

BIALAGS & BILLABONGS*

A Language Lover's Guide to the Most Intriguing Words Around the World

What sums up a nation or gives us an insight into the cultural differences between us and our neighbours? Where better to start than with language?

Take a linguistic trip around the world with ***In Other Words*** and unlock the meaning of some of the most insightful, intriguing, and satisfying expressions on the planet—for which there are no English equivalents. There is a Czech proverb** which proclaims that you live a new life for every language that you speak. If you only know one language, you only live once!

From Chinese to Czech, Swahili to Swedish, Thai to Turkish, language expert Christopher Moore defines many so-called 'untranslatables', opening a window into the culture of each language, explaining words and phrases that in literal terms may boggle the mind. Take a look at *yokomeshi*. Literally, it means 'a meal eaten sideways' but it has come to mean the awkwardness of struggling with a foreign tongue with reference to the fact that Japanese is written vertically rather than horizontally.

When do meanings become lost in translation and when is it simply more satisfying to use the original? Why do we say *doppelgänger* and not 'double goer'? And where would we be without *froufrou*? ***In Other Words*** will give you a whole new vocabulary for those elusive things you never had a word for and explain where some of the more interesting words you did know came from!

Did you know that 'ketchup' is thought to be a simple corruption of the original Cantonese *Kê Tsiap*, the name of a spicy sauce brought back to Europe in the seventeenth century? Wouldn't you like to have a word for that irritating person who buttonholes you to tell you their long stories of woe? The Italians would say they are truly an *attaccabottoni* (literally a person who attacks your buttons)!

The Japanese language apparently has no single word for "water". And did you know that the word *ilunga**** is considered by many to be the most untranslatable word in the world? But what does it mean?

Meticulously researched with dozens of specialist language consultants, accessibly written and with a foreword by Simon Winchester, ***In Other Words*** gives a unique insight into different cultures and languages.

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Christopher Moore will be available for interview on Thursday 31st March

For more information, or to interview Christopher Moore, please contact Sarah Kidd on 01865 353911 or email sarah.kidd@oup.com

*Bialag= a person in front of another on horseback
Billabong= 'a branch of the river cut off from the mainstream'

***Kolik jazyků znáš, tolikrát jsi člověkem*

*** It describes a person who is ready to forgive any transgression a first time, and then to tolerate it for a second time...but never a third time.

Some of the words and phrases taken from *In Other Words*:

horripiler (French) Untranslatable only in its wonderful brevity, this ghostly sounding word means 'to make your hair stand on end'.

drachenfutter (German) meaning 'dragon fodder', this is the offering German husbands make to their wives when they've stayed out late or they have otherwise engaged in some kind of inappropriate behaviour.

de doofpot (Dutch) Literally 'the extinguisher', this is a common Dutch response to any kind of scandal that urges everyone to look the other way so that the whole thing is forgotten.

duende (Spanish) Originally meaning 'imp' or 'goblin', this wonderful word captures an entire world of passion and artistic excellence and describes a climactic show of spirit in a performance or work of art.

se virar (Portuguese) From Brazilian Portuguese, this literally means 'to empty'. It is used to describe when you try to do something but you don't have enough knowledge to complete the task.

pohoda (Czech) What exactly is *pohoda*? It is hard to say, except that it's a pain-free, trouble-free state that we should all like to share in.

hart ducha (Polish) It literally means 'strength of spirit' or 'strength of will'. A man needs to be a man and this word covers the mental self-discipline that requires.

yolki-palki (Russian) A peculiar Russian expression which could express surprise, dismay, or pleasure, depending on the situation.

bupkis (Yiddish) This word, literally meaning 'beans', has come to mean 'nothing' or 'something that is worthless'. It is generally spoken in disgust or despair.

bejaka (Swedish) This word encapsulates a whole philosophy. This means enthusiastic, optimistic, or joyful attitude, and, when applied to life, signifies far more than just agreeing to live.

utepils (Norwegian) You have to live through the long dark months of a Norwegian winter to appreciate the annual rite of *utepils*. Literally, it means 'the first drink of the year taken out of doors'.

aina on oksan ottajia, kun on kuusen kantajia (Finnish) Roughly translated as 'if there is someone to carry a fir tree, there will be no shortage of people willing to hold a branch to help', it enigmatically suggests that there will always be many people around to grab the coat-tails of someone else's success.

denize düşen yılanı sarılır (Turkish) A phrase that evokes the imagery of the sea, it literally translates, 'if you fall into the sea, hold onto the snake'. It highlights the understanding that you will accept help in any way, no matter what it looks like, if you are in a bad situation

taarof (Persian) Accepting someone's hospitality, taking something that you may not want so that you don't offend them.

bacheque (Lingala) The local 'man on the street', the man who lives on nothing but his wits. The closest English translation might be 'con artist'.

nunchi (Korean) This refers to a sort of 'sixth sense', an intrinsic understanding of the person with whom you are interacting with.

dil baagh baagh ho-gaya (Urdu and Punjabi) Literally 'my heart became a garden' and it is a phrase that is used to express overwhelming joy.

kefi (Greek) A word that says you're happy and just want to have a good time, enjoy good company over a good meal, drink, dance, and be merry.

caim (Celtic) This word literally means 'a sanctuary'. It's an imaginary circle made around the body with the hand, serving as a ring of protection.

hozh'q (Navajo) This means 'the beauty of life, as seen and created by the person'. For the Navajo, this is something that grows from a human being and spreads outward to permeate the universe.

ti pouchon (Haitian Creole) This refers to a handsome young man who is also wealthy.