

BEST QUOTES ON FOREIGN LANGUAGE

If you talk to a man in a language he understands, that goes to his head. If you talk to him in his language, that goes to his heart.

—Nelson Mandela

Math and science fields are not the only areas where we see the United States lagging behind. Less than 1 percent of American high school students study the critical foreign languages of Arabic, Chinese, Japanese, Korean or Russian, combined.

—Cathy McMorris

I have learned several languages because I refuse to accept any manmade differences between human beings.

--Maya Angelou

The Russian language, which is, as far as I can judge, the richest of all the European family, seems admirably adapted to express the most delicate shades of thought. Possessed of a marvelous conciseness and clearness, it can with a single word call up several ideas, to express which in another tongue whole phrases would be necessary.

—Prosper Mérimée

‘Seize the day’ drains dignity from ‘*Carpe diem.*’

—Willis Goth Regier

Why is it that the United States child whose family can send him to Spain for a year to learn Spanish is a genius, but the little Korean kid who doesn't speak perfect English but already knows a second language has something wrong with him?

--Samuel Betances

You always lose when you translate, but there remains an echo of the original language. I had a professor at Harvard, Helen Vendler, who always said, ‘In translation, the music of the language is lost, but the magic of the meaning remains.’ I think an imprint of the language is still there. It's like you're covering an object with a piece of cloth, but you can still feel it. You don't have direct access to it, but you can still feel its shape through that cloth.

--Jean Kwok

With a very few exceptions, every word in the French vocabulary comes straight from the Latin.

--Lytton Strachey

You are fortunate because your language is English. English is a great language; among the world's languages it is perhaps the one that gives the individual the greatest freedom. It is poetic and practical at the same time; it is tremendously rich; it's a sort of all-purpose language....

You are doubly fortunate because your language is American English. English is wonderfully free; American is even freer. It has more scope and more vitality; and it has more of just the thing I am talking about here: elbowroom for the individual speaker and writer.

--Rudolf Flesch

That language is the best which, at every single point, is easiest to the greatest possible number of human beings.

--Otto Jespersen

If you can speak three languages you're trilingual. If you can speak two languages you're bilingual. If you can speak only one language you're an American.

—Unknown

To speakers of modern Greek the Homeric poems of the 7th century B.C. are not written in a foreign language. The Greek language has enjoyed a continuous tradition from earliest times until now. [...]

The only other language which enjoys comparable continuity of tradition is Chinese.

—Robert Browning

According to the United Nations' latest count, of the approximately 3,000 languages spoken in the world today, only some 78 have a literature. Of those 78, a scant five or six enjoy a truly international audience.

—Barry Sanders

Many Americans have long been of the opinion that bilingualism is 'a good thing' if it was acquired via travel (preferably to Paris) or via formal education (preferably at Harvard) but that it is a 'bad thing' if it was acquired from one's immigrant parents or grandparents.

—Joshua Fishman

Knowledge of languages is the gateway to wisdom.

--Roger Bacon

One thing I can say about the French language is that no one in the world loves their language as much as they do. It doesn't matter if you're close—it still sounds terrible to their ears.

—Mads Mikkelsen

I failed world geography, civics, Spanish and English. And when you fail Spanish and English, they do not consider you bilingual. They may call you bi-ignorant because you can't speak any language.

—Tim Scott

Never knew before what eternity was made for. It is to give some of us a chance to learn German.

—Mark Twain

French: why does this language even exist? Everyone there speaks English anyway.

—Meg Cabot

He cared for languages dead long enough that they wouldn't change on him.

—Maggie Stiefvater

Almost any sort of noise that the human vocal apparatus can produce is used in some way in some language.

--H. A. Gleason

Adam was charming and spoke perfect French. Like many anglophones in Montréal, he actually spoke French better than we did. They knew exactly which verbs to use in the same way that people knew which utensils to use while eating at a fancy dinner. It was very proper because they learned it from books. They didn't know slang or how to curse. They didn't know how to do anything other than be proper and reserved. It was state-sponsored, dry-clean-only French.

—Heather O'Neill

We have room but for one Language here and that is the English language, for we intend to see that the crucible turns our people out as Americans of American nationality and not as dwellers in a polyglot boardinghouse.

—Theodore Roosevelt

I speak twelve languages. English is the bestest.

--Stefan Berman

I was gradually coming to have a mysterious and shuddery reverence for this girl; now-a-days whenever she pulled out from the station and got her train fairly started on one of those horizonless transcontinental sentences of hers, it was borne in upon me that I was standing in the awful presence of the Mother of the German Language. I was so impressed with this, that sometimes when she began to empty one of these sentences on me I unconsciously took the very attitude of reverence, and stood uncovered; and if words had been water, I had been drowned, sure. She had exactly the German way: whatever was in her mind to be delivered, whether a mere remark, or a sermon, or a cyclopedia, or the history of a war, she would get it into a single sentence or die. Whenever the literary German dives into a sentence, that is the last you are going to see of him till he emerges on the other side of his Atlantic with his verb in his mouth.

—Mark Twain

My son is a high-school teacher. In one of his classes he mentioned to his students that Latin is a dead language, no longer spoken. One girl raised her hand to challenge my son's claim. 'But what do they speak in Latin America?' she demanded.

—E. D. Hirsch, Jr.

The center of gravity for the English language is no longer Britain. American English is the greatest influence on English everywhere.

--Robert Burchfield

In richness, good sense, and terse convenience, no other of the living languages may be put beside English.

—Jakob Grimm

England and America are two countries separated by the same language.

--George Bernard Shaw

I wish I weren't locked in my own language.

--Carol Burdick Hudson

He who knows the language is at home everywhere.

--Dutch Proverb

Latin is a language,
Dead as Dead Can Be,
First it Killed the Romans,
Now It's Killing Me.

All are dead who spoke it.
All are dead who wrote it.
All are dead who learned it,
Lucky dead, they've earned it.

--Michael Kilgarriff

There are between two thousand and three thousand languages spoken throughout the world, not including that spoken by teenagers.

--Unknown

An American who speaks French can only be understood by other Americans who have also just arrived in Paris.

--Fred Allen

Modern man is educated to understand foreign languages and misunderstand foreigners.

--G. K. Chesterton

Language is a steed that carries one into a far country.

--Arab Proverb

To acquire a few tongues is the task of a few years; to be eloquent in one is the labor of a life.

--Charles Caleb Colton

No man should travel until he has learned the language of the country he visits. Otherwise he voluntarily makes himself a great baby,—so helpless and so ridiculous.

--Ralph Waldo Emerson

But oh! the Latin!—Madame, you can really have no idea of what a mess it is. The Romans would never have found time to conquer the world if they had been obliged first to learn Latin. Lucky dogs! they already knew in their cradles the nouns ending in *im*. I on the contrary had to learn it by heart, in the sweat of my brow...

—Heinrich Heine

Colleges teach the dead languages as if they were buried and the living ones as if they were dead.

--Frank Moore Colby

French people hate broken French worse than most of us hate broken English.

--Frank Moore Colby

Whenever I hear French spoken as I approve, I find myself quietly falling in love.

--E. R. Bulwer-Lytton

The sum of human wisdom is not contained in any one language, and no single language is CAPABLE of expressing all forms and degrees of human comprehension.

--Ezra Pound

What is most difficult to render from one language into another is the tempo of its style.

--Nietzsche

The art of translation lies less in knowing the other language than in knowing your own.

--Ned Rorem

It were as wise to cast a violet into a crucible that you might discover the formal principle of its colour and odour, as seek to transfuse from one language into another the creations of a poet.

--Percy Bysshe Shelley

It is by no means always the case that translated terms preserve the original concept; indeed, every nation has some idiomatic expressions that are impossible to render perfectly in the language of another.

--Iamblichus

They spell it Vinci and pronounce it Vinchy; foreigners always spell better than they pronounce.

--Mark Twain

To change your language you must change your life.

--Derek Walcott

A man who knows four languages is worth four men.

--Charles V

Each new form of human speech introduces one into a new world of thought and life.

--Charles V

As a hawk flieth not high with one wing, even so a man reacheth not to excellence with one tongue.

--Roger Ascham

Poetry cannot be translated; and, therefore, it is the poets that preserve the languages; for we would not be at the trouble to learn a language if we could have all that is written in it just as well in a translation. But as the beauties of poetry cannot be preserved in any language except that in which it was originally written, we learn the language.

--Samuel Johnson

There is no tracing the connection of ancient nations but by language; therefore I am always sorry when any language is lost, for languages are the pedigree of nations.

--Samuel Johnson

The proper means of increasing the love we bear to our native country is to reside some time in a foreign one.

--Shenstone

Humour is the first of the gifts to perish in a foreign tongue.

--Virginia Woolf

It is of interest to note that while some dolphins are reported to have learned English—up to fifty words used in correct context—no human being has been reported to have learned dolphinese.

--Carl Sagan

The Romans would never have had time to conquer the world if they had been obliged to learn Latin first of all.

--Heinrich Heine

A gentleman need not know Latin, but he should at least have forgotten it.

--Brander Matthews

Everyone smiles in the same language.

--George Carlin

Travel, in the younger sort, is a part of education; in the elder, a part of experience. He that traveleth into a country, before he hath some entrance into the language, goeth to school, and not to travel.

--Francis Bacon

Nobody can say a word against Greek; it stamps a man at once as an educated gentleman.

--George Bernard Shaw

Please, never despise the translator. He's the mailman of human civilization.

--Alexander Pushkin

To have another language is to possess a second soul.

--Charlemagne

In Paris they simply stared when I spoke to them in French; I never did succeed in making those idiots understand their own language.

--Mark Twain

To communicate through an interpreter is like hacking one's way through a forest with a feather.

--James Evans

German is the most extravagantly ugly language...like someone using a sick-bag on a 747.

--William Rushton

Being bilingual and bicultural is an asset. It is having *twice* as much as most folks. How fortunate can Latinas be?...Latinas can have the best of both worlds as well as a choice of who to be.

--Bettina R. Flores

Germans are flummoxed by humour, the Swiss have no concept of fun, the Spanish think there is nothing at all ridiculous about eating dinner at midnight, and the Italians should never, ever have been let in on the invention of the motor car.

--Bill Bryson

Languages are the pedigree of nations.

--Samuel Johnson

I once heard a Californian student in Heidelberg say, in one of his calmest moods, that he would rather decline two drinks than one German adjective.

--Mark Twain

The Norwegian language has been described as German spoken underwater.

--Unknown

The French language is a piano without a pedal.

--André Gide

Americans have a peculiar sense of humor; Americans find this out when they try to talk to them in French.

--Unknown

All languages are illogical: in French, for example, *feminin* is masculine.

--Unknown

America is the only country left where we teach languages so that no pupil can speak them.

--G. C. Lichtenberg

To many a high school student the greatest accomplishment of the ancient Romans was their ability to speak Latin.

--Unknown

I cannot learn languages; men of ordinary capacity can learn Sanskrit in less time than it takes me to buy a German dictionary.

—George Bernard Shaw

One of the first things you learn when studying a foreign language is that the word *tongue* is feminine.

--Unknown

The most verbal nation (France) on the face of the earth, where language is the Muzak of the mind.

--Joseph Morgenstern

Man is the only animal that hasn't an international language.

--Unknown

You have to live in a country to learn a language deeply, and so much better if you fall in love with someone who speaks it.

--Peter Temes

Boy, those French: they have a different word for everything!

--Steve Martin

French is the language that turns dirt into romance.

--Stephen King

I took an estimated two thousand years of high school French, and when I finally got to France, I discovered that I didn't know one single phrase that was actually useful in a real-life French situation.

--Dave Barry

(Asked how to speak French) You speak it the same way you speak English, you just use different words.

--Gracie Allen

That woman speaks eight languages and can't say 'no' in any of them.

--Dorothy Parker

Hearing a foreign language is like seeing a postcard from some other land, even when you are actually in that other land.

--Ta-Nehisi Coates

Quidquid latine dictum sit, altum sonatur. (Whatever is said in Latin sounds profound.)

--Unknown

By the way, the secret of speaking French is confidence. Whether you are right or wrong, you don't hesitate.

--Joseph Epstein

I bet the 'YMCA' dance is a lot harder to do in Chinese.

--Unknown

If you really want to hurt me, talk badly about my language.

--Gloria Anzaldúa

A mother mouse and a baby mouse were walking along, when all of a sudden, a cat attacked them. The mother mouse goes, 'BARK!' and the cat runs away.

'See?' says the mother mouse to her baby. 'Now do you see why it's important to learn a foreign language?'

—Unknown

No man fully capable of his own language ever masters another.

—George Bernard Shaw

I am fluent in three languages...English, sarcasm, and profanity.

—T-Shirt Slogan

An Englishman's way of speaking absolutely classifies him.

—Alan Jay Lerner

English is the easiest language to speak badly.

—George Bernhard Shaw

Never make fun of someone who speaks broken English. It means they know another language.

—H. Jackson Brown, Jr.

The limits of my language stand for the limits of my world.

--Ludwig Wittgenstein

Our vocabulary is derived from the nation's language; and the vocabulary provides a very good indication of the nation's knowledge: by comparing a nation's vocabulary at different times, we can get a pretty good idea of that nation's progress.

--Denis Diderot

The most important book of a nation is the dictionary of its language.

--Constantin comte
de Volney

The man who knows no foreign language knows nothing of his mother tongue.

--Johanne von Goethe

A world language is more important for mankind at the present moment than any conceivable advance in television or telephony.

--Lewis Mumford

Here you have a very carefully wrought plan for an international language, capable of very wide transactions of practical business and interchange of ideas.

—Winston Churchill
(Speech advocating
Basic English as a
world tongue,
September 7, 1943)

The Russian writer Anton Chekhov once told a story about a man who tried to teach a kitten to catch mice. Whenever the kitten refused to give chase, the man beat it. After the animal grew into an adult cat, it always cowered in terror in the presence of a mouse. ‘That,’ said Chekhov, ‘is the man who taught me Latin.’

--Patrick Welsh

We have strong evidence today that studying a foreign language has a ripple effect, helping to improve student performance in other subjects.

—Richard Riley

Foreign language instruction is a good way to introduce children to other cultures—and to stimulate their understanding of geography and history. The question often put to advocates of foreign language instruction is: What language should be taught at the elementary level? It is not surprising that young students in Europe and the USSR learn English; ours is now the primary language of international commerce and diplomacy. But should American students learn Russian, or Spanish, or Urdu? Let’s not become preoccupied with that question. What is important is for students, early on, to ‘break the language barrier’—to grasp the fact that any language, including English, is a way of communicating, of conveying meaning. Young students can use any second language to break out of the monolingual habit. In fact, a number of school districts have begun offering Latin at the elementary level, in some cases using it to help disadvantaged students get a better grip on English. What matters is not so much that students master any specific tongue; what they should learn at the elementary level is that they can learn—that foreign language need not be alien.

—William J. Bennett

There are masked words abroad, I say, which nobody understands.

—John Ruskin

John Dewey's Educational Formalism has turned America's schools into academic shopping malls, where students wander aimlessly among a host of competing educational boutiques whose only coherence is their presence under one roof. A pre-law student may know something about civil rights, but he thinks Washington, D.C. is in Washington state. An eighth-grader thinks that Latin is the language of Peru—it's in Latin America, isn't it? Students with this patchwork of cultural information no longer have a common language for the discussion of national issues or the communication of vital ideas.

--Robert Pattison

One attraction of Latin is that you can immerse yourself in the poems of Horace and Catullus without fretting over how to say, 'Have a nice day.'

—Peter Brodie

Time was also (as an infant) I knew no Latin; but this I learned without fear of suffering, by mere observation, amid the caresses of my nursery and jests from friends, smiling and sportively encouraging me. This I learned without any pressure of punishment to urge me on, for my heart urged me to give birth to its conception, which I could only do by learning words not of those who taught but of those who talked with me; in whose care also I gave birth to the thoughts, whatever I conceived. No doubt then, that a free curiosity has more force in our learning these things than a frightful enforcement.

—St. Augustine

The sum of human wisdom is not contained in any one language, and no single language is CAPABLE of expressing all forms and degrees of human comprehension.

--Ezra Pound

My only comfort was the knowledge that I was not alone. Huddled in the hallways and making the most of our pathetic French, my fellow students and I engaged in the sort of conversation commonly overheard in refugee camps.

'Sometime me cry alone at night.'

'That be common for I, also, but be more strong, you. Much work and someday you talk pretty. People start love you soon. Maybe tomorrow, okay.'

—David Sedaris

I was recently on a tour of Latin America, and the only regret I have was that I didn't study Latin harder in school so I could converse with those people.

—Al Gore

Susie: Hi Calvin! Aren't you excited about going to school? Look at all these great school supplies I got! I love having new notebooks and stuff!

Calvin: All I've got to say is they're not making me learn any foreign languages. If English is good enough for me, then by golly, it's good enough for the rest of the world! Everyone should just speak English or shut up, that's what I say!

Susie: You should maybe check the chemical content of your breakfast cereal.

—Bill Watterson

You're kidding. I thought all geniuses read Latin. Isn't that the international language for smart people?

—Rachel Caine

A Roman centurion walks into a bar and orders a martinus.

The bartender says, 'Don't you mean a martini?'

The centurion answers, 'If I wanted a double I would have ordered it.'

—Harlan Wolff

There's nothing quite like Latin for disguising the fact that you're making it up as you go along.

—Ben Aaronovitch

There are hundreds of languages around the world, but a smile, speaks them all.

—Unknown

The difficulty of learning the dead languages does not arise from any superior abstruseness in the languages themselves, but in their being dead, and the pronunciation entirely lost. It would be the same thing with any other language when it becomes dead. The best Greek linguist that now exists does not understand Greek so well as a Grecian plowman did, or a Grecian milkmaid; and the same for the Latin, compared with a plowman or a milkmaid of the Romans; and with respect to pronunciation and idiom, not so well as the cows that she milked. It would therefore be advantageous to the state of learning to abolish the study of the dead languages, and to make learning consist, as it originally did, in scientific knowledge.

—Thomas Paine

There are some students who fall in love with the tidings of Latin morphology and the exquisite logic of many grammatical instructions, but these same students, when they first confront the nuances and complexities and ambiguities of literary texts ... become frustrated and disappointed: How can a language that makes so much sense be used to make such little sense?

—Peter L Corrigan

You can say any sort of nonsense in Latin, and our feeble university men will be stunned, or at least profoundly confused. That's how the popes have gotten away with peddling bad religion for so long, they simply say it in Latin.

—Neal Stephenson

It is almost impossible to translate verbally and well at the same time; for the Latin (a most severe and compendious language) often expresses that in one word which either the barbarity or the narrowness of modern tongues cannot supply in more. ...But since every language is so full of its own proprieties that what is beautiful in one is often barbarous, nay, sometimes nonsense, in another, it would be unreasonable to limit a translator to the narrow compass of his author's words; it is enough if he choose out some expression which does not vitiate the sense.

—John Dryden

It's Latin, which is an excellent language for mischief-making, which is why governments are so fond of it.

—Catherynne M. Valente

There is no better recreation for the mind than the study of the ancient classics. Take any one of them into your hand, be it only for half an hour, and you will feel yourself refreshed, relieved, purified, ennobled, strengthened; just as if you had quenched your thirst at some pure spring. Is this the effect of the old language and its perfect expression, or is it the greatness of the minds whose works remain unharmed and unweakened by the lapse of a thousand years? Perhaps both together. But this I know. If the threatened calamity should ever come, and the ancient languages cease to be taught, a new literature shall arise, of such barbarous, shallow and worthless stuff as never was seen before.

—Arthur Schopenhauer

Languages are like games. You learn the rules for one, and they all work the same way.

—Haruki Murakami

If you want to know a country, read its writers.

—Aminatta Forna

This question of language was curious. The sound of spoken Spanish was common in Miami, but it was also common in Los Angeles, and Houston, and even in the cities of the northeast. What was unusual about Spanish in Miami was not that it was so often spoken, but that it was so often heard: in, say, Los Angeles, Spanish remained a language only barely registered by the Anglo population, part of the ambient noise, the language spoken by the people who worked in the car wash and came to trim the trees and cleared the tables in restaurants. In Miami Spanish was spoken by the people who ate in the restaurants, the people who owned the cars and the trees, which made, on the socio-auditory scale, a considerable difference. Exiles who felt isolated or declassed by language in New York or Los Angeles thrived in Miami. An entrepreneur who spoke no English could still, in Miami, buy, sell, negotiate, leverage assets, float bonds, and, if he were so inclined, attend galas twice a week, in black tie. 'I have been after the *Herald* ten times to do a story about millionaires in Miami who do not speak more than two words in English,' one prominent exile told me. 'Yes' and 'no.' Those are the two words. They come here with five dollars in their pockets and without speaking another word of English they are millionaires.

—Joan Didion

Service members will only stay on active duty if they can provide for their families—and DOD schools provide a world-class education that has proven time and again to be an incentive for sailors, soldiers, airmen and marines to reenlist. Military dependents that attend DOD schools are highly regarded by prestigious universities the world over for a number of reasons, but there's one that you'd have a hard time replicating in a stateside school system: they've lived overseas, traveled the world, seen and experienced other cultures, learned foreign languages through immersion, and they've gained an understanding of the world that you can't get in a traditional classroom. Add a rigorous curriculum and a long track record of high test scores throughout DOD schools, and it's pretty easy to see why military kids are in such high demand.

—Tucker Elliot

Pity the poor in spirit who know neither the enchantment nor the beauty of language.

—Muriel Barbery

I have a prejudice against people who print things in a foreign language and add no translation. When I am the reader, and the author considers me able to do the translating myself, he pays me quite a nice compliment—but if he would do the translating for me I would try to get along without the compliment.

--Mark Twain

Reading a translation is like looking at a tapestry on the wrong side.

—Cervantes

Before long the reading of novels will occupy a niche not much more significant than the one currently occupied by the reading of poems in Latin.

--Philip Roth

Translation is like a woman. If it is beautiful, it is not faithful. If it is faithful, it is most certainly not beautiful.

—Yevgeny Yevtushenko

George Chapman was the first to translate Homer's epics into English....The first portion of the translation was published in 1598, the last in 1616. Until then Englishmen interested in the Homeric tales had to go back to the original Greek, or else to rely on the medieval versions of the tale, as Chaucer and Shakespeare did in their stories of the love of *Troilus and Cressida*. *Chapman's Homer* was by no means an exact translation. In fact, Chapman not only translated Homer into English, but into the Elizabethan idea of English poetry complete with rhymed fourteen-syllable verse and with added moral homilies. Perhaps, for that reason, it proved extremely popular, remaining so even after Alexander Pope, between 1713 and 1726, translated Homer into urbane heroic couplets in equally artificial manner. It wasn't till modern times that more or less literal translations appeared.

—Isaac Asimov

The finest words in the world are only vain sounds, if you cannot comprehend them.

--Anatole France

It lost much of its true worth; and the same happens when people try to translate books of verse into another language.

--Miguel de Cervantes

Reading poetry in translation is like kissing a woman through a veil.

--Chaim Bialik

It is as impossible to translate poetry as it is to translate music.

—Voltaire

Prose can be translated, but poetry can only be transmutilated.

—Unknown

An unalterable and unquestioned law of the musical world required that the German text of French operas sung by Swedish artists should be translated into Italian for the clearer understanding of English-speaking audiences.

--Edith Wharton

Quebec City is the most European of any city in North America; they speak French all the time. There is a part of town called Old Quebec which is really like being in France. The architecture is just gorgeous, food, shopping. I'd say Quebec City is the most beautiful city in North America I've seen.

—Sebastian Bach

I speak Spanish to God, Italian to women, French to men and German to my horse.

—Charles V

The vanishing of languages, like those of living species, is an event that has been repeated many times in history. Localized disasters such as a volcano eruptions, great floods or warfare have played a part, but in the modern era the spread of Europeans--and European diseases--has greatly accelerated the pace of destruction. Local or regional language communities may be overpowered by a dominant metropolitan language, which increases the pressure to neglect the ancestral tongue in favor of the new one and is seen as the key to prospering in the dominant culture. Children may be forbidden to use their mother tongue in the classroom, as has occurred to many groups, including the Welsh, Native Americans and Aboriginal Australians. Speakers of minority languages have been forcibly relocated and combined with speakers of other languages, as happened when Africans were brought to the Americas as slaves. Practices such as these have made Native American languages the most imperiled of any on the earth.

The death of a language is not only a tragedy for those directly involved but also an irretrievable cultural loss for the rest of the world. Through language, each culture expresses a unique worldview. Thus, any effort to preserve linguistic variety implies a deep respect for the positive values of other cultures.

—Rodger Doyle

A different language is a different vision of life.

—Federico Fellini

Those who know nothing of foreign languages, knows nothing of their own.

—Johann von Goethe

The American arrives in Paris with a few French phrases he has culled from a conversational guide or picked up from a friend who owns a beret.

—Fred A. Allen

The proverbial German phenomenon of the verb-at-the-end about which droll tales of absentminded professors who would begin a sentence, ramble on for an entire lecture, and then finish up by rattling off a string of verbs by which their audience, for whom the stack had long since lost its coherence, would be totally nonplussed, are told, is an excellent example of linguistic recursion.

—Douglas Hofstadter

How many languages are there in the world? How about 5 billion! Each of us talks, listens, and thinks in his/her own special language that has been shaped by our culture, experiences, profession, personality, mores and attitudes. The chances of us meeting someone else who talks the exact same language is pretty remote.

—Unknown

If we spoke a different language, we would perceive a somewhat different world.

—Ludwig Wittgenstein

Chinese differs from other languages as much as if it were spoken by the inhabitants of another planet.

—Frederic William
Farrar

The longer a language lives, the richer, more diverse and refined it becomes. What happened to Chinese will take place in younger languages in their own time and in their unique and native forms.

An understanding of the history of Chinese language and its impact upon the Chinese mind can be helpful for the students of Western culture because it illustrates an experience beyond the horizon of contemporary speakers of Western languages whose literatures have evolved for only a few hundred years.

—Sharron Gu

Chinese may be called the Latin of the Far East. For, just as Rome through her higher civilisation lent thousands of words to the semi-savages hovering along her borders, so China has furnished all the surrounding peoples with their scientific, legal, philosophical and religious terminology.

—Homer Bezalee Hulbert

[On Russian] [T]here is the wonderful wealth of the language, which, as a popular tongue, is more flexible, more expressive of thought than any other living tongue I know of.

—Ernst von der Brüngen

It must not be thought, however, that the Chinese language is destitute of ornament. They employ various figures of speech, and in some they excel. Metaphor is frequently to be met with in their writings, and similes are abundant. They are fond of alliteration, and attention to rhythm is with them an essential part of composition. Gradation and climax are sometimes well sustained, while in description and dialogue they seem quite at home. But the most remarkable feature of Chinese composition, is the antithesis. Most of the principal words are classed in pairs, such as *heaven* and *earth*, *beginning* and *end*, *day* and *night*, *hot* and *cold*, etc. From antithetical words, they proceed to contrast phrases and sentences, and draw up whole paragraphs upon the same principle. In these antithetical sentences, the number of words, the class of expressions, the meaning and intonation, together with the whole sentiment, are nicely and exactly balanced, so that the one contributes to the perspicuity and effect of the other. Such a counting of words, and such a mechanical arrangement of sentences, would be intolerable in European composition, but are quite elegant and almost essential in Chinese.

—W. H. Medhurst

Of course when one of these grand mountain ranges goes stretching across the printed page, it adorns and ennobles that literary landscape,—but at the same time it is a great distress to the new student, for it blocks up his way; he cannot crawl under it, or climb over it or tunnel through it. So he resorts to the dictionary for help; but there is no help there. The dictionary must draw the line somewhere,—so it leaves this sort of words out. And it is right, because these long things are hardly legitimate words, but are rather combinations of words, and the inventor of them ought to have been killed.

—Mark Twain

This last summer, when I was on my way back to Vienna from the Appetite-Cure in the mountains, I fell over a cliff in the twilight, and broke some arms and legs and one thing or another, and by good luck was found by some peasants who had lost an ass, and they carried me to the nearest habitation, which was one of those large, low, thatch-roofed farm-houses, with apartments in the garret for the family, and a cunning little porch under the deep gable decorated with boxes of bright colored flowers and cats; on the ground floor a large and light sitting-room, separated from the milch-cattle apartment by a partition; and in the front yard rose stately and fine the wealth and pride of the house, the manure-pile. That sentence is Germanic, and shows that I am acquiring that sort of mastery of the art and spirit of the language which enables a man to travel all day in one sentence without changing cars.

—Mark Twain

All in all, the language of the Macedones was a distinct and particular form of Greek, resistant to outside influences and conservative in pronunciation. It remained so until the fourth century when it was almost totally submerged by the flood tide of standardized Greek.

—Nicholas Geoffrey
Lemprière
Hammond

[F]or a man whose mother tongue is Russian to speak about political evil is as natural as digestion [...]

—Joseph Brodsky

The Russian language is undoubtedly the richest of all the European tongues.

—Eugène-Melchior de
Vogüé

The Russian language is able to express by means of one pitiless word the idea of a certain widespread defect for which the other three European languages I happen to know possess no special term. The absence of a particular expression in the vocabulary of a nation does not necessarily coincide with the absence of the corresponding notion but it certainly impairs the fullness and readiness of the latter's perception.

—Vladimir Nabokov

It is a rather curious thing, that Russia, which has never had a parliamentary government, and where political history has been very little influenced by the spoken word, should have so much finer an instrument of expression than England, where matters of the greatest importance have been settled by open and public speech for nearly three hundred years. One would think that the constant use of the language in the national forum for purposes of argument and persuasion would help to make it flexible and subtle; and that the almost total absence of such employment would tend toward narrowness and rigidity. In this instance exactly the contrary is the case. If we may trust the testimony of those who know, we are forced to the conclusion that the English language, compared with the Russian, is nothing but an awkward dialect. Compared with Russian, the English language is decidedly weak in synonyms, and in the various shades of meaning that make for precision. Indeed, with the exception of Polish, Russian is probably the greatest language in the world, in richness, variety, definiteness, and elegance. It is also capable of saying much in little, and saying it with tremendous force.

—W. L. Phelps

Yiddish was a rich, living language, the chattering tongue of an urban population. It had the limitations of its origins. There were few Yiddish words for animals and birds. It had virtually no military vocabulary. Such voids were filled by borrowing from German, Polish and Russian. Yiddish was particularly good at borrowing: from Arabic, from Hebrew, from Aramaic and from anything with which it intersected. On the other hand, it contributed: English - American. Its chief virtue lay in its internal subtlety, particularly in its characterization of human types and emotions. It was the language of street wisdom, of the clever underdog, of pathos, resignation and suffering, all of which it palliated by humor, intense irony and superstition. It has been said the Yiddish is the only language never spoken by anyone in power.

—Paul Johnson

To me the Yiddish language and the conduct of those who spoke it are identical. One can find in the Yiddish tongue and in the Yiddish spirit expressions of pious joy, lust for life, longing for the Messiah, patience and deep appreciation of human individuality. There is a quiet humor in Yiddish and a gratitude for every day of life, every crumb of success, each encounter of love. The Yiddish mentality is not haughty. It does not take victory for granted. It does not demand and command but it muddles through, sneaks by, smuggles itself amidst the powers of destruction, knowing somewhere that God's plan for Creation is still at the very beginning. [...] Yiddish has not yet said its last word. It contains treasures that have not been revealed to the eyes of the world. It was the tongue of martyrs and saints, of dreamers and Cabalists - rich in humor and in memories that mankind may never forget. In a figurative way, Yiddish is the wise and humble language of us all, the idiom of frightened and hopeful Humanity.

—Isaac Bashevis Singer

People ask me often, 'Why do you write in a dying language?' [...] I like to write ghost stories and nothing fits a ghost better than a dying language. The deader the language the more alive is the ghost. Ghosts love Yiddish and as far as I know, they all speak it.

Secondly, not only do I believe in ghosts, but also in resurrection. I am sure that millions of Yiddish speaking corpses will rise from their graves one day and their first question will be: 'Is there any new Yiddish book to read?' For them Yiddish will not be dead. [...] Yiddish may be a dying language but it is the only language I know well. Yiddish is my mother language and a mother is never really dead.

—Isaac Bashevis Singer

It is the task of the translator to release in his own language that pure language that is under the spell of another, to liberate the language imprisoned in a work in his re-creation of that work.

—Walter Benjamin

One can translate an editorial but not a poem. For one can go across the border naked but not without one's skin; for, unlike clothes, one cannot get a new skin.

—Karl Kraus

A poem sings with a bad accent in any language not its own.

—Austin O'Malley

[The translator] has done his cleverest and best with this that follows, but you might as well seek to translate a violet into verse as seek to render in language other than its own the delicate sentiment, the exquisite rhythm, of the... original.

—William Cleaver
Wilkinson

Mrs. Howitt knew German and even Swedish much better than she knew Danish, and very often she commits ludicrous blunders which would be the ruin of the average translator nowadays, but nobody ever caught the spirit of Andersen as she has done, and she is loyally literal or fearlessly free according as the occasion demands it.

—R. Nisbet Bain

Some translators turn an author's words from gold to stone, others from stone to gold.

—Terri Guillemets

A translation of a poem is like a plaster cast of a statue or a photograph of a painting; and the better the translation the poorer the original poem.

—Austin O'Malley

True translation is transparent: it does not obscure the original, does not stand in its light, but rather allows pure language, as if strengthened by its own medium, to shine even more fully on the original.

—Walter Benjamin

He swore at us in German (which I should judge to be a singularly effective language for that purpose)...

—Jerome K. Jerome

Any man who does not make himself proficient in at least two languages other than his own is a fool. Such men have the quaint habit of discovering things fifty years after all the world knows about them — because they read only their own language.

—Martin H. Fischer

'If you can't say something nice, say it in French,' my mother advised.

—Vicki Linder

If I had a phrase-book of a really satisfactory sort I would study it, and not give all my free time to undictionarial readings, but there is no such work on the market. The existing phrase-books are inadequate. They are well enough as far as they go, but when you fall down and skin your leg they don't tell you what to say.

—Mark Twain

Learn a new language and get a new soul.

—Czech Proverb

One language sets you in a corridor for life. Two languages open every door along the way.

—Frank Smith

Language is the blood of the soul into which thoughts run and out of which they grow.

—Oliver Wendell Holmes

Learning a foreign language, and the culture that goes with it, is one of the most useful things we can do to broaden the empathy and imaginative sympathy and cultural outlook of children.

—Michael Gove

Parents should conduct their arguments in quiet, respectful tones, but in a foreign language. You'd be surprised what an inducement that is to the education of children.

—Judith Martin

There is a slam-dunk case for extending foreign language teaching to children aged five. Just as some people have taken a perverse pride in not understanding mathematics, so we have taken a perverse pride in the fact that we do not speak foreign languages, and we just need to speak louder in English.

—Michael Gove

Every high school and college graduate in America should, I think, have some familiarity with statistics, economics and a foreign language such as Spanish. Religion may not be as indispensable, but the humanities should be a part of our repertory. They may not enrich our wallets, but they do enrich our lives. They civilize us. They provide context.

—Nicholas Kristof

It's important to me to work in my own language now and then. I love English, but you can never learn to master a foreign language if you're not brought up with it.

—Max von Sydow

BELLADONNA, n. In Italian a beautiful lady; in English a deadly poison. A striking example of the essential identity of the two tongues.

—Ambrose Bierce

The conquest of learning is achieved through the knowledge of languages.

—Roger Bacon

People think that other international languages are smarter and more business wise. But they have to understand that we have to preserve our culture.

—Enock Maregesi

We Americans are reluctant to learn a foreign language of our own species, let alone another species. But imagine the possibilities. Imagine the access we would have to different perspectives, the things we might see through other eyes, the wisdom that surrounds us. We don't have to figure out everything by ourselves: there are intelligences other than our own, teachers all around us. Imagine how much less lonely the world would be.

—Robin Wall Kimmerer

A complicated structure? Undoubtedly. But after all, the cathedral of Milan is complicated too, and you still look at it with awe.

—Kató Lomb

It seems the British are born to hoist their flag over every nation where the sun rises and never learn their language.

—Chloe Thurlow

A man who knows two languages is worth two men.

—French Proverb

The gospel of the glory of Christ spreads better and flourishes more because of 6,500 languages, not in spite of them.

—John Piper

In Japanese and Italian, the response to [‘How are you?’] is ‘I’m fine, and you?’ In German it’s answered with a sigh and a slight pause, followed by ‘Not so good’.

—David Sedaris

Language is the road map of a culture. It tells you where its people come from and where they are going.

—Rita Mae Brown

You live a new life for every new language you speak. If you know only one language, you live only once.

—Czech Proverb

Change your language and you change your thoughts.

—Karl Albrecht

Americans who travel abroad for the first time are often shocked to discover that, despite all the progress that has been made in the last 30 years, many foreign people still speak in foreign languages.

—Dave Barry

To learn a language is to have one more window from which to look at the world.

—Chinese Proverb

Learning a foreign language not only reveals how other societies think and feel, what they have experienced and value, and how they express themselves, it also provides a cultural mirror in which we can more clearly see our own society.

-Edward Lee Gorsuch

Learning a new language is like starting a new life.

—Michel Bouhot

It is literally the case that learning languages makes you smarter. The neural networks in the brain strengthen as a result of language learning.

—Michael Gove

The most intimate temper of a people, its deepest soul, is above all in its language.
— Jules Michelet

The man who does not know other languages, unless he is a man of genius, necessarily has deficiencies in his ideas.
—Victor Hugo

Learning is a treasure that will follow its owner everywhere.
—Chinese Proverb

Language is to the mind more than light is to the eye.
—William Gibson

Own only what you can always carry with you: know languages, know countries, know people. Let your memory be your travel bag.
—Aleksandr
Solzhenitsyn

There is the fear, common to all English-only speakers, that the chief purpose of foreign languages is to make fun of us. Otherwise, you know, why not just come out and say it?
—Barbara Ehrenreich

If I'm selling to you, I speak your language. If I'm buying, *dann müssen Sie Deutsch sprechen*.
—Willy Brandt

We die. That may be the meaning of life. But we do language. That may be the measure of our lives.
—Toni Morrison

The more languages you know, the more human you are.
—Tomáš Garrigue
Masaryk

Obviously no language is innate. Take any kid from any race, bring them up in any culture and they will learn the language equally quickly. So no particular language is in the genes. But what might be in the genes is the ability to acquire language.
—Steven Pinker

There is no such thing as an ugly language. Today I hear every language as if it were the only one, and when I hear of one that is dying, it overwhelms me as though it were the death of the earth.

—Elias Canetti

To rescue from oblivion even a fragment of a language which men have used and which is in danger of being lost—that is to say, one of the elements, whether good or bad, which have shaped and complicated civilization—is to extend the scope of social observation and to serve civilization.

—Victor Hugo

There is in every child a painstaking teacher, so skillful that he obtains identical results in all children in all parts of the world. The only language men ever speak perfectly is the one they learn in babyhood, when no one can teach them anything!

—Maria Montessori

Language is not an abstract construction of the learned, or of dictionary makers, but is something arising out of the work, needs, ties, joys, affections, tastes, of long generations of humanity, and has its bases broad and low, close to the ground.

—Noah Webster

He showed the words ‘chocolate cake’ to a group of Americans and recorded their word associations. ‘Guilt’ was the top response. If that strikes you as unexceptional, consider the response of French eaters to the same prompt: ‘celebration.’

—Michael Pollan

The English language is like London: proudly barbaric yet deeply civilised, too, common yet royal, vulgar yet processional, sacred yet profane. Each sentence we produce, whether we know it or not, is a mongrel mouthful of Chaucerian, Shakespearean, Miltonic, Johnsonian, Dickensian and American. Military, naval, legal, corporate, criminal, jazz, rap and ghetto discourses are mingled at every turn. The French language, like Paris, has attempted, through its Academy, to retain its purity, to fight the advancing tides of Franglais and international prefabrication. English, by comparison, is a shameless whore.

—Stephen Fry

I have not been able to discover whether there exists a precise French equivalent for the common Anglo-American expression ‘killing time.’ It’s a very crass and breezy expression, when you ponder it for a moment, considering that time, after all, is killing us.

—Christopher Hitchens

I don't know what it is about the French language, it seems to be scared of coming out of the mouth so it comes out the nose instead.

—P. D. Q. Bach

I think we are wise, we English speakers, to savor accents. They teach us things about our own tongue.

—Anne Rice

You will do well to take advantage of Madame's short residence to get up your French a little... You will be glad of this, my dear, when you have reached France, where you will find they speak nothing else.

—J. Sheridan Le Fanu

What is the French word for rain? Le rain? La rain? Is the rain masculine or feminine? It's such a bother that it must be masculine.

—Libba Bray

People in France have a phrase: 'Spirit of the Stairway.' In French: *Esprit de l'escalier*. It means that moment when you find the answer, but it's too late. Say you're at a party and someone insults you. You have to say something. So under pressure, with everybody watching, you say something lame. But the moment you leave the party...

As you start down the stairway, then -- magic. You come up with the perfect thing you should've said. The perfect crippling put-down.

That's the Spirit of the Stairway.

The trouble is even the French don't have a phrase for the stupid things you actually do say under pressure. Those stupid, desperate things you actually think or do.

Some deeds are too low to even get a name. Too low to even get talked about.

—Chuck Palahniuk

Je suis désolé, he said. You had to wonder about the French, how they could make a simple 'sorry' sound so extreme and forlorn.

—Kate Atkinson

Birds are sensitive to mispronunciation, even more sensitive than the French.

—Alan Powers

The true structure of the Welsh grammar will be revealed only when we look at sentences slightly more complicated than its basic VSO pattern. Welsh is no different from the rest of the world: it does involve an extra step, but even that isn't all that unusual. Welsh is like Shakespearean English on acid: the verb always - not just in questions - moves to the beginning. Alternatively, it can be viewed as taking the French grammar a step further. While the verb stops at tense in French, it moves further in Welsh to a position that traditional grammarians call the complementizer (don't ask).

—Charles Yang

I said, 'Je parle français.' Indira gave me a weird look. Or a look that said I was weird. Whichever. The point is, I don't really speak French, but it's a useful phrase for confusing people you don't wish to speak with. However, it's apparently more useful in Europe, where no one enjoys speaking to the French.

—Tucker Elliot

Occasionally, merely for the pleasure of being cruel, we put unoffending Frenchmen on the rack with questions framed in the incomprehensible jargon of their native language, and while they writhed, we impaled them, we peppered them, we scarified them, with their own vile verbs and participles.

—Mark Twain

Tuesday—we had school for the first time. Madame O'Malley had a moment of silence at the beginning of French class, a class that was always punctuated with long moments of silence, and then asked us how we were feeling.

'Awful,' a girl said.

'En français,' Madame O'Malley replied. 'En français.'

—John Green

You can never understand one language until you understand at least two.

—Geoffrey Willans

I started going over the lines in my head for this French play I'm in at school. I play a rabbit called Janot Lapin, who's the leader of a group of farm animals. It's not the most interesting play in the universe, but we only know three verb tenses so far so we didn't have a lot of choices. There's this one scene where I'm really hungry because the landowners aren't feeding us, and I keep saying, 'J'ai faim.' In case you don't know, that means 'I'm hungry,' but it really means 'I have hunger.' That's what real French people say. I think it's neat how French people have hunger, but they aren't hungry like Americans are. I mean, it's a lot easier to try not to have something than to try not to be it.

—Lori Gottlieb

For Sayonara, literally translated, ‘Since it must be so,’ of all the good-bys I have heard is the most beautiful. Unlike the *Auf Wiedersehens* and *Au revoirs*, it does not try to cheat itself by any bravado ‘Till we meet again,’ any sedative to postpone the pain of separation. It does not evade the issue like the sturdy blinking *Farewell*. *Farewell* is a father’s good-by. It is - ‘Go out in the world and do well, my son.’ It is encouragement and admonition. It is hope and faith. But it passes over the significance of the moment; of parting it says nothing. It hides its emotion. It says too little. While *Good-by* (‘God be with you’) and *Adios* say too much. They try to bridge the distance, almost to deny it. *Good-by* is a prayer, a ringing cry. ‘You must not go - I cannot bear to have you go! But you shall not go alone, unwatched. God will be with you. God’s hand will over you’ and even - underneath, hidden, but it is there, incorrigible - ‘I will be with you; I will watch you - always.’ It is a mother’s good-by. But *Sayonara* says neither too much nor too little. It is a simple acceptance of fact. All understanding of life lies in its limits. All emotion, smoldering, is banked up behind it. But it says nothing. It is really the unspoken good-by, the pressure of a hand, ‘Sayonara’

—Anne Morrow
Lindbergh

‘I said I kicked a French chicken in the stomach once.’ ‘Huh?’ ‘It said, ‘Oeuf.’ ‘What is that?’ ‘It’s a joke. Do you want to hear another, or have you already had *un oeuf*?’

—Jonathan Safran Foer

It was not the way Curve smelled that Colin liked - not exactly. It was the way the air smelled just as Lindsey began to jog away from him. The smell of perfume left behind. There’s not a word for that in English, but Colin knew the French word: *sillage*. What Colin liked about Curve was not its smell on the skin but its *sillage*, the fruity sweet smell of its leaving.

—John Green

‘Delight is *délice*, *délit* is a misdemeanour’

‘Well, it’s bloody close...’

‘Well, they often are....’

—Alan Hollinghurst

The genius of the French language, descended from its single Latin stock, has triumphed most in the contrary direction - in simplicity, in unity, in clarity, and in restraint.

—Lytton Strachey

You get the feeling that many of my guests feel that the French language gives them entry into a more cultivated, more intelligent world, more highly civilised too, with rules.

—Bernard Pivot

When I took part in European leaders summits, it was sometimes unpleasant for me to hear Romanian, Polish, Portuguese, and Italian friends speak English, although I admit that on an informal basis, first contacts can be made in this language. Nevertheless, I will defend everywhere the use of the French language.

—Francois Hollande

To achieve the very pinnacle of good taste, the neoclassicists wrote their plays entirely in Alexandrine verse, a rarefied meter that is uniquely tailored to the French language and fits no other.

—Florence King

Both French and Latin are involved with nationalistic and religious implications which could not be entirely shaken off, and so, while they seemed for a long time to have solved the international language problem up to a certain point, they did not really do so in spirit.

—Edward Sapir

English, once accepted as an international language, is no more secure than French has proved to be as the one and only accepted language of diplomacy or as Latin has proved to be as the international language of science.

—Edward Sapir

CONJUGATE THIS:

I cut class, you cut class, he, she, it cuts class. We cut class, they cut class. We all cut class. I cannot say this in Spanish because I did not go to Spanish today. *Gracias a dios. Hasta luego.*

—Laurie Halse Anderson

Then I speak to her in a language she has never heard, I speak to her in Spanish, in the tongue of the long, crepuscular verses of Díaz Casanueva; in that language in which Joaquín Edwards preaches nationalism. My discourse is profound; I speak with eloquence and seduction; my words, more than from me, issue from the warm nights, from the many solitary nights on the Red Sea, and when the tiny dancer puts her arm around my neck, I understand that she understands. Magnificent language!

—Pablo Neruda

I studied French in high school and German in college and I once took a 24-hour Italian crash course. English has by far the most words in it of any other language. Our money might not be worth anything anymore, but the language is.

—Roy Blount Jr.

Mochó was a Spanish word that meant maimed or referred to something that had been lopped off like a stump. To call Homer *el mocho* was, essentially, to call him ‘Stumpy’ or ‘the maimed one.’

It doesn’t sound particularly flattering, but among Spanish speakers the giving of nicknames is tantamount to a declaration of love. Things that would sound insulting outright in English were tokens of deep affection when said in Spanish.

—Gwen Cooper

There is nothing intrinsic in the English language that made it attain such prominence. It is far from easy to learn. (A recent study found that it takes much longer for an infant to learn English than, for example, Spanish; the world would indeed have been better off if Spanish had become the universal language.)

—Minae Mizumura

English was such a dense, tight language. So many hard letters, like miniature walls. Not open with vowels the way Spanish was. Our throats open, our mouths open, our hearts open. In English, the sounds were closed. They thudded to the floor. And yet, there was something magnificent about it. Profesora Shields explained that in English there was no *usted*, no *tu*. There was only one word—you. It applied to all people. No one more distant or more familiar. You. They. Me. I. Us. We. There were no words that changed from feminine to masculine and back again depending on the speaker. A person was from New York. Not a woman from New York, not a man from New York. Simply a person.

—Cristina Henríquez

The Spaniards are good at many things, but not at making war. All foreigners are alike appalled by their inefficiency, above all their maddening unpunctuality. The one word that no foreigner can avoid learning is *mañana*.

—George Orwell

Spanish—how shall I say this?—is like Portuguese spoken with a speech impediment.

—Sol Luckman

Spanish is a feeling-based language that comes first from the heart, just as English is a thinking-based language that comes first from the head.

—Victor Villaseñor

The Actor, noticing a closed bookshop, dismounted from the horse which he tied to a street lamp. He woke up the bookseller and bought a Spanish grammar and dictionary. He set out again across town marveling at the way that the words of the foreign language were freshly gathered fruits and not old and dry. They touched the senses marvelously, new like young beggars who accost you, not yet words but the every things they designate, happily running naked before being clothed again in abstraction.

—Georges Limbour

We're afraid the others will think we're *agringadas* because we don't speak Chicano Spanish. We oppress each other trying to out-Chicano each other, vying to be 'real' Chicanas, to speak like Chicanos. There is no one Chicano language just as there is no one Chicano experience.

—Gloria E. Anzaldúa

I grew up speaking Spanish and English. My mother can speak Spanish, English, French and Italian, and she's pretty good at faking Portuguese. I wish that I spoke more languages than I do.

—Sebastian Arcelus

The English language was carefully, carefully cobbled together by three blind dudes and a German dictionary.

—Dave Kellett

Things could be brought into being that had no name in English - *Weltanschauung*, *Schadenfreude*, *Sippenhaft*, *Sonderweg*, *Scheissfreundlichkeit*, *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*. Her words that don't have English counterparts? 'view of the world', 'joy at another's misery', 'collective responsibility', 'special path', 'crap friendship' and 'coming to terms with the past'.

—Anna Funder

In German, a young lady [*das Mädchen*] has no sex, but a turnip [*die Rübe*] has.

—Mark Twain

The German language speaks being, while all the others merely speak of being.

—Martin Heidegger.

Life is too short to learn German.

—Oscar Wilde

I remember learning German - so beautiful, so strange - at school in Australia on the other side of the earth. My family was nonplussed about me learning such an odd, ugly language and, though of course too sophisticated to say it, the language of the enemy. But I liked the *sticklebrick* nature of it, building long supple words by putting short ones together. Things could be brought into being that had no name in English - *Weltanschauung*, *Schadenfreude*, *sippenhaft*, *Sonderweg*, *Scheissfreundlichkeit*, *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*. Her words that don't have English counterparts? 'view of the world', 'joy at another's misery', 'collective responsibility', 'special path', 'crap friendship' and 'coming to terms with the past'.

—Anna Funder

Though unmusical, German is the most expressive of all languages.

—Arthur Conan Doyle

If you've never studied German before or think you know nothing about it, you might be in for a little surprise. You already know many German words. And you have the advantage of being an English speaker, which means that your knowledge of that language will be a helpful tool for learning German efficiently and comfortably.

—Edward Swick

When one is polite in German, one lies.

—Johann Wolfgang von
Goethe

The German language is so sonorous, isn't it? Beautiful language...the language of poetry. Angry, angry poetry.

—John Oliver

Only the language of civilized people may be spoken, thus no German.

—Anne Frank

My philological studies have satisfied me that a gifted person ought to learn English (barring spelling and pronouncing) in thirty hours, French in thirty days, and German in thirty years. It seems manifest, then, that the latter tongue ought to be trimmed down and repaired. If it is to remain as it is, it ought to be gently and reverently set aside among the dead languages, for only the dead have time to learn it.

—Mark Twain

It is easier for a cannibal to enter the Kingdom of Heaven through the eye of a rich man's needle than it is for any other foreigner to read the terrible German script.

—Mark Twain

A dream...I was trying to explain to St. Peter, and was doing it in the German tongue, because I didn't want to be too explicit.

—Mark Twain

A dog is 'der Hund'; a woman is 'die Frau'; a horse is 'das Pferd'; now you put that dog in the genitive case, and is he the same dog he was before? No, sir; he is 'des Hundes'; put him in the dative case and what is he? Why, he is 'dem Hund.' Now you snatch him into the accusative case and how is it with him? Why, he is 'den Hunden.' But suppose he happens to be twins and you have to pluralize him- what then? Why, they'll swat that twin dog around through the 4 cases until he'll think he's an entire international dog-show all in his own person. I don't like dogs, but I wouldn't treat a dog like that- I wouldn't even treat a borrowed dog that way. Well, it's just the same with a cat. They start her in at the nominative singular in good health and fair to look upon, and they sweat her through all the 4 cases and the 16 *the's* and when she limps out through the accusative plural you wouldn't recognize her for the same being. Yes, sir, once the German language gets hold of a cat, it's goodbye cat. That's about the amount of it.

—Mark Twain

In early times some sufferer had to sit up with a toothache, and he put in the time inventing the German language.

—Mark Twain

I don't believe there is anything in the whole earth that you can't learn in Berlin except the German language.

—Mark Twain

The circumstances and the atmosphere always have so much to do in directing a conversation, especially a German conversation, which is only a kind of an insurrection, anyway.

—Mark Twain

It's awful undermining to the intellect, German is; you want to take it in small doses, or first you know your brains all run together, and you feel them flapping around in your head same as so much drawn butter.

—Mark Twain

I can understand German as well as the maniac that invented it, but I talk it best through an interpreter.

—Mark Twain

It is not like studying German, where you mull along, in a groping, uncertain way, for thirty years; and at last, just as you think you've got it, they spring the subjunctive on you, and there you are. No- and I see now plainly enough, that the great pity about the German language is, that you can't fall off it and hurt yourself. There is nothing like that feature to make you attend strictly to business.

—Mark Twain

The Germans have an inhuman way of cutting up their verbs. Now a verb has a hard time enough of it in this world when it's all together. It's downright inhuman to split it up. But that's just what those Germans do. They take part of a verb and put it down here, like a stake, and they take the other part of it and put it away over yonder like another stake, and between these two limits they just shovel in German.

—Mark Twain

I don't speak German well but several experts have assured me that I write it like an angel. Maybe so, maybe so- I don't know. I've not yet made any acquaintances among the angels. That comes later, whenever it please the Deity. I'm not in any hurry.

—Mark Twain

[On Dutch] It is too smooth and blubbery; it reads like butter-milk gurgling from a jug.

—Mark Twain

'The Indians are the Italians of Asia', Didier pronounced with a sage and mischievous grin. 'It can be said, certainly, with equal justice, that the Italians are the Indians of Europe, but you do understand me, I think. There is so much Italian in the Indians, and so much Indians in the Italians. They are both people of the Madonna - they demand a goddess, even if the religion does not provide one. Every man in both countries is a singer when he is happy, and every woman is a dancer when she walks to the shop at the corner. For them, food is music inside the body, and music is food inside the heart. The Language of India and the language of Italy, they make every man a poet, and make something beautiful from every banalite. They are nations where love - *amore, pyaar* - makes a cavalier of a Borsalino on a street corner, and makes a princess of a peasant girl, if only for the second that her eyes meet yours.'

—Gregory David Roberts

She decided that day to study Russian, the language of violence, terror, and absurdity. She knew she would never be bored.

—Natalie Standiford

[English] fails me utterly when I attempt to describe what I love about Greek, that language innocent of all quirks and cranks; a language obsessed with action, and with the joy of seeing action multiply from action, action marching relentlessly ahead and with yet more actions filing in from either side to fall into neat step at the rear, in a long straight rank of cause and effect toward what will be inevitable, the only possible end.

—Donna Tartt

‘How do we define ‘normal?’ Quite literally it comes from the Latin *norma* meaning ‘carpenter’s square.’ Straight. And ‘abnormal?’ That’s from the Greek *anomalos*, and the Latin *abnormis* meaning ‘monstrosity.’

—Matt Fraction

Greek is a wonderfully rich and expressive language, which makes it one of the harder of the European tongues to learn. The active vocabulary is much bigger than other European languages. The constructions and the different endings are not easy to master, especially if you are an English speaker.

—John Mole

The word *ecology* is derived from the Greek *oikos*, the word for home.

—Robin Wall Kimmerer

Light means knowledge in the Greek language. It can also be translated as illumination, knowledge, insight, understanding and wisdom.

—Sunday Adelaja

The original text of the *Bible* was perhaps written in Hebrew and Aramaic and later translated into Greek.

—Sudhir Ahluwalia

If you look up ‘atheism’ in the dictionary, you will probably find it defined as the belief that there is no God. Certainly many people understand atheism in this way. Yet many atheists do not, and this is not what the term means if one considers it from the point of view of its Greek roots. In Greek ‘a’ means ‘without’ or ‘not’ and ‘theos’ means ‘god.’ From this standpoint an atheist would simply be someone without a belief in God, not necessarily someone who believes that God does not exist. According to its Greek roots, then, atheism is a negative view, characterized by the absence of belief in God.

—Michael Martin

Everyone has to learn Greek, because it is through Greek that one can understand one's own language.

—Jacqueline de Romilly

The knowledge of the Greek language is an indispensable foundation for someone who wishes to achieve a high cultural level.

—Marianne McDonald

The Greek language for me is a cosmogony. It is not just a language.

—Luis José Navarro

If the violin is the most perfect musical instrument, the Greek language is the violin of the human thought.

—Helen Keller

If the Gods speak, they will surely use the language of the Greeks.

—Marcus Tullius Cicero

The Greek language with its mathematical structure is the language of Information Technology and the new generation of advanced computers, because only in the Greek language there are no limits.

—Bill Gates

Without Greek studies there is no education.

—Leon Tolstoy

It is amazing to see how much we still rely on the Greek language, in order to talk about entities and events which are at the heart of modern life.

—Professor David
Crystal

In Greek there is vertigo of words, because only this (language) recorded and analysed the innermost procedures of speech and language, like no other language.

—Zach Lacarrier

The Greek language has homogeneity like the German language, however, it is richer. It has the clarity of French, but it has greater punctiliousness. It is more flexible than Italian and more harmonic than Spanish. In other words it has what is needed to be considered the most beautiful language of Europe.

—Karolos Foriel

The Chinese use two brush strokes to write the word ‘crisis.’ One brush stroke stands for danger; the other for opportunity. In a crisis, be aware of the danger--but recognize the opportunity.

—John F. Kennedy

Travel provided many interesting experiences, but perhaps the most useful lesson I learned was that I really had no proficiency for learning the thousands of characters of the written Chinese language.

—Eric Allin Cornell

Chinese language tends to be quick, economical. To know what people are saying, you always need to know what the context is.

—Gish Jen

It is a cultural slavery for an independent nation to have education and official work in some foreign language.

—Walter Channing

A country that does not take pride in its language and literature can never progress.

—Dr. Rajendra Prasad

Hindi has always been such a language that it never boycotted any word only because it's of foreign origin.

—Dr. Rajendra Prasad

We need a president who's fluent in at least one language.

—Buck Henry

Heimat. The word means home in German, the place where one was born. But the term also conveys a subtler nuance, a certain tenderness. One's *Heimat* is not merely a matter of geography; it is where one's heart lies.

—Jenna Blum

To speak a language is to take on a world, a culture.

—Frantz Fanon

The world is a book, and those who do not travel, read only a page.

--Saint Augustine

Once you have traveled, the voyage never ends, but is played out over and over again in the quietest chambers, that the mind can never break off from the journey.

—Pat Conroy

I thought that foreign children
Lived far across the sea,
Until I got a letter from a boy in Italy.
'Dear little foreign friend,' it said
As plainly as could be.
Now I wonder who is 'foreign'—
The other child or me?

--Ethel Blair Jordan

We have learned that we cannot live alone, in peace; that our own well-being is dependent on the well-being of other nations, far away.... We have learned to be citizens of the world, members of the human community.

--Franklin D. Roosevelt

My country is the world, and my religion is to do good.

--Thomas Paine

I am not an Athenian nor a Greek, but a citizen of the world.

--Socrates

A man's feet should be planted in his country, but his eyes should survey the world.

--George Santayana

Clasp the hands and know the thoughts of men in other lands.

--John Masefield

A wise man's country is the world.

--Aristippus

People have prejudices against a nation in which they have no acquaintance.

--Philip Hamerton

A foreigner can photograph the exteriors of a nation, but I think that is as far as he can get. No foreigner can report its interior—its soul, its life, its speech, its thought.

--Mark Twain

Those who go overseas find a change of climate, not a change of soul.

—Horace

As the traveler who has once been from home is wiser than he who has never left his own doorstep, so a knowledge of one other culture should sharpen our ability to scrutinize more steadily, to appreciate more lovingly, our own.

--Margaret Mead

Our country is the world—our countrymen are all mankind.

--William Lloyd Garrison

He that travels much knows much.

--Thomas Fuller

He who never leaves his own country is full of prejudices.

—Carlo Goldoni

‘You remember the Latin?’

‘Of course. *Vir prudens non contra venom mingit.*’ I couldn’t see his face. Cease of the hood, but it could tell by the tone of his voice that he was completely serious. Or at least trying to be. I wrinkled my forehead as I attempted to translate.

‘Wait a second,’ Seth said, pulling back his hood to demonstrate his utter confusion. ‘I thought their greeting was *Non ducor, duco.* ‘I am not led, I lead.’”

Liam’s shoulders began shaking just as I finished my rough translation. ‘A wise man does not urinate against the wind?’ I pulled down my hood and looked at Liam. He winked at me, and it was pretty much the most beautiful thing I’d ever seen in my life. Normally, I’m very anti-wink when it comes to guys, but in this case it was a wink of absolution. It was a wink that meant Liam and I were actually going to be okay.

‘You’ve been planning that all night, haven’t you?’ I reached over and squeezed his arm. It was the first time I had touched him in at least twenty-four hours, and his strong forearm felt so good beneath my fingertips. When he grabbed my hand and quickly brought my palm to his lips, I felt all the air leave my body. As much as I hated to admit it, for fear of sounding like a ridiculous, boy-crazed damsel in distress, it felt good to have my boyfriend back.

Taylor whipped back her hood, her blue eyes icy. ‘I’m so glad this is such a joke to you,’ she spat, clearly not in the mood for games.

Liam dropped my hand and sat up a little straiter. ‘Sorry T., I’ve got it *non ducor, duco.* Don’t worry.’

—Lisa Roecker

A knowledge of Greek thought and life, and of the arts in which the Greeks expressed their thought and sentiment, is essential to high culture. A man may know everything else, but without this knowledge he remains ignorant of the best intellectual and moral achievements of his own race.

--Charles Eliot Norton

In the area of linguistics, there are major language groups: Japanese, Chinese, Spanish, English, Portuguese, Greek, German, French, and so on. Most of us grow up learning the language of our parents and siblings, which becomes our primary or native tongue. Later, we may learn additional languages but usually with much more effort. These become our secondary languages. We speak and understand best our native language. We feel most comfortable speaking that language. The more we use a secondary language, the more comfortable we become conversing in it. If we speak only our primary language and encounter someone else who speaks only his or her primary language, which is different from ours, our communication will be limited. We must rely on pointing, grunting, drawing pictures, or acting out our ideas. We can communicate, but it is awkward. Language differences are part and parcel of human culture. If we are to communicate effectively across cultural lines, we must learn the language of those with whom we wish to communicate. In the area of love, it is similar. Your emotional love language and the language of your spouse may be as different as Chinese from English. No matter how hard you try to express love in English, if your spouse understands only Chinese, you will never understand how to love each other. My friend on the plane was speaking the language of 'Affirming Words' to his third wife when he said, 'I told her how beautiful she was. I told her I loved her. I told her how proud I was to be her husband.' He was speaking love, and he was sincere, but she did not understand his language. Perhaps she was looking for love in his behavior and didn't see it. Being sincere is not enough. We must be willing to learn our spouse's primary love language if we are to be effective communicators of love.

—Gary Chapman

Greek was very much a live language, and a language still unconscious of grammar, not, like ours, dominated by definitions and trained upon dictionaries.

—Gilbert Murray

To become an American citizen, we require people to read, write and speak in English. That is to help them to assimilate in our melting pot, truly to become Americans. We mock that when the cherished right to vote does not involve English any more.

—Ernest Istook

Veni, Vidi, Velcro. I came, I saw, I stuck around.

—Unknown

Keep your language. Love its sounds, its modulation, its rhythm. But try to march together with men of different languages, remote from your own, who wish like you for a more just and human world.

--Hélder Câmara

You can't speak a language fluently until you find out who you are in that language, and that has as much to do with your body as it does with vocabulary and grammar.

—Fred Frith

The human face is powered, depending on how you count them, by between 23 and 43 muscles, many of which attach to the skin, serving no obvious function for survival. An alien examining a human specimen in isolation wouldn't know what to make of them. Tugging on the forehead, eyebrows, lips and cheeks, the muscles broadcast a wealth of information about our emotional state, level of interest and alertness. It is a remarkably efficient means of communication—almost instantaneous, usually accurate, transcending most language and cultural barriers.

—Jerry Adler

It is naive to suppose that something that has been expressed in one form can be expressed in another without significantly changing its meaning, texture or value. Much prose translates fairly well from one language to another, but we know that poetry does not; we may get a rough idea of the sense of a translated poem but usually everything else is lost, especially that which makes it an object of beauty. The translation makes it into something it was not.

--Neil Postman

Research at the University of Birmingham in England found that bilingual speakers were better at maintaining focus and attention than monolinguals. *Muy bien!*

—Ken Budd

Shakespeare's bitter play [Troilus and Cressida] is therefore a dramatization of a part of a translation into English of the French translation of a Latin imitation of an old French expansion of a Latin epitome of a Greek romance.

--Gilbert Highet

It's too late to be studying Hebrew; it's more important to understand even the slang of today.

--Henry David Thoreau

Years later—long after I had failed, in high school, to master the math courses that would have allowed me to go on to study calculus—my father would occasionally remark that it was too bad, because it's impossible to see the world clearly if you don't know calculus...Years after all this, whenever my father made this comment... I'd invariably reply by saying that you couldn't really see the world clearly without having read the Aeneid in Latin, either. And then he'd make that little grimace that we all knew, half a smile, half a frown, twisting his face, and we'd laugh a sour little laugh, and retreat to our corners.

—Daniel Mendelsohn

I was worried people would laugh at me when I started to talk the language, but they were just pleasantly surprised that I could. The sense of humour here is great—once I could have a giggle, I settled down.

—Parminder Nagra

The Greek language with its mathematical structure is the language of Information Technology and the new generation of advanced computers, because only in the Greek language there are no limits.

—Bill Gates

I liked Latin, I like languages, I liked all the myths, and the Roman tales that we were required to translate in Latin, and all these interesting people who were never quite what they thought they would be or seemed to be.

—Suzanne Farrell

Botany is the art of insulting flowers in Greek and Latin.

--Alphonse Karr

In the United States, having a French or German accent is to be considered cultured, educated. But if you have a Spanish accent you are ignored, even if you are a Ph.D.

--Hugo Piñeda

Garbo had something behind the eyes that you couldn't see until you photographed it in close-up. You could see thought. If she had to look at one person with jealousy, and another with love, she didn't have to change her expression. You could see it in her eyes as she looked from one to the other. And nobody else has been able to do that on the screen. Garbo did it without the command of the English language.

--Clarence Brown

Television? No good will come of this device. The word is half Greek and half Latin.

—Unknown

Just learning to think in another language allows you to see your own culture in a better viewpoint.

—Gates McFadden

I bought a new Japanese car. I turned on the radio...I don't understand a word they're saying.

--Rodney Dangerfield

English distinguishes between the definite article 'the,' the indefinite article 'a,' and the demonstratives 'this' and 'that.' Some languages have no articles. Japanese is one such language. It has three demonstratives, however, corresponding to 'this here,' 'that over there near you,' and 'that over there near neither of us.'...My wife's first language is Japanese. She has been speaking English since she was a child, but she still occasionally misses a 'the' or inserts one where a native speaker would know it doesn't belong, e.g., 'Shall we hike the Diamond Head?'

—M. Thomas
Gammarino

Like other Romance languages, French has two definite articles, le (masculine) and la (feminine), as well as les for plurals. Some words change meaning entirely if gender-swapped; Compare le barde (poet) and la barde (bacon wrapped around meat), le boum (explosion) and la boum (party), le mari (husband) and la mari (marijuana), le merci (thanks) and la merci (mercy), le souris (smile) and la souris (mouse.).

—M. Thomas
Gammarino

My roommates and their classmates are burning & sacrificing an animal cracker to pray for their Greek final to be canceled. A snackrifice.

—Anna Borges

The teacher, in French hour, asked 'What is the difference between 'madame' and 'mademoiselle?'

The hopeful student answered 'monsieur.'

—Bennett Cerf

Myths can't be translated as they did in their ancient soil. We can only find our own meaning in our own time.

—Margaret Atwood

Student goes back to Latin *studium*, zeal or eagerness—a misnomer if there was one.

—Francis Griffith

The only trouble with this country [Mexico] is, the Verbs have too many endings.

—Will Rogers

Give your mind a chance to travel through foreign languages.

--Neil Simon

Reading in a foreign language is the most intimate way of reading.

—Jhumpa Lahiri

Being able to read a book in another language is a source of ego-stroking pride.

—Emily O’Beirne

English is a great language, and you never realize how great a language it is until you leave it behind and you try to write in another. A number of my Paraguayan friends who are poets and write in Spanish are very conscious of this, because the official dictionary of the Spanish Academy is really very small when compared, say, to the *New English Dictionary*. Spanish is a language which is not very rich in words, but in that respect, English is a tremendous language. There are almost 500,000 words in *Webster’s Third New International Dictionary*, which demonstrates that English is absolutely unsurpassable. There isn’t a language in the world that has the lexical riches that English has, but you would never know it by the way many people behave with it. They act as if it were a national patrimony to be locked up in Fort Knox, and the only two words you can withdraw at one time are ‘like’ and ‘I mean.’ And all those other millions of words sitting in there, gathering dust.

—Bruce Cutler

The gift of a common tongue is a priceless inheritance and it may well someday become the foundation of a common citizenship. I like to think of British and Americans moving about freely over each other’s wide estates with hardly a sense of being foreigners to one another.

—Winston Churchill

What most helps someone learn a language is when they’re immersed in a situation and they’re struggling to speak.

—Geoff Stead

Apps aren't likely to soon overcome the two essential advantages of a human teacher: the ability to hold a student's attention, and to continually tailor a lesson to the individual's progress, difficulties, and interest. There are all kinds of contextual factors in language learning. It would be hard for an app to take them all into account.

—Tom Roeper

All languages travel at the speed of sound, but sign language travels at the speed of light.

--*theChive*

Learning a new language is like downloading an expansion pack that allows you to interact with new characters.

--*theChive*

Lucky indeed is the writer who has grown up in Ireland, for the English spoken there is so amusing and musical.

—Kurt Vonnegut

There's this girl at my school, she speaks French. So it's like people actually think she's stupid in a way—the students use her as a clown. They go, 'What? Can you say that again?' The teachers, I think they notice it, but they feel they can't control the kids.

—Middle School Student
Amelia as quoted
by Kathleen
Cushman & Laura
Rogers

When I was young I was amazed at Plutarch's statement that the elder Cato began at the age of eighty to learn Greek. I am amazed no longer. Old age is ready to undertake tasks that youth shirked because they would take too long.

--W. Somerset Maugham

Code is the world's most dominant language.

—Kathy Einhorn and
Clark Merkle

What is the least spoken language in the world? Sign.

—*theChive*

Language is the most defining feature of human intelligence.

--William Calvin

Poesy is of so subtle a spirit, that in the pouring out of one language into another it will evaporate.

—Sir John Denham