is sometimes called “the Big Cheese.” When something is

very poorly done, we say it is “cheesy.” And of course we have a vulgar usage, “cut the cheese,” which refers to flatulence.

## Conclusion

I am sure it isn’t just my conclusion that cheese, however you call it, is delicious. I just hope I haven’t soured you on it with the details. As always, let me know your thoughts on the subject. Recipes including cheese are also welcome! **PT**



Someone preparing a pot of fondue, which is a traditional cheese dip.

### Other pictures related to cheese

**From top-left, clockwise:** Wheels of cheese in a shop; Cheese sticks in a snack bar in knabberzeug; Wheel of St Pat cheese, sliced open; Wheels of Edam cheese being carried to the cheese market in the traditional manner; Cheese pizza; Cheese cake.



**GERMANIC**

*Western*

<b>Afrikaans:</b>	kaas melk
<b>Dutch:</b>	kaas
<b>English:</b>	cheese
<b>Flemish:</b>	kaas
<b>Frisian:</b>	tsiis
<b>German:</b>	Käse
<b>Luxembourgish:</b>	Kéis
<b>Yiddish:</b>	קעז [kez]
<b>Swiss German:</b>	Chäs
<b>Ancient high german:</b>	sur - sour

*Northern*

<b>Danish:</b>	ost
<b>Faeroese:</b>	ostur
<b>Icelandic:</b>	ostur
<b>Norwegian:</b>	ost
<b>Swedish:</b>	ost
<b>Ancient islandic:</b>	surr - sour, ferment, mold / syr - sour milk

**SLAVIC**

*Western*

<b>Czech:</b>	sýr
<b>Polish:</b>	ser
<b>Eastern Belorussian:</b>	сыр [syr]
<b>Russian:</b>	сыр [syr]
<b>Ukrainian:</b>	сир [sir]

*Southern*

<b>Bulgarian:</b>	сирене [sirene] / кашкавал [kaškaval]
<b>Croatian:</b>	sir
<b>Macedonian:</b>	сирење [sirenje]
<b>Serbian:</b>	сир [sir]
<b>Slovenian:</b>	sir

**ITALIAN DIALECTS**

<b>Bergamo:</b>	formài
<b>Bologna:</b>	furmài
<b>Brescia:</b>	fúrmaj
<b>Calabria:</b>	casu / formaggiu
<b>Ferrarese:</b>	maggiu
<b>Standard Italian:</b>	formaggio / cacio
<b>Trieste:</b>	formaio
<b>Venezia:</b>	formaio
<b>Viestano:</b>	furmagg'
<b>Zeneize:</b>	formaggio

**OTHER ROMANCE**

<b>Asturian:</b>	quesu
<b>Catalan:</b>	formatge
<b>French:</b>	fromage
<b>Galician:</b>	queixo
<b>Latin:</b>	caseus
<b>Leonese:</b>	queixu
<b>Occitan:</b>	fromatge
<b>Portuguese:</b>	queijo
<b>Romanian:</b>	brânză
<b>Romansh:</b>	chaschiel
<b>Spanish:</b>	queso
<b>Judeo-Spanish:</b>	ceso / kezo / queso
<b>Valencian:</b>	formage
<b>Wallon:</b>	froumadje

**ALBANIAN**

<b>Albanian:</b>	djathë
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**GREEK**

<b>Modern Greek:</b>	τυρί [tyrí]
<b>Ancient Greek:</b>	τυρός [tyros]

**ALTAIC**

<b>Korean:</b>	얼크
<b>Mongolian:</b>	бяслaг [bjaslag] / хурууд [huruud]

**TURKIC**

<b>Azeri (Latin Script):</b>	pendir
<b>Turkish:</b>	peynir
<b>Turkmen:</b>	peýnir

**INDEPENDENT**

<b>Basque:</b>	gazta
<b>Japanese:</b>	チーズ

**CELTIC**

<b>Goidelic Irish:</b>	cáis
<b>Scots Gaelic:</b>	càise
<b>Brythonic Breton:</b>	fourmaj / fourmaj-laezh / keuz
<b>Welsh:</b>	caws

## FINNO-UGRIC

Estonian:	juust
Finnish:	juusto
Hungarian:	sajt
Saami:	vuostá

## CAUCASIAN

Chechen:	nekhcha
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## MALAYO-POLYNESIAN

Bicolano:	keso / queso
Cebuano:	keso / queso
Chavacano:	quezo
Filipino:	keso / quezo / queso / cheese / chis
Hawaiian:	waiūpakapa'a
Indonesian:	keju
Malagasy:	fromàzy
Malay:	keju
Maori:	tiihi
Rapa Nui:	pata
Samoan:	sisi
Tetun:	keiju
Tongan:	siisi

## MESO-PHILIPPINE

Tagalog:	keso
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## SEMITIC

Arabic:	جُبْن
Hebrew:	גבינה
Maltese:	gobon

## SINO-TIBETAN

Chinese:	奶酪 [nǎi lào]
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## BALTIC

Latvian:	siers
Lithuanian:	sūris
Sudovian:	sūris
Prussian:	suris

## KADAI

Thai:	เนยแข็ง
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## INDO-IRANIAN

Hindi:	चीज़
Kurdish Kurmanji:	penîr
Kurdish Sorani:	په نیر

## NIGER-KHORDOFANIAN

Shona:	chizi
Swahili:	jibini

## ANDEAN-EQUATORIAL

Quechua (Peruvian):	llap'inqa / masara
Quechua (Ecuador):	makinchu

## TUPI

Guarani:	kesú
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## OTHER INDO-EUROPEAN

Farsi:	پنیر
Sanskrit:	दधिजि
Urdu:	پنیر

## INDIAN LANGUAGES

Gujarati:	ચીઝ
Konkani:	चीजी
Punjabi:	ਖੀਰ

## OTHER

Bengali:	পনির
Dzoratâi:	fremâdzo / toma
Ladino:	ãiajó
Maasai:	eng'orno naibor
Mokshan:	michkae

## CONSTRUCTED LANGUAGES

Esperanto:	fromaĝo
Interlingua:	caseo
Lingua Franca Nova:	ceso

# Language Boat

immersion language learning

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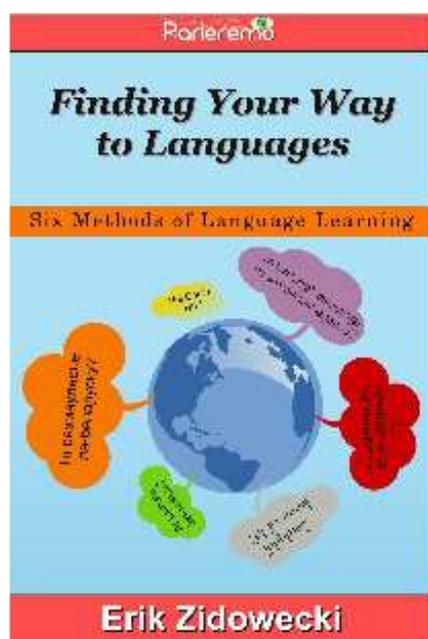


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This book won't teach you any secrets, any overnight paths to fluency. What it will give you is a solid understanding of what the strengths and weaknesses are of each approach, allowing you, the reader, to find your own way to languages.

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# Where Are You?

This bustling city is not only the largest in its country, it is also the largest in the world, a fact which should already tell you which it is. It is no surprise then that it is a global financial centre and transport hub and is located at the mouth of a major river on the coast.

While it has been a major shipping and trading town for centuries, it only became a major player on the European stage in the 19th century. It started out as a meagre fishing village, under the ever changing rule of kingdoms as they fought and conquered each other. It became a town in 1074, and became more fortified when a second sea wall was built to help maintain its ocean coastline in 1172, where before had been only a dyke.

In 1554, it had its first city wall built to protect it from pirates. It also had its first major City God Temple build in 1602, which reflect the city's economic importance.

Today, it is a popular tourist destination, with several historical landmarks, both ancient and modern and is a "showpiece" of a booming economy of its country.

**Can you name this location and country?**

**Last month's answer: Rock of Cashel, Cashel, County Tipperary, Ireland**



# Book Look

## The Power of Babel - A Natural History of Language

by John McWhorter

Language: English

Item Rating: ★★★★★

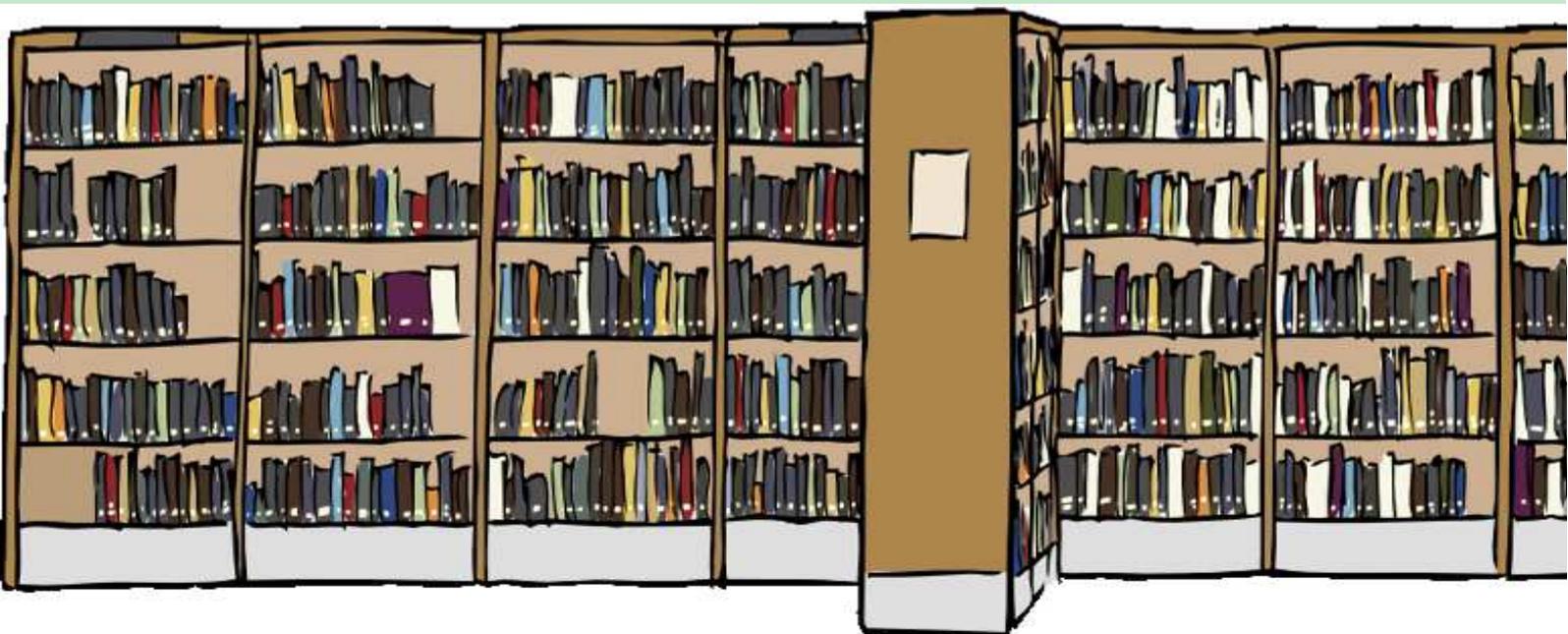
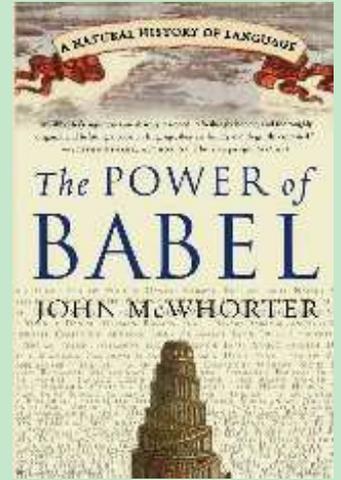
ISBN-10: 006052085X - ISBN-13: 978-0060520854

Language learners are often also interested in alphabets, like an alphabet's history and usage. But how did writing itself come into being? "A History of Writing" digs into this mystery, and begins with the basic methods of encoding language into the physical world. Some of the methods discussed here are knots, notches, and pictography. The history continues on to talk in-depth about the way that cuneiform arose from those earlier methods and expanded into the numerous hieroglyphic systems, then later into the more formalized "alphabets".

The book goes into great detail about the modern alphabets, focusing not only on the basic history of each, but also into the finer points of how and why things were created in the way they were. The future of writing is also discussed, pointing out the qualities that dictate whether a writing system succeeds or fails.

"A History of Writing" isn't a simple reference book for those that want to study a specific alphabet or syllabary, although it is very thorough in its explanations. It looks at the evolution of writing not as a series of unrelated systems but rather as a vivid painting that has been created over time by many brushes and colors and layers.

The writing style of the book itself is straightforward; it neither talks down to the reader, nor attempts to lecture them. It manages to be entertaining as well, without resorting to pop culture references or clever anecdotes. Perhaps this is due to its British heritage. It is one in a series of books called "Globalities". This series is designed to "reinterpret world history in a concise yet thoughtful way". "A History of Writing" manages to do exactly that. **PT**



## A History of Writing

by Steven Roger Fischer

Language: English

Item Rating: ★★★★★

ISBN-10: 1861891016 - ISBN-13: 978-1861891013

When opening a book about languages, I tend to immediately put them into one of two categories: a reference guide or a general overview. "The Power of Babel" falls into the latter of these categories. It is not about any particular language, nor is it a straightforward "history" as the title suggests.

History books normally are full of dates and events which have a generally universal acceptance as truth. This is not as possible with languages, since they change slowly over long expanses of time in subtle ways. Only a few events in language history can truly be dated, like the discovery of the Rosetta Stone.

Nor can theories of language change truly be proven, since we can only observe what has happened and attempt to trace the reasons.

This is the realm in which "Power of Babel" lives. The book looks at the many ways in which languages have developed over time and the probable causes for those changes. In fact, the author argues that no real "languages" exist, but rather just "dominant dialects" of several related dialects.

The book is extremely well written, and it is quickly noticeable the scope of linguistic knowledge that the author draws from in the discussions.

However, as I mentioned at the beginning, this isn't a reference book. It is more of a free flowing walk through language theories, discussions, and concepts.

McWhorter writes for the layperson. The book is very easy to read, although sometimes it does get a little bogged down into pop cultural references which may not make sense to all readers. Another aspect which may disturb some readers is how the book can be very abstract at some points, then shift into very detailed analysis at others. It's almost as if the author is struggling to keep the book on one level, then unknowingly changing to another.

"The Power of Babel" makes for excellent reading, and I would suggest it for anyone that truly has an interest in languages and linguistics as a whole. **PT**



## Credits

### Letter From the Editor

**Writer:** Erik Zidowecki  
**Images:** paulgeor: 13 pool ball

### Chatting in Languages Online - Text Chats

**Writer:** Erik Zidowecki  
**Images:** Petey: Keyboard (title); typing hands; laptops and coffee; troll; gummy bears; typing on laptop; shadowy lurker

### Why Do People Learn Languages?

**Writer:** Erik Zidowecki  
**Images:** Petey: Open book (title); Children outside school; Couple overlooking city; Girls reading; Knowledge is Power chalkboard

### The Question Of Practice — An International Language Is Possible

**Writer:** Erik Zidowecki  
**Images:** brionv: Esperanto flag flying  
nekonata: Propaganda Postcard  
Melissa Gallo from Pittsburgh, PA, USA: Sign at Esperanto Park  
Ivan Camilo Quintero Santacruz: 20th Colombian Congress of Esperanto  
Petey: Esperanto Letter (splash page); First World Esperanto Congress; Alfred Michaux and Zamenhof postcard; Steloj Coin

**Sources:**  
• "International Language - Past, Present & Future" W. J. Clark. London - J. M. Dent & Company. 1907

### At The Cinema - Chinese Puzzle

**Writer:** Erik Zidowecki  
**Sources:**  
• "Chinese Puzzle" Internet Movie Database <<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1937118/>>  
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## Live Five A Day



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[livefiveaday.com](http://livefiveaday.com)

**Celebrations - Fastelavn****Writer:** Sonja Krüger**Images:**

Tomasz Sienicki: Fastelavnsboller

Petey: Denmark skyline; Children hitting cat box

**Sources:**• "Fastelavn" Wikipedia <<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fastelavn>>• "Fastelavn – The Danish Carnival" LexioPhiles <<http://www.lexiophiles.com/english/fastelavn-the-danish-carnival>>**Words in Your Mouth - Cheese****Writer:** Erik Zidowecki**Images:**

Petey: Shop in France (splash); Shelves of hard cheese wheels (title); Counter in cheese market; Old fashioned cheese shop; Plate of cheeses; Pot of fondue; Wheels of cheese in a shop; Cheese sticks in a snack bar in knabberzeug; Wheel of St Pat cheese, sliced open; Wheels of Edam cheese being carried to the cheese market in the traditional manner; Cheese pizza; Cheese cake

**Where Are You?****Writer:** Sonja Krüger**Images:**

Petey: Mystery image

**Book Look****Writer:** Erik Zidowecki

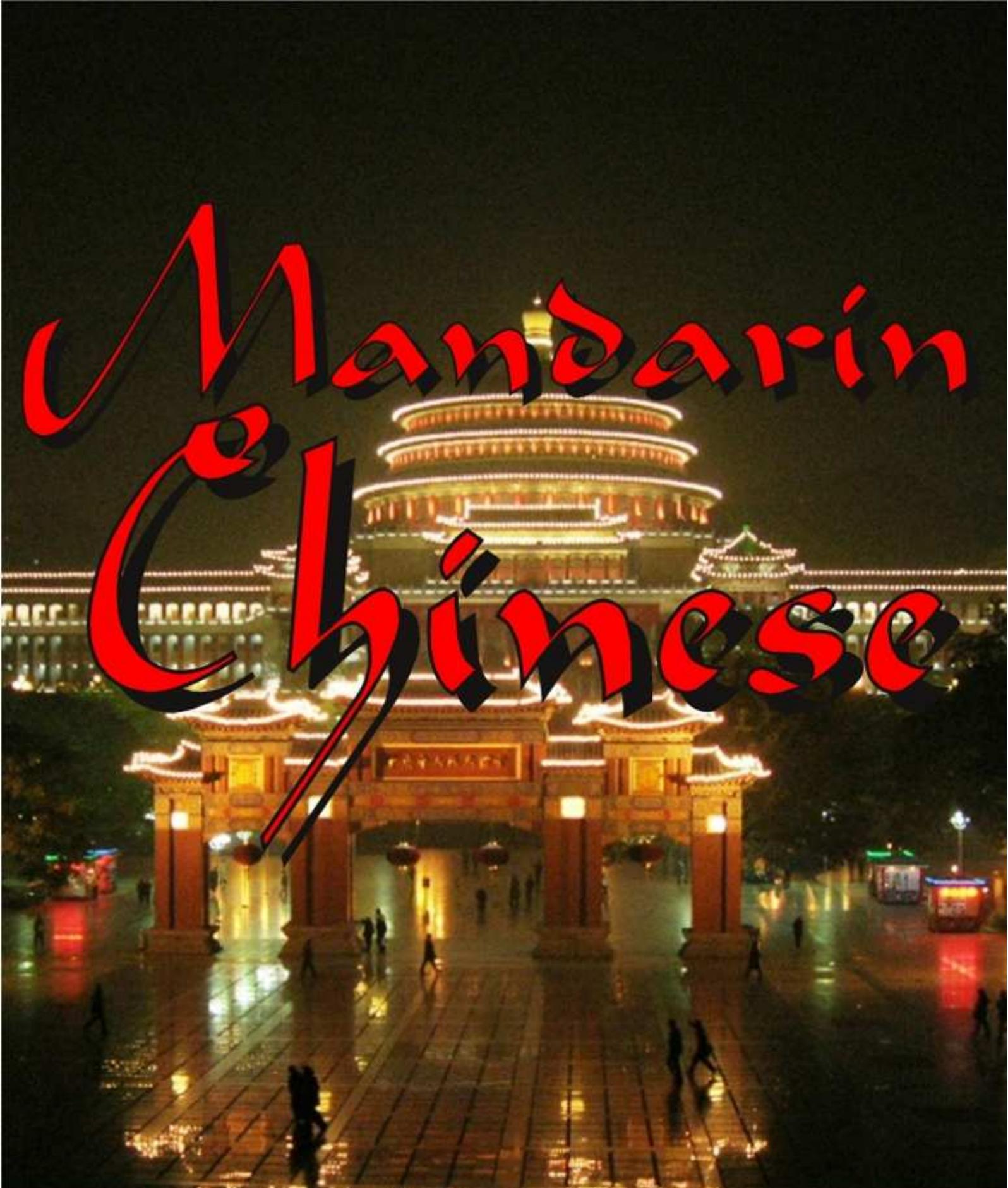
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