

Zine Verschenken

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Editorial

Naa? Was geht? Let's dive into how language shapes us in this month's edition of Zine Verschenken.

Did you know that over half of the world's population is bilingual? Learning a new language isn't just about vocabulary; it's like adopting a new personality. While that might not be entirely true, language certainly shifts your perspective. It's a chance to explore a different culture, complete with its own quirks and expressions.

I remember being in school, eager to learn French, but instead, I was placed in a tutor group for German. It felt a bit like being sorted into one of Hogwarts' houses. In the end, German proved to be the more practical choice, leading me to take the plunge and move to Germany. But I still wonder—how different would my life be if I were fluent in French?

Why did the comma break up with the apostrophe? Because it was too possessive. What do nouns and adjectives have in common? They both need a good subject to complete them. And why don't conjunctions ever get lonely? Because they're always connecting with someone.

Thanks for being here with us! Don't forget to subscribe to our mailing list to stay updated on all things Zine Verschenken.

The Creamery on the corner

(Childhood memory of learning how to speak German)

"Are you coming Karen? I need one or two things from the creamery on the corner of Fichtestrasse. I hope there won't be a queue as Frau Tuschik is a bit of a chatterbox. She's got a heart of gold, but it can be difficult to get away!"

"You don't want to be giving away any secrets, that's for sure!" agreed Tante Rita. "Anything you say in K tchen's shop is bound to be all over the neighbourhood in the blink of an eye!"

I didn't need any encouragement. I loved shopping at the creamery, with its humming fridge, its rows of cheeses, triangular tubs of cream and shelves stacked high with paper packets of every shape and size, all with see-through windows showing what was inside. Frau Tuschik liked children and I always got a treat of some sort: a slice of cheese, a mini bread roll, or a milk chocolate bar. But the real reason I liked going there was because you took a little milk can with you to carry the milk back in. They reminded me of the milk churns at Whitegates Farm, where I went to nursery school.

"From tomorrow, I'm going to send Karen to do the errands," said Oma to Frau Tuschik. "It's good practice for her German and I think she's old enough now."

"What a good idea! You rest your legs, Frau Ranke, and let the young ones do the work!" Then she turned to me and smiled, "I think you'll do just fine," she said reassuringly, patting me on the head.

That evening, Opa laid out a row of coins and put me to the test. I wasn't very good at it.

"Fritz, jetzt ist aber genug! Sie haben ein ganz anderes system in England!"

"Aber sie soll lernen, Therese. Dafur ist sie ja hier!"

Then he turned to me and whispered conspiratorially. "I'm going to put a golden Groschen right here for you if you manage to pay the bill correctly tomorrow."

Next morning, Oma gave me the little milk can, a string bag and her foldaway purse with the magic pockets.

"So Karen, repeat after me: 6 Milchbrotchen, 1 liter vollmilch (dafur hast du die Kanne), sahne, 1 tute Backpulver, 1 paket linsen, ein stuck Butter, Edam-kase, 1 dose Marmelade... You can choose which fruit... Can you say all the names?"

"Of course she can! She's got a mouth and she's not frightened to use it!" said Opa, winking at me.

"And..." Oma went on, "there should be enough to get yourself a sweet, or a milk lolly. Absolutely no chewing gum and certainly no gobstoppers. We have the Americans to thank for those! They're a danger to little children and I don't want you swal-

lowing one by accident. That's what happened to poor little Dieter, the butcher's boy. He had to walk around all day with his mouth wide open, unable to speak or eat. It took 5 litres of chamomile tea to melt it enough so that his mother could take it out with sugar tongs!"

"Mutti, stop that, you're scaring her. She wouldn't be so daft!" said Tante Rita.

Oma waved goodbye at the gate. "Remember, don't dawdle, don't talk to strangers and come back quickly!" she said. I felt a bit like Little Red Riding Hood going to visit her granny, but swung my milk can from side to side as I walked along to show I didn't believe in the big bad wolf, keeping to the path as my Oma had told me. Once, I thought I heard the pitter-patter of footsteps behind me and stopped. Out of the corner of my eye I saw a movement by the lamp post, but when I turned around, there was no one there... Eventually I spied the creamery with its yellow and white striped awning on the corner. Practising what I was going to say, I tripped up the steps.

It was cool inside, bathed in a pale yellow light, like the colour of butter. I hummed along with the fridge and pressed my nose against the glass to look at the cheeses ... Suddenly the strip curtains were whipped back and in bustled Frau Tuschik in a starched apron, her hair tucked under a snow-white cap like the bonnets girls wore in Mother Goose rhymes.

"Good morning!" she cried in her high little voice. "Aren't you the little English milkmaid on an errand for her Oma?"

"I'm half German!" I said indignantly, tossing back my plaits before I remembered my manners.

"Of course you are! Silly me!" she laughed. "So, did Oma give you a shopping list?"

"No, I can say it all by myself!" I said proudly, "In Hochdeutsch!"

"Can you indeed? Let's see, then!"

Slowly, I chanted the order - word perfect (or so I thought) as Frau Tuschik filled up the string bag. "You can tell your Oma that I have put in a few extra fresh rolls because I know she likes them soft."

"Yes, then she won't have to dip them in her tea because of her false teeth!" I said, warming to the subject.

"A-ha. You can pretend to be Heidi, taking soft rolls back to her Granny from Frankfurt..."

"I know that story, too!" I giggled. "She hid them in her hat in the wardrobe!"

"So she did... Well, that's 5 marks and 35 pfennigs altogether, then," said Frau Tuschik firmly, who suddenly looked like Fraulein Rottenmeier!

For the moment I'd dreaded most had arrived... Red-faced, I struggled to open the foldaway purse. I tried to count out the money properly, I really did, but the magic pockets kept opening and closing and the flaps kept flipping and flapping and then the coins scattered and rolled all over the floor.

"Oh dear! I think it might be best if I count it out," said Frau Tuschik. "Don't

worry, I won't say anything. It can be our little secret..."

I blinked away a tear and looked up, but her Fraulein Rottenmeier face had disappeared!

The change, when it came, was in the form of 6 little jelly bears presented on a saucer. I thought it would be a shame to put them into the purse, they would be too sticky, so I popped them into my mouth on my way out!

I had just crossed the road and rounded the corner when suddenly someone sprang out at me, blocking the path.

"Hello, little girl. Where are you going, and what's that you've got in your basket?" said a gruff voice.

"It's shopping for my Oma, her legs are poorly, so..."

The next thing I knew, cousin Rolf was standing in front of me howling with laughter. "What's the matter? It's me! Or did you think I was the Big Bad Wolf?"

When we got back, Oma checked the bill and Opa said he'd sent Rolf out to follow me and make sure I got to the shop and back safely. He gave me the golden Groschen to put in my piggy bank.

Over the holidays, I went shopping on my own almost every day, and never met a wolf again. And Frau Tuschik never gave away our little secret - that I would always present her with Oma's purse so she could pay herself. Who knows, maybe it was the only secret she ever kept...

Mineirês 101

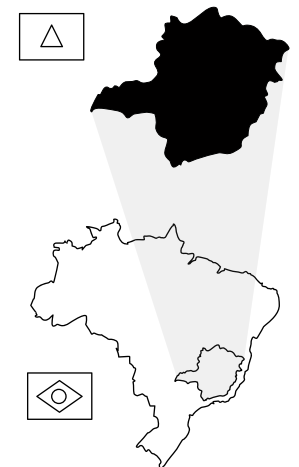
As will soon become clear, English isn't my first language nor is Portuguese.

I was born and raised in the state of Minas Gerais, Brazil, commonly known as the best state in the country. I first noticed my accent when I lived in São Paulo for a while, there I found out that I do have a strong accent, but it was no problem, people always found very cute the way I speak, so I never tried to change it. The problem arose when I started learning other languages. Suddenly I had to start using nouns instead of using trem, coisa, and negocim, to point out anything I wanted, because apparently you can't go far with only using "thing" in English.

I learned some languages throughout the years but I did not lose my core expressions in Portuguese, it does not matter which language I'm speaking if I find something surprising, cool, confusing, sad, or anything on the spectrum of emotions, I will always say "Nossa", "nu", "eita", "meu deus", "ixa" and the best of all "uai". The thing is, my partner is 110% invested in learning Portuguese, which is great, but that made me so aware of my lack of knowledge in Portuguese. Let me first clarify and tell you that this is not the very common case of someone who forgot how to say some words in their mother tongue, because a second language became their primary spoken language. At least not entirely. I simply realized that I do not speak Portuguese, I speak Mineirês, which seems to be something completely different, and unfortunately for him, not easier.

A Mineirês native speaker does not pronounce all the words in a sentence, nor all the letters in a word, and when we use full words, and we have many expressions that don't have head or feet. So, I selected a few examples and translated to both Portuguese and English:

| Minêires | Portuguese | English |
|---------------------|----------------|-------------------|
| Arreda | Chega pra lá | Go to the side |
| Cambada | Muitas pessoas | Group of people |
| Di Bituca | De olho | Observing |
| Espia | Olha | Look |
| Gastura | Desconforto | Discomfort |
| Jacú | Burro | Dumb |
| Nó | - | Express intensity |
| Nú | - | Express surprise |
| Paia | Sem graça | Not cool |
| Pelando | Muito quente | Very hot |
| Picá a mula | Vamos embora | Let's go |
| Rachá o bico | Morrer de rir | LOL |
| Tiquim | Pouco | Little |
| Tô pouco me lixando | Não me importo | I don't care |
| Trem | Coisa | Thing |
| Uai | - | Uais is Uai |





Grimm's Fairytales, book of my childhood...

Es war einmal...

...the first words of every story I knew.

Was it the sound of her voice, as she said it?

Was it the magic that tripped off her tongue?

Or the soft sigh that came after?

a chink I filled with flights of fancy

and she, with wistful memories

of a long, long time ago

Es war einmal...

...the yellowed pages turned

engraved with Old German script,

stiff, stern and upright, that swam before my childish eyes

pricked by thorns, kissed by roses

bristling with sharp spikes and fierce flourishes

a dark book

glowing with invisible pictures

in the candlelight

Yet still I traced the spellbound words

with fabulous forboding

sounding out their secret charms

repeating riddles and rhymes until they were second nature

until they tripped off my tongue, too

Es war einmal...

...that mixture of dread and delight

of a mystery unfolding

twisting and turning

along a pebble path, silvery in the moonlight

over seven hills and seven valleys to who knows where

through deep, dark forests and cobbled streets of tiny towns with pointy roofs

Es war einmal...

...the dreamlike rhythm of

another night

another fairytale

of magical beginnings

and bittersweet endings

Their music was in was the telling

their beauty in the listening

their enchantment always and forever green

Books speak volumes...

Books are magical: **they remind, inspire, describe, inform - and keep us entertained** * *they can make us experience the impossible* * their smell entices * they appeal to our sense of touch * **they protect us from idleness and boredom** * *through them, forgotten histories and lost civilisations are brought alive* * books speak in many tongues, saying different things to different people * they persuade, console and stir up our emotions * they rarely disappoint * **their stories weave spells around us** * *their words bring solace and stimulation at any time of day and night* * often, they help us to start and continue conversations * they make us feel we know people we've never met and visited places we've never been * **they can transport us to other worlds** * *books can be our best friends* * they keep you sharp * unfailingly good value, they beat small talk every time * **they help us learn, ask questions and form our opinions** * *books inspire us to write our own* * they illuminate the lives of others * patient by nature, they wait until you've got time for them * **whenever you want to stop, you can put them down** * *they're not put out if you pick up where you left off* * they have the power to change the world * you don't have to dress up to read one * **they make us smile, laugh and bring tears to our eyes** * *they can be passed on, or make the best presents* * books are treasures that deserve to be appreciated and are worth their weight in gold.

Where have all the flowers gone?

I sat on my stool in the dining room, clutching a bunch of daisies, my feet knocking rhythmically against the wooden legs, and watched the record turn slowly on the turntable. A blizzard of crackles as the needle hopped over a scratch, then it settled into the groove. Seconds later, the soft strum of a guitar could be heard as Marlene Dietrich sang "Where have all the flowers gone?" in her haunting voice.

"Long time passing," I answered, dutifully. (We sang together now, she and I; I had learned the words...)

"Where have all the flowers gone?" she asked again.

"Long time ago," I echoed.

"Where have all the flowers gone?" she insisted.

Apparently, girls had picked them until there were no more left... But luckily, I had brought my own.

As the music went up a semitone, I pulled the petals off the daisies and and dropped them like confetti onto the carpet.

"What are you doing, Karen? Now I'll have to Hoover them all up!" said Mama, poking her head around the door.

"But I'm a little flower girl, picking flowers one by one, like in the song!" I protested.

As Marlene sang higher and higher, and more guitars joined in, not only had the flowers gone, but also the girls and the men... This was a song in which things kept disappearing, one after the other; where lots of questions were being asked to which, Mama said, the answers were blowing in the wind.

Up the musical ladder we went. By verse 4, the violins were plucking their heartstrings out and Marlene was in a scratchy mood. You could hear it in her voice which held a mixture of anger and bitterness - or so it seemed to me.

"Where have all the soldiers gone?" she now demanded.

I didn't know. I could only imagine. But Mama told me they had been cut down in their youth, like flowers, leaving everyone they loved behind. Girls who were engaged to be married, young mothers, old mothers, grandmothers, and little children.

Had the flowers been cut to make hay? I wanted to know.

No, if you were cut down, she explained, it meant you went to war and didn't come back. But wherever you died, wild flowers would grow, and and the wind would carry the sad news back to your loved ones. Her explanation made me feel teary, but it was much softer than Marlene's harsh voice as she grated, "Where have all the graveyards gone?"

Could it get any sadder? I wondered.

Then, all of a sudden I realised we had come right back to the beginning and the very first question: "Where have all the flowers gone?" (I think Marlene was sounding tired now, a bit like me!)

Just as I thought we were going to have to repeat the song all over again, the music came back down the ladder and sat on the bottom step.

At last the final, plaintive "When will we ever learn?" faded away on a husky whisper as the turntable slowly wound down to a standstill. Silence. Then the needle lifted, the arm swung back, waited for a moment, and clicked back into its cradle.

I ran outside into the sunshine, throwing down my bunch of wilted daisies and began to pick some more...

The spell was broken.

Isn't language sometimes so reach and wonderful, like a mouthful of wild honey running down your throat? Here are a few of my favorite expressions in different languages.

- In the Hungarian community of Covasna, something insignificant or "no big deal" literally translates to "butterfly fart" ("lepke fing").



- "az Isten háta mögött" means "behind God": a place, small village, that no one, not even God knows or heard of. In Romanian, "at the devil's mother" ("la mama dracului") or "in the devil's slingshot" ("la dracu-n praştie") emphasizes how far away a place is. In Spanish, "está en el quinto pino" which translates to "it's in the fifth pine



tree".
- My favorite Romanian expression is "A-ți da filme" ("to play movies for yourself"), used for playing scenarios in head in a much more dramatic fashion

than the bland reality (cries in Spanish). Much wider than the German "Kopf Kino", it can mean anything from daydreaming (think J.D. from Scrubs), to spiraling in paranoid thought, or simulating different scenarios in your head, to wishful thinking, to fantasizing so strong about your crush you almost hear the violins soundtrack, to just "shooting the shit" with your friends in a game of absurdity and imagination (think Family Guy). I wonder how they called this human activity before the medium of cinema was invented.

- Of course, swear words are the most fertile in any language. In Romanian, when someone is pretending to be concerned / worried about you just to give condescending advice or make backhanded comments, they are "fucked by worry". - You should shave or your man will leave you! - Aww, thanks, but don't let worry fuck you (sarcastically). "Nu te fute pe tine grija".

- Another Romanian insult is "sending someone to the origins", which is telling someone to crawl back into their mother's womb and be born again, having another chance at life. It can be very philosophical, but is mostly meant to be misogynistic and it sounds horrible, so I won't tell you the original phrase.

- In Spanish, people say they "shit" into different things to express revolt. "I shit in the milk" ("me cago en la leche") comes from an old insult which was to shit in the milk you were breastfed with ("me cago en la leche que mamaste"). But that last part has disappeared and now "in the milk" is used to swear when something goes wrong. One cannot help but imagine someone squatting over a milk carton with a mischievous expression.



- Similarly, the blasphemous version "me cago en Dios" ("I shit in God") was softened into the phonetically similar "me cago en diez" ("I shit in ten").

- My favorite Spanish expression ever is "encañado", pure poetry using simple grammar. Is created by the preposition "en" (like in envelope) wrapping around the word "coño" (pussy). This creates an image of someone enveloped by a pussy, to suggest

they are so in love, they are completely in the pussy owner's spell (pussy-whipped).

- A "Pagafantas" is a person who thinks they can seduce someone by keeping paying ("pagar") for their many drinks, specifically Fanta. Don't be a Pagafantas.

- My Italian friend grew up saying "In culo alla balena!" ("in the whale's ass") instead of "good luck!". Probably has something to do with Pinocchio?



- Slovenian is very poetic, too. If you want to say "there is no rush", you say "the water is not burning" ("ne gori voda"), but if you say that someone is in under a huge time pressure "the water is running down their throat" ("Voda mu/ji teče v grlo").

- If you can't find something, but it turns out to be just in front of you "it will jump into your nose" ("v nos ti bo skočilo"). To say you are procrastinating/doing nothing, you are "looking into the air" ("gledam v zrak"). This reminds me of the Romanian "mint-rubbing" ("a freca menta"), which comes from the easiest job for a servant in medieval courts, simply refreshing wooden tables by rubbing them with mint leaves to release the mint oil.

- Continuing with Slovenian, if you want to (gently) curse someone (like a respectfully, fuck you), you say "go salt yourself". If two people are living together without being married we say that "they live on the corn" ("Živita na koruzi"). In Romanian, out of wedlock children are "children from the flowers" ("copiii din flori"), as they were probably conceived passionately on a field and not the legitimate bed inside the house. But growing up I liked to believe they are born out of the flowers themselves, blooming under the petals.



- In Turkish, "A butterfly on a horse's dick!" ("At sikine kelebek!") is an exclamation used when comparing two completely unrelated things. This is related to the Portuguese "pao pao queijo queijo" (literally, "bread bread cheese cheese") used to say that one thing belongs in one place and the other thing in another.

- In Portuguese, "Ttirar o cavalinho da chuva" means "to take the little horse out of the rain". It is used to discourage someone from doing something / clinging on to the hope of something most likely impossible. Poor little creature! Similar, but so much more expressive than the English "don't hold your breath".

- Having "elbow pain" ("dor de cotovelo") means being jealous. The same expression in Romanian ("durere in cot"), means "not giving a fuck". Romanians also say "pain in the ass" ("durere in cur") to mean the same thing, aka not caring at all.

- Going back to Portuguese, "Quem anda a chuva molha-se" means "he who walks in the rain, gets wet" reminds us that every action has consequences.

- Someone who is very knowledgeable and experienced has (spent) "lots of years turning chickens" ("Muitos anos a virar frangos").

- Finally, after moving to Germany, I became very much a fan of the "Ohrwurm", the little worm that leaves inside your ear playing that annoying song you can't get out of your head on repeat.



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