

READING COMPREHENSION

Au Renoir mister franglais - EOI País Vasco Inglés B2 (resuelto)

The British are notoriously bad at learning foreign tongues. But with Franglais anyone could get by on holiday with just a petit peu of effort. If there is one foreign language that English speakers always seem to crack, it's Franglais.

Its rules are simple. Insert as many French words as you know into the sentence, fill in the rest with English, then speak it with absolute conviction. Although it wasn't known as such then, Franglais is found in Shakespeare and has probably been used for as long as the English and French have had to talk to each other.

But Miles Kington did it best. After all, he coined the name for this hybrid tongue. Kington studied languages, and it showed. In a long-running series of columns for Punch he satirized the earnest but doomed efforts of native English speakers to handle French. Like a phrase book, each of his "lessons" covered a particular situation.

Bodged attempts at foreign languages are as important as food poisoning to a good holiday anecdote, but Franglais is a daily reality for millions working in Europe, Africa and Canada.

The Canadian journalist Karl Mamer, author of a website on Franglais, says many Canadians speak "*cereal box French*", as they only get to practise it by reading the bilingual text on the back of the box in the morning.

When they then travel to French-speaking centres, like Montreal or Quebec City, their few words of French are used as a kind of peace offering to shopkeepers. He says they're thinking: 'Look, I'm going to try speaking as much French as possible, showing you I'm making a sufficient effort, and then you please switch to your fluent English as soon as I've linguistically self-flagellated myself before you.'

Franglais might be good enough to buy your oignons, but it's different if you want to win votes.

Politicians running for office in an officially bilingual country need to try to master both languages, although some have made it to high office without knowing their *coude* from their elbow. According to Janyce McGregor, a producer who covers parliament for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, 'they may be very clever, but their language skills are always going to be a factor.'

It's not just high office either. A Francophone bus passenger in Ottawa complained to the city transport authority last December that drivers must be bilingual, and be sent off for language training if necessary. But as Ms. McGregor points out: 'If people are bilingual, they probably won't apply to be bus drivers.'

In Canada, Franglais helps French and English speakers co-exist, even if it's a shoddy compromise for some. In France it is something quite different. It is a cultural attack. This is not the Franglais of the tourist asking awkwardly for a cup de cafe. What concerns them is the creeping advance of English words, especially American-English, into their language.

The Toubon Law, passed in 1994, was an attempt to restrict them. It makes French compulsory in government publications. Public bodies weed out English words and suggest French ones where they previously did not exist. So it was goodbye "e-mail", hello "courriel", although "le weekend" - for some the dark heart of Franglais - has survived.

London-based French journalist Agnes Poirier says those who suggest new words are often too late. 'The man in the street will have already adopted English words to describe new trends.'

It's true that, like a really good French waiter, Franglais always seem to be hovering nearby with a suggestion. Need a three-word headline to sum up the man who has cost Societe Generale billions? Le Rogue Trader, as the Independent - Kington's own paper - described him last week.

So e-mails still swamp courriels on French web pages. And despite the Toubon Law, Ms Poirier says the internet has led to an invasion of English words, which are picked up by newspapers because they seem fashionable, and then find their way into speech.

But why does it matter? Ms Poirier's book, *Touche*, a French Woman's Take on the English, has plenty of examples of the English language adopting French words and phrases, even if some of them, like "double entendre", are not actually said in France. It's a kind of Franglais, but it has never seemed to bother anyone.

Other mixed languages like Spanglish and Denglisch (German and English) also exist without causing nearly so much anguish. The French see it differently because English is taking over the world and French isn't. English doesn't need defending, but French, once the European language of freedom and culture, does. And English is not just 600,000 eccentrically spelt words in a very large book, it is, to some, a symbol of Anglo-American cultural imperialism, the language of junk food. You might think we were talking about the last two speakers of a native American dialect, rather than French, which is used by more than 350 million people. But to some, a future of Franglais n'est pas un future at all.



Read the text. For questions 1–5 choose the alternative a, b or c which fits best according to the text.

0. What does the writer say about Franglais?
 - a) It is older than it may seem.
 - b) It is the only thing the English are good at.
 - c) It is what the British speak while holidaying in France.

1. Miles Kington...
 - a) Made fun of the way French was spoken in Britain.
 - b) Spoke Franglais better than anyone else.
 - c) Was an expert in languages and a columnist.

2. When shopping in Quebec, English-speaking Canadians...
 - a) Always do their best
 - b) Only use French
 - c) Try to be polite

3. In Canada, being bilingual is...
 - a) Compulsory to find a job nowadays.
 - b) Convenient to become a politician
 - c) Useless and unnecessary.

4. In the writer's view, French people...
 - a) Feel threatened by the English.
 - b) Refuse to be culturally colonized.
 - c) Think English tourists could try harder.

5. The French journalist Agnes Poirier
 - a) Blames the Internet for the English invasion.
 - b) Doesn't seem the least bothered with Franglais.
 - c) Thinks the French are reluctant to use new English words.

6. In the text, which of these statements is TRUE?
 - a) English language is more fashionable than French.
 - b) Franglais is not the only example of a hybrid language.
 - c) French could only advance if English was banned in France.

7. The conclusion of the writer on the issue is that the French are...
 - a) Hypocritical.
 - b) Obsessed with the English.
 - c) Overreacting.



See next page for answer key.



Key

- 0. A
- 1. C
- 2. C
- 3. B
- 4. B
- 5. B
- 6. B
- 7. C