



La Lettre de l'OEP N°53

(mars-avril 2014)

<http://www.observatoireplurilinguisme.eu>

Translated by Sylvie Aubert

Editorial : Spotlights on education

1) We know that education makes good films. A teacher tries to list them in her [blog](#) : 123 French and foreign films, from *Claudine à l'école* (1937) to *La Cour de Babel* (2014) including *Les Risques du métier* (1967), *Le Maître d'école* (1981), *Entre les murs* (2008), *Detachment* (2012) and *At Berkeley* (2014). There have been many more in the last few years, between 5 and 8 films a year since 2008.

Is it a sign ? It may be. At least, two important films have been acclaimed by both the public and the film critics : *Sur le chemin de l'école* and *La Cour de Babel*.

These two films have one distinctive feature that they share with *Entre les murs* (2008) : they do not criticize school, the school is not their setting, but they speak about school, about children, about schoolchildren, about parents and family (not necessarily mother or father), about teachers, about the institution and education in general.

Depending on whether you are left or right-leaning, optimistic or pessimistic, positive or negative-minded, grumpy or cheery, a realist or a utopian, you will find in them either true representations of some reality, or soothing expressions liable to give a good conscience and to legitimate failures and inaction. As for us, we take these films for what they are : they show something and provoke our thoughts.

2) *Sur le chemin de l'école*

This strong and moving film beautifully illustrates the statements and communication on education UNESCO and UNICEF have been developing for decades. At the same time, the [itinerant world photographic exhibition](#) "Journeys to school against all the odds" that was launched in Paris on 3 April 2013 will continue its trip around the world until 3 May 2015.

To understand properly the issues of the film, we need to have a look at the program [Education for all](#) adopted in Dakar in 2000 by UNICEF and UNESCO. One of the main goals of this program was to ensure that by 2015 all the children, ...->

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La Lettre de l'OEP is translated by volunteers in [allemand](#), [anglais](#), [bulgare](#), [croate](#), [espagnol](#), [grec](#), [italien](#), [polonais](#), [portugais](#), [roumain](#) et [russe](#). The texts can be read on-line. Thanks to the translators. You can add other languages. [Contact us](#)

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In this issue

- x Editorial : Spotlights on education
 - Education makes good films
 - « Sur le chemin de l'école »
 - « La Cour de Babel »
 - 1st possible misinterpretation : associating immigration and school problems.
 - Restricting immigration to reception classes
 - Potentialities of immigration in education
 - PISA surveys
 - An example to follow : New York City !
- x Recent articles not to be missed

->and especially the girls, the children in difficult situations and those from ethnic minorities, would have the opportunity to access compulsory, free and quality primary education and to complete it. These goals will probably not be reached. Nevertheless the [progress report](#) notes that "in developing regions, ...->

-> the enrolment rate of children of primary school age went from 82% in 1999 to 90% in 2010... Clear progress has been recorded in the countries facing the greatest challenges : East and South-East Asia, and Sub-Saharan Africa, where the number of out-of-school children has been reduced and the enrolment rate increased." If you like statistics, you can peruse these [graphs](#).

Sur le chemin de l'école celebrates the wonderful courage of these children, everywhere in the world, in poor countries, who walk long distances and face dangers to go to school. The role of the parents is also emphasized and the faith they place in the school that will give a different future to their children. The teacher is not absent, he is in the background as an unquestionable reality.

This is food for thought for our Western minds, so different is the situation in our rich societies where our children, unaware of the chances offered by school, are reluctant to study...

3) *La Cour de Babel* is a kind of Western counterpart to Pascal Clisson's film.

The great virtue of *La Cour de Babel* is to ask questions which are difficult to answer. Hence some possible misinterpretations.

4) 1st possible misinterpretation : associating immigration and school problems.

The fact that the film focuses on allophone children recently arrived in France, according to the terminology of the Ministry of education, may create a wrong association between school problems and immigration. This association is partly justified but it must be severely qualified. Contrary to common beliefs, for the last ten years immigration, at least in France, has been kept at a very low, almost incompressible level. Thus the number of foreign pupils in secondary school in France was more than halved between 1995 and 2010. In the meantime, the educational level has also declined. Between 1997 and 2007, according to a [Ministry study](#), the ratio of pupils having difficulties to read when entering secondary school has gone up from 14.9% to 19%. This degradation does not involve the basic ability to read but the language skills, more particularly vocabulary and spelling. This decline is general and important in priority education. That children newly arrived in the country should have difficulties at school is a certainty, confirmed by the PISA surveys (see lower). Nonetheless, there is no link between immigration and the decline of the educational level, as proven by the reading level. Therefore the causes of this decline are elsewhere.

To link decline in educational level and immigration is thus groundless, all the more so that part of these children will find their way to success whereas others will meet many difficulties. Giving hope, ambition, motivation, means giving possibilities of success. This is a result in itself.

5) 2nd possible misinterpretation : restricting immigration to reception classes. Reception classes are but a transition. Immigration lasts.

More than 70% of the immigrants to France ... ->

->(foreigners born in France + foreigners born abroad + foreigners born abroad who have acquired citizenship) arrived more than 10 years ago ; more than half are married to a woman who does not come from the same country ; more than half the immigrants who arrived more than 15 years ago are now French. 68% of the immigrants speak French well or very well. But if we want to embrace the cultural potential that population movements represent, the field of observation must be enlarged and include the descendants of the immigrants.

...6) The potential of immigration for education

In Europe, the proportion of immigrants and their descendants represents 17% of the population with great disparities between countries : 20% in Spain, 22% in Germany, 24% in the United Kingdom, 26% in Sweden, and 27% in France.

These are averages which mean that in the large cities, the ratios are significantly higher. It means that many families do not necessarily use the language of education at home. Bilingual families are no exceptions, many families are bilingual.

Seeing the linguistic diversity of the families, one could expect a diversity of foreign languages taught in schools. But there is no such thing. Everywhere in Europe, and more particularly in France, the early teaching of foreign languages in schools has developed into teaching of English only... This is a paradoxical and almost absurd situation because children have all the time to learn English in secondary school and higher education, taking into account the great importance of English in everyday life.

It is even more paradoxical when one considers that though children are ever younger when they start learning English, their proficiency has not improved. One even finds the opposite, at least in France, between 2004 and 2010. The lower level in English, and also in other languages but less ...->

->important, is certainly not a consequence of early teaching but it proves that this is not efficient and the drawbacks of the polarization on English amply outweigh the expected benefits, that is of a higher level.

The paradigm should then be reversed and the development of a multilingual and multicultural education should be favoured. It is the only way to use linguistic and cultural diversity as a wealth benefiting the whole society and its cohesion, and to favour personal fulfilment of everyone.

This was the topic of the round table "[Des langues de la famille aux langues de l'école](#)" organised by Expolangues 2014 of which we speak further in this newsletter.

The example of New York City (see lower) should be examined closely too.

7) The PISA surveys

The OEP must remain true to its methods. That is why we are inviting you to consider both *La Cour de Babel* and the PISA surveys. The [PISA surveys](#) (*Program for International Student Assessment*) have been conducted every 3 years since 2000 by the [OECD](#). They aim at measuring the performances of educational systems in both member and non-member states.

We do not wish to summarise these surveys which can be found on-line ([FR](#), [EN](#), [GER](#)). We can nevertheless take out an extract which illustrates our point : "On average across OECD countries, 8% of students are top performers in reading (Level 5 or 6). These students can handle texts that are unfamiliar in either form or content and can conduct fine-grained analyses of texts. Shanghai-China has the largest proportion of top performers – 25% – among all participating countries and economies. More than 15% of students in Hong Kong- China, Japan and Singapore are top performers in reading as are more than 10% of students in Australia, Belgium, Canada, Finland, France, Ireland, Corea, Liechtenstein, New Zealand, Norway, Poland and Chinese Taipei." In France (see the [French report](#), the surveys by country are available [here](#)), the correlation between the socio-economic background and the performance is more clearly linked than in other countries of the OECD ; the level of performance in maths is nevertheless in the OECD countries average...

The French system is more unequal in 2012 than it was 9 years before and the social inequalities have worsened mainly between 2003 and 2006 (43 points in 2003 against 55 in 2006, and 57 points in 2012). In France anyone coming from a disadvantaged background has less chances of success today than in 2003.

Pupils with an immigrant background are at least twice more likely to have difficulties. The proportion of pupils with an immigrant background who were under Level 2 in maths during the cycle PISA 2012 is 16% in Australia and Canada but it reaches 43% in France and is globally over 40% in Austria, Finland, Italy, Mexico, Portugal, Spain and Sweden. ...->

->8) An example to follow : New York City !

The media, following the *New York Times* on 30 January 2014, echoed the keen interest of New Yorkers for bilingual classes. Indeed, the New York authorities have decided to open bilingual classes when at least 10 families requested it. It was a success. Classes in Spanish, Chinese, French, and other languages were opened and were quickly full, attracting not only families of foreign origin but also American families. We should follow this example instead of force-feeding our children with English as early as primary school or even nursery school without any visible results.

For more information :

[Archives du New York Times](#)
[French Morning 22 mars 2014](#)
[Le Monde Amériques](#)
[Le Huffington Post](#)
[Business Insider](#)

Articles not to be missed

Languages on-line : the new ways of learning

The radio broadcast "Tout un monde" on France-Culture by Marie-Hélène Fraïssé, with the participation of OEP (Astrid Guillaume, Vice-president of OEP, lecturer at Paris IV-Sorbonne), and Mathieu Cisel, doctoral student in Science of education.

MOOC = Massive open online course

ou CLOM : Cours en ligne ouvert et massif

[More information](#)



A television in the bottle (Le docu Public Sénat)

Broadcast 04/03/2014 on Public Sénat

Length : 52 minutes

The television programs for babies and toddlers are attracting more and more parents every year, as they are convinced of their educational benefits. The film decodes the scientific issues of this new media opportunity, looking into the making of these programs and the studies conducted on young children both in France and in the United States. It upsets many common beliefs and illusions about the benefits of television and video as learning tools. It shows the inescapable importance of human relationship. It also opens fascinating views on the mental and emotional world of babies...

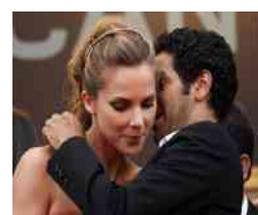
A documentary by Anne Georget. A Quark production



7 Reasons You Should Teach Your Children To Speak French

The New Republic's John McWhorter just came out with an essay on why we should [stop pretending French is an important language](#). The piece comes in response to [a New York Times article](#) about a new initiative from the French government to increase the amount of French instruction in American schools. To be sure, it's a little heavy handed for a foreign government to be attempting to quasi-infiltrate another country's education system. But here's why McWhorter's wrong, and why everyone should learn French, even if [this guy's](#) the one telling you to do it:

1) For English speakers, French is the easiest language to learn.



Giornata della Lingua Madre: "La scuola deve dare valore al multilinguismo",

“Se per lingua madre si intende quella che si impara dai genitori, l’Italia vanta una varietà incredibile. Inoltre, se si pensa ai dialetti, si evince che nel nostro Paese c’è sempre stata una notevole differenziazione linguistica, anche prima dell’aumento dell’immigrazione”. A parlare è il professore Gilberto Bettinelli, secondo il quale in Italia la sensibilità verso le lingue minoritarie e i dialetti si è diffusa a partire dagli anni '70.



Lingua materna, lingua interiore (Yalla.it)

10 febbraio 2014

La centralità del tema delle [lingue madri](#) nell'attuale realtà sociale italiana che ha visto in pochi anni un forte incremento del multilinguismo (si contano più di 150 lingue immigrate), con il più alto numero in Europa di provenienze diverse delle comunità immigrate, pone la questione del rapporto delle giovani generazioni con la lingua e la cultura d'origine.

Inaugurazione del Centro studi sulla diversità linguistica "Sociolinguia", Università di Teramo e Civitella del Tronto, 14 marzo 2014

Il Centro Studi sulla Diversità Linguistica nasce con l'obiettivo di sensibilizzare l'opinione pubblica al valore della diversità linguistica.

Al fine di moltiplicare le sue azioni divulgative e di incidere sullo sviluppo delle comunità linguistiche minoritarie, il Centro Studi sulla Diversità Linguistica si occupa anche di formazione e trasferimento della conoscenza. Legere il [dépliant](#) e la [locandina](#).

Johnson: What is a foreign language worth? (The Economist March 11th 2014)

JOHNSON is a fan of the Freakonomics books and columns. But this week's [podcast](#) makes me wonder if the team of Stephen Dubner and Steven Levitt aren't overstretching themselves a bit. "Is learning a foreign language really worth it?", asks the headline. A reader writes: ...

Language knowledge in the European Union

Language knowledge in the European Union by country, age group and mother tongue vs. learned

Choose a **language** to see where it is most widely spoken, or choose a **country** to see its top languages.

Does English still borrow words from other languages?

English language has "borrowed" words for centuries. But is it now lending more than it's taking, asks Philip Durkin, deputy chief editor of the Oxford English Dictionary.

Singing and learning French songs abroad

We are constantly looking for new ways of learning [learning foreign languages](#). We found recently that singing in a foreign language helps memorise the words of this language. How is it with **French songs** ? Does it travel abroad ? That is what we are going to explain in this article.



Announcements and publications

Des langues de la famille aux langues de l'école : synergies, démarches, outils

Round Table organised by the Délégation générale à la langue française et aux langues de France

To listen click [HERE](#).

Pour access each contribution click on each speaker's name.

Speakers : [Daniel Coste](#), Association pour le développement de l'enseignement bi-plurilingue (ADEB); [Barbara Abdelilah-Bauer](#), CAFE BILINGUE; [Michel Candelier](#), Éducation et Diversité linguistique et culturelle (EDILIC); [Gwenn Guyader](#), D'Une Langue A L'Autre (DULALA); [Naïma Blanc](#), Kidilangues; [débat avec le public](#).

Moderator : Gaïd Evenou, DGLFLF

Many children speak at home other languages than those taught at school and thus possess linguistic skills that are not always developed. How can we make use of the linguistic and cultural diversity present in a classroom ? The speakers outlined their teaching methods and presented new tools adapted to a multicultural context.



[In Paris, a museum to discover the languages of the world](#)

The language plays a central role in our lives, even in our dreams. The 170m²-wide permanent exhibition MUNDOLINGUA invites you to discover the secrets of language during an unusual visit with many different themes.

The exhibition is open to all, either beginners or experts. It proposes several levels, reading and listening on touchscreens, games, many unusual objects such as a sound head, a language tree, syntax cubes and bricks, many instruments used by linguists, a copy of the Rosetta Stone, the encrypting machine Enigma, etc.



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Open every day from 10am to 7pm



Dans le nouveau numéro 2014/1 des Langues Modernes

L'anglicisation des formations dans l'enseignement supérieur

Dossier (coordonné par Pierre Frath)

Tools for learning languages :
different approaches of languages and cultures



Even if, as a result of works within the European Council, many educational systems are now interested in the learning principles explained here, they are still mostly ignored. They have the opportunity to use the results of experimental works which have been conducted for several decades by many researchers and teachers who innovated in this area.

The main feature of these "different approaches of languages and cultures" is to have the pupils working simultaneously on several languages and several cultural varieties.

La revue du *Synergies Italie*, revue du GERFLINT, lance un appel à contributions pour la publication du n°11 sur le thème :



***Le commerce de la parole
entre linguistique et économie***

Coordonné par Giovanni Agresti, Université de Teramo
Date limite de soumission des propositions : 30 mai 2014
<http://gerflint.eu/publications/synergies-italie.html>



Welcome to the *Ist International Congress of Linguistics Applied the Teaching of Languages : En route to multilingualism*, a meeting place where researchers and teachers, either experts or beginners can share the results of their studies and teaching experiences.

[> More information](#)

XI Congreso Internacional Traducción, Texto e Interferencias

El Congreso de 2014 versará, como bien aclara su título, sobre la amplia temática de la teoría y la práctica de la traducción, con especial incidencia en los tipos de traducciones, y los traductores.

La **fecha límite** para la presentación de los resúmenes finalizará **el 30 de junio de 2014**

Lengua(s) oficial(es) del evento: español, inglés, alemán, francés

[>> Más información >>](#)



[La Clé des langues N°63-Février 2014](#)

2014 will be marked either in England or in France by the celebration of the 450th birthday anniversary of William Shakespeare. In this context an excellent film by Joss Whedon, *A lot of ado about nothing*, inspired by the shakespearean comedy came out last week. You will find a cinema ticket on our website and a dossier about the film.



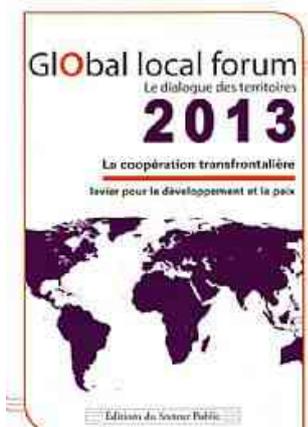
Of course our news is not only about England and the Bard of Avon. You will also find information about Angélica Liddell's theatre, two articles about Sigrid

Damm, a conference about formulas in sur political and institutional discours, texts about the events on Piazza della Loggia and resources on contemporary Arab literature.

The editorial team

Global local forum 2013- Le dialogue des territoires

HORS COLLECTION, Ouvrage collectif - 23 € ou 15 000 F CFA
publié à Dakar et Paris le 17 décembre 2013



"La coopération transfrontalière, levier pour le développement et la paix :
les territoires construisent par delà les frontières"

A signaler notamment au sommaire :

- Les avatars de la frontière ou l'émergence du poreux par complexification néguentropique, par **Paul GHILS**, Genève
- Quand les frontières ne séparent plus mais unissent : la victoire sur la guerre, par **Alain HOULOU**
- Questionnements théoriques et recherches artistiques : les frontières entre ordre et altérité, par **Anna KRASTEVA**, Université de Sofia, Bulgarie,
- La culture, trait d'union entre les deux capitales congolaises, Brazzaville et Kinshasa, Par **Alphonse TSHILUMBA**, Congo
- Europe – Afrique, pour une meilleure gouvernance et des résultats plus concrets en matière de développement, par **Michèle STRIFFLER**, 1ère Vice-présidente de la Commission du développement du Parlement Européen

Towards Plurilingualism ? Twenty years later

Under the direction of : Violaine Bigot, Aude Bretegnier, Marité Vasseur

In the last decades, the plurilingual prospect deeply changed the research on the teaching of languages. Nevertheless we can wonder in what way it had an influence of the linguistic and educational policies, and the practices and ideas of teachers. This is what this work, with the contributions of 42 researchers from 10 different countries, is trying to do.



Langage et société n° 147, 2014/1

Familles plurilingues dans le monde Mixités conjugales et transmission des langues

178 pages

Éditeur : [Maison des sciences de l'homme](#)

ISBN : 9782735116089

Sous la direction de [Christine Deprez](#), [Gabrielle Varro](#), [Beate Collet](#)



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