

The Story Of French Of Interest To More Than Just Linguists



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Paris, 20 May, 2010: The influence of the French language is certainly enormous, and nearly half of the commonly used words in English, so write the authors of *The Story of French* citing the examples of chase, catch, surf, challenge and staunch, are of French origin. Yet anyone who has ever studied French will be aware that a gulf exists between spoken and written French. For those looking to find out more about the topic, *The Story of French* is an eye-opening introduction to the French attitude towards linguistic propriety.



The book picks up on many quirky details, like the fact that a definition of Anglais (English) has been missing from every edition of the *Dictionnaire de l'Academie francaise*, however its treatment of the French Academy certainly raises questions. Francophones throughout the world have long looked to the French Academy for the correct usage of words, however the French-Canadian authors Jean-Benoit Nadeau and Julie Barlow of *The Story of French* write that "in its four-hundred year history, the French Academy has had little impact on how French is actually used."

Although respect for the French Academy is widespread, readers might be surprised to learn about its inefficiency. The authors write that the academic body was appointed by King Louis XIII (1601-1643) for the purpose of writing a dictionary. It was only after 55 years of work that the *Dictionnaire de l'Academie francaise* was published in 1694. Privately published competing editions were frowned upon by the French Academy because technical Latin

words used in trades and sciences were included. Still today, it takes an average 37 years for the French Academy to write a dictionary.

The insistence on linguistic purity, which influences how French is today taught, spoken and written, prompted Nadeau and Barlow



to travel the world to research what they call "the mental universe of French speakers" from its center in France to such places as Canada, Senegal and Israel. The pair decided to challenge the assumption that despite the natural development of French over time, "[in] the back of any francophone's mind is the idea that an ideal, pure French exists somewhere."

For students looking to learn French, travel is also an effective and enjoyable way to immerse oneself in the language, according to the Ecole Suisse de Langues (ESL), a [French language school](#) network that operates in France and Switzerland. ESL gives students an unbeatable chance to discover the significance and impact of the French language, as well as to acquaint themselves with the differences between spoken, written and taught French.

About ESL Schools: Ecole Suisse de Langues (ESL) offers students of all ages the chance to study French, German, English and Italian at their language centers in France, Germany and Switzerland. ESL specializes in providing [language courses France](#) and Switzerland, with a range of summer camps for younger learners, preparation courses for French exams, and special programs available throughout the year.

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