

At the close of the year I thought of chatting about something more light-hearted. Language barriers, as many of us would know, are one of the obstacles you encounter when traveling to foreign countries. I recently traveled through Europe and have definitely been left in some awkward hand gesturing situations which leave both parties more confused at the conclusion than when you began... which makes you realize just how important accurate translation and interpretation is. Thus I have decided to share with you some interesting facts on the languages of the world.

Hoping to hear from you!
Raquel de Sousa

Lost in Translation



Food... I think
- Budapest

You arrive at a train station and are faced with crowds of people who are moving in a general direction and so you follow thinking 'this must surely be the way out', only to find that you have been led directly into the maze of the local metro system. All your luggage and 'must-have-items' (collected from your previous travels) in-tow, you make your way in the direction of the friendly slanted *i* signaling tourist information. Happy to finally be on the right track you continue through the underground maze. Finally the light at the end of the tunnel can be seen... the staircase to the world above and your much needed tourist information centre. Your eyes adjust to the light of the sun and what are you greeted with construction work in exactly the same area your English-speaking information centre should be!

No, it really isn't this bad when traveling around Europe and that is mainly because of the number of languages taught to the youth at a school level. Many individuals can speak an average of two languages fluently and often the second language is English. English is in fact the language spoken by the most non-native speakers world-wide (approx. 250 – 350 million). However in a world comprising of around 6200 languages, is it wise to know only one language?

Polygots are individuals who know and are able to use several languages. Some people claim to speak 10 to 60 languages. These would include dialects as well as official languages. Within Papua New Guinea there are 820 languages spoken and this would therefore lend to the number of languages the inhabitants would speak or understand. If you were to live in Switzerland you would be exposed to German, French, Italian and English. Most of the locals I met in this country were able to speak fluent English as well as their mother tongue, and many could speak an extra one or two languages. So how do you choose which new language to begin learning?



Friendly family sign
outside Red Light District in Amsterdam

Often it is a passion for the culture or for business opportunities. Within Africa there are an estimated 2000 languages spoken. After gaining independence, many African countries, in the search for national unity, selected one language (generally the former colonial language) to be used in government and education. Consequently, English, Portuguese and French are often spoken. Knowing one of these languages would be highly beneficial but you could be adventurous and even try learning Arabic or Swahili. Some African languages are even whistled to communicate over long distances... but that's another kettle of fish entirely!

In the end it is always valuable to know another language... or you could just hire a simultaneous interpretation company and we would iron out all those 'lost in translation' dilemmas :)



Other meanings for Toi
Toi - Zurich

Celebrations for the new arrival



Congress Rental celebrated the arrival of yet another bundle of joy. The baby shower was held on 10 July and was filled with the usual games and giggles. Romaine gave birth to her 53 cm, 3,4 kg little boy on the 3 August 2009 at 14:11. We just want to wish her and Angelo all the luck with the new arrival and congratulations! You can see Josh Ethan on the left already showing his sporty side :)

