

## Language Use

I am writing this letter after having finished three, count them, three detention periods for speaking English in the hallway. Now, I know the reasons behind the school's policy on preserving our mother tongue; however, with the way I'm feeling after such a drastic consequence, I'd like to express my point of view regarding the true consequence of using punishment to ensure linguistic pride.

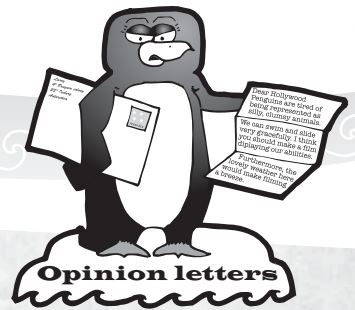
First of all, when I'm with my friends, I like to talk in a way that is spontaneous. The language we use is like a code; it sets the mood, and it keeps us together. When we are chatting, we simply happen to use a lot of English expressions. This is not a rejection of our mother tongue. The choice of our words and language simply reflect what we find current and stylish.

I don't understand the school's panic when it comes to students' language preference. Of course, we still identify with our culture and heritage. In fact, there are plenty of places where students deepen their appreciation for these. For instance, we are exposed to our mother tongue in class, through student radio and TV, and at presentations in the auditorium. And let's not forget that most students are exposed to their cultural heritage at family gatherings, big or small. All of these occasions give us the chance to develop and be proud of our mother tongue and culture. I don't think chatting with my friends in English is any threat to that.

I believe we should be allowed to communicate freely without repercussions if we choose to do so in English. If communication is the key to understanding one another, are we not all better off mastering as many languages as possible?

I know that English and French people in Canada have a history of conflict. I learned that in history class. I also understand the leftover resentment on both sides. But I'd like us kids to experience something more positive. To me, this can be done if the school's attitude is more open to the freedom of language choice when students are socializing. Students, also, would be proud to speak two languages, rather than looking constantly over their shoulder for fear of punishment. Student-teacher relations would certainly improve if we had more freedom of expression.

When it comes to having positive attitudes towards learning more than one language, I think some adults still have things to learn. I often have heard comments from adults who resent having to be fluent in both official languages in order to qualify for a government job. I think this can change in the future if students today have positive experiences with language use; thereby fostering a better attitude towards bilingualism and becoming admirable models for all Canadians.



## Preferred Language

I would like to give my point of view in response to the letter about whether English should be spoken or not amongst students in the hallways of French schools.

I choose to go to a French school in Ontario because it is an environment that provides a chance to learn and socialize in French. When certain students insist on speaking English, I feel disrespected in my choice of lifestyles.

In Ontario, English is the language of the majority. We, as Francophones, definitely have our place in Ontario, but, because there are so few of us, we must make a special effort to live and celebrate our culture. This is done in our schools. Anglophones, being the majority, have everywhere else to do this: recreational activities, arts events and shopping, just to name a few. Therefore, when it comes to being open about speaking any other language than French in our schools, I think it is unacceptable. There simply is nowhere else I can easily, comfortably socialize with friends my age in my preferred language.

I also disagree with other issues mentioned in the letter. For instance, I do not buy into the idea that English is more stylish. There are just as many colourful and humorous expressions in French. An expression becomes stylish by its exposure. At FESFO [Fédération des élèves du secondaire franco-ontarien] events, I have a great time when I meet students from all regions of the province who bring new and often really funny ways to say things, "en français". For instance, in Ottawa I would say, "C'est capotant!" when I'm impressed with something, but a student from Northern Ontario would say, "C'est mental!"

There is so much to discover and appreciate in our Francophone community: accents, expressions and different views of the world. The only way that this discovery and appreciation can happen is if there is a special place to explore all those fun and wonderful things: at school. Schools must maintain their purpose by insisting that everyone who walks their halls speak in French. This is the only way we can promote the culture that is such a struggle to maintain. If that means getting serious about handing out consequences to those who don't get it, then I'm all for it.

Finally, it is important to respect both official languages in Canada. The school environment should respect and promote an individual's choice of language and culture.