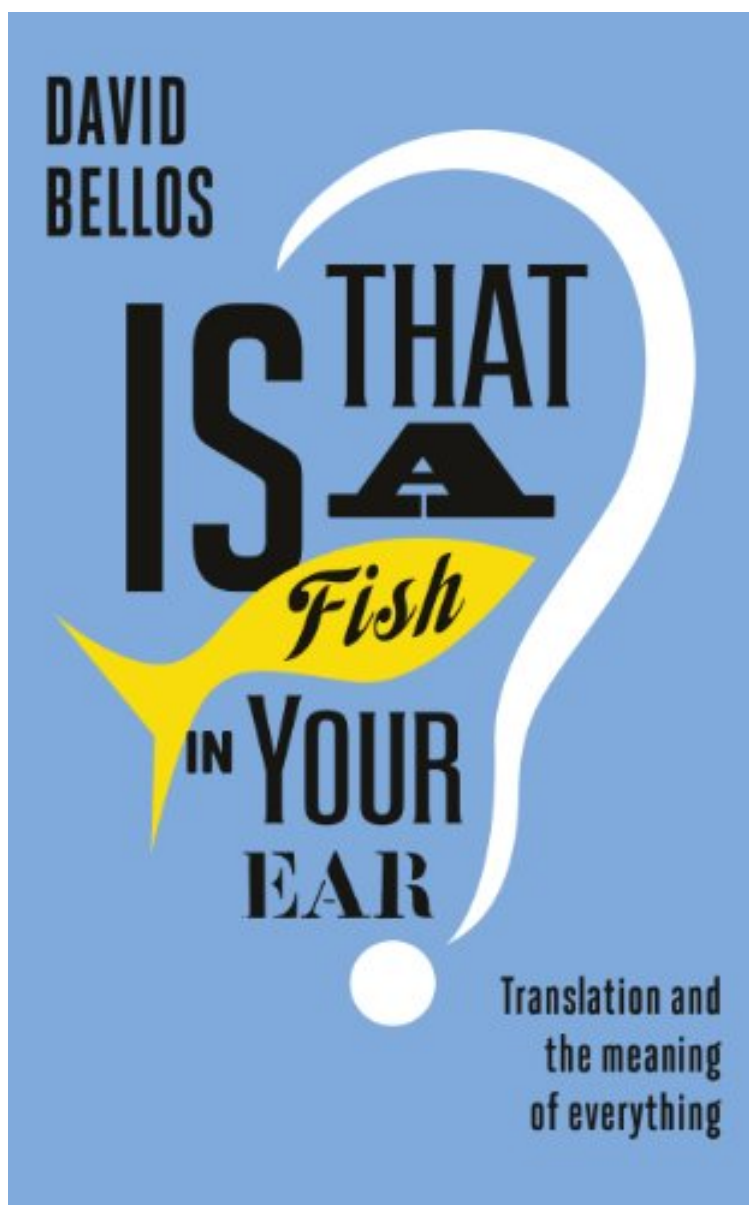


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# Is That a Fish in Your Ear?: Translation and the Meaning of Everything



*Par David Bellos*  
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## Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurPeople speak different languages, and always have. The Ancient Greeks took no notice of anything unless it was said in Greek; the Romans made everyone speak Latin; and in India, people learned their neighbours' languages - as did many ordinary Europeans in times past. But today, we all use translation to cope with the diversity of languages. Without translation there would be no world news, not much of a reading list in any subject at college, no repair manuals for cars or planes, and we wouldn't even be able to

put together flat pack furniture. *Is That a Fish in Your Ear?* ranges across the whole of human experience, from foreign films to philosophy, to show why translation is at the heart of what we do and who we are. What's the difference between translating unprepared natural speech, and translating *Madame Bovary*? How do you translate a joke? What's the difference between a native tongue and a learned one? Can you translate between any pair of languages, or only between some? What really goes on when world leaders speak at the UN? Can machines ever replace human translators, and if not, why? The biggest question is how do we ever really know that we've grasped what anybody else says - in our own language or in another? Surprising, witty and written with great joie de vivre, this book is all about us, and how we understand each other.

Revue de presse In the guise of a book about translation this is a richly original cultural history ... A book for anyone interested in words, language and cultural anthropology. Mr Bellos's fascination with his subject is itself endlessly fascinating (*The Economist*) For anyone with a passing interest in language this work is enthralling ... A wonderful celebration of the sheer diversity of language and the place it occupies in human endeavour. Conducted by a man who clearly knows his stuff, it is a whirlwind tour round the highways and byways of translation in all its glorious forms, from literary fiction to car repair manuals, from the Nuremberg trials to decoding at Bletchley Park (*The Scotsman*) Bellos has numerous paradoxes, anecdotes and witty solutions ... his insights are thought provoking, paradoxical and a brilliant exposition of mankind's attempts to deal with the Babel of global communication (*Michael Binyon The Times*) [A] witty, erudite exploration... [Bellos] delights in [translation's] chequered past and its contemporary ubiquity... He would like us to do more of it. With the encouragement of this book, we might even begin to enjoy it (*Maureen Freely Sunday Telegraph*) *Is That A Fish In Your Ear?* is spiced with good and provocative things. At once erudite and unpretentious... [it is a] scintillating bouillabaisse (*Frederic Raphael Literary*) *Is That A Fish in Your Ear?* by David Bellos (father of Alex of Numberland fame) is a fascinating book on the world of translation that might well be this year's *Just My Type* (*Jonathan Ruppin, Foyles Booskhop*) Selected by *The Times' 'Daily Universal Register'* as a 'Try This' Book (*The Times*) A fascinating... very readable study of the mysterious art and business of translation... Bellos asks big questions... and comes up with often surprising answers... sparky, thought-provoking (*Nigeness*) Forget the fish-it's David Bellos you want in your ear when the talk is about translation. Bellos dispels many of the gloomy truisms of the trade and reminds us what an infinitely flexible instrument the English language (or any language) is. Sparkling, independent-minded analysis of everything from Nabokov's insecurities to Google Translate's felicities fuels a tender-even romantic-account of our relationship with words. (-*NATASHA WIMMER*, translator of Roberto Bolao's *Savage Detectives* and 2666) *Is That a Fish in Your Ear?* offers a lively survey of translating puns and poetry, cartoons and legislation, subtitles, news bulletins and the Bible (*Matthew Reisz Times Higher Education Supplement*) Please read David Bellos's brilliant book (*Michael Hofmann Guardian*) A clear and lively survey... This book fulfils a real need; there is nothing quite like it. (*Robert Chandler Spectator*) In his marvellous study of the nature of translation... [David Bellos] has set out to make it fun... Essential reading for anyone with even a vague interest in language and translation - in short, it is a triumph (*Shaun Whiteside Independent*) A dazzyingly inventive book (*Adam Thirlwell New York Times*) Witty and perceptive... stimulating, lucid, ultimately cheering (*Theo Dorgan Irish Times*) Superbly smart, supremely shrewd (*Carlin Romano The Chronicle*) Selected as a National Book Critics' Circle Award Criticism Finalist 2011 (*NBCC*) Presentation de l'diteur People speak different languages, and always have. The Ancient Greeks took no notice of anything unless it was said in Greek; the Romans made everyone speak Latin; and in India, people learned their neighbours' languages - as did many ordinary Europeans in times past. But today, we all use translation to cope with the diversity of languages. Without translation there would be no world news, not much of a reading list in any subject at college, no repair manuals for cars or planes, and we wouldn't even be able to put together flat pack furniture. *Is That a Fish in Your Ear?* ranges across the whole of human experience, from foreign films to philosophy, to show why translation is at the heart of what we do and who we are. What's the difference between translating unprepared natural speech, and translating *Madame Bovary*? How do you translate a joke? What's the difference between a native tongue and a learned one? Can you translate between any pair of languages, or only between some? What really goes on when world leaders speak at the UN? Can machines ever replace human translators, and if not, why? The biggest question is how do we ever really know that we've grasped what anybody else says - in our own language or in another? Surprising, witty and written with great joie de vivre, this book is all about us, and how we understand each

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