



Mais Oui! Deepening Story and Character with Foreign Language

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Do we underestimate the role of foreign language in everyday life?



Story and Foreign Language



- **How important is French to this scene?**
 - Would this scene be as funny without French?
 - Why French, and not Spanish? Or Latin?
- **What do the references to French tell us about the characters?**
- **How does foreign language enhance the scene?**
 - What are the sources of tension and conflict?

The Art of Foreign Language

Benefits

- Multiculturalism
- Distinguishes characters
 - Adds dimensions to personality
 - Provides backstory
 - Culturally separates groups (*Renegade*)
- Engages reader imaginations
- Transports readers to new places
- A minefield of conflict and tension (Trevor Noah)

Risks

- Meanings of words vary
 - *Les copains vs Mes copains*
- Sentence structure varies
 - Formal vs informal voice
 - Chinese & tenses
- Languages are not the same from region to region
 - French vs Canadian French vs Creole
- "Cultural appropriation"

A little foreign language goes a long way

- "Señor Smith, would you like your room key?"
- "No, thank you, I think we will eat first."
- "Bueno, Señor Smith, would you like a recommendation?"
- "Yes, gracias, thank you. What do you suggest?"
- "Miguel's is very popular."
- George looked at the form and signed on the line agreeing to the charges. "Was denken Sie?"
- "Nein," Vivian responded.
- George breathed in, shook his head, and let out a long, steady exhale. "Where can we get a good steak?"
- "Si, Señor Smith. Ruth's Chris is one block from the hotel."
- Where does this scene take place? What do we know about the setting? **[setting]**
- What is happening? **[plot]**
- How many characters are in this scene? **[character]**
- What do we know about the characters? What are their roles?
- What is the source of tension/conflict in this scene? **[story]**
- What role does foreign language play?

Create a Scene 1

French

- oui (yes)
- non (no)
- merci (thank you)
- aujourd'hui (today)
- bon nuit (good night)
- bienvenue (welcome)
- laissez (leave)

Spanish

- Si (yes)
- Non (no)
- Gracias (thank you)
- Bueno (good)
- Ahora (now)
- Bienvenido (you are welcome)
- salir (get out)

German

- Ja (yes)
- Nein (no)
- Danke (thank you)
- Gut (good)
- Jetzt (now)
- Bitte schön (you are welcome)
- raus hier (get out of here)

Create a Scene 2

Calusa Vocabulary

cacique – chief

ka – the, this

ño – war

ñoaka – warrior

ri – house

ra – fierce

kuči – destroy

kuhpe – assemble

lete – run

maśu – build

maśuhoma – house of prayer

mayai – on the other side

ño – stop, rest, lie down

śahka – tree

śeha – to examine

śera – watch over/guard

śihpi – harpoon

tepe – join

wiši – water

How to get started...

- **Start simple**
 - Single words, then layer in phrases.
 - Begin with a language with which you are most familiar
- **Google translate is a good place to *start***
 - Reverse translations are essential
 - Check dialects
 - Use multiple sources to check translations
- **Actively solicit help from *native* foreign language speakers**
 - Personal friends
 - Ethnic restaurants
 - University and high school foreign language programs

Closing Thoughts...

- Foreign language is a window into different cultures
- Foreign languages can add complexity to characters
- Foreign characters create new sources of tension and conflict to propel plot
- Readers are eager to be taken someplace different and exotic
- Start slow and build your capacity

