

I am a human being. The preceding statement is simple enough. It conjures an expectation by the reader that the writer is the same kind of being as the reader, since reading is an activity, at present, limited to one kind of being, a human being. However, reading requires a written language, and the statement above is rendered in English, thus limiting its potential exposure to those human beings capable of reading – and understanding – English, only some fraction of the whole of human beings. Because this statement is now limited to a division of human beings, it is subject to the ignorance, prejudices, misconceptions, and unreasonable, even irrational, expectations of non-English speaking human beings (assuming, of course, that all English-speaking individuals are capable of understanding all English text – a very large assumption, indeed). It wouldn't matter in the slightest what the following pages would reveal; non-English speaking human beings would still be excluded; that statement, and all subsequent statements, would still have no meaning to them. The most interesting part of this argument, to me, is the *translation*, the rendering of the English language into another language, or of any language into any other language. The first sentence in this paragraph, for instance, would be easy. Yet, I have presented the translator with a dilemma concerning the rest of this paragraph: what should be done with the references to “English” as the language used for each and every word? Does the French-speaking translator simply change every “English” to “French”, which would make a meaningful connection to the French reader, but would forever change the context, perspective, and position of the English-speaking author? Worse, perhaps, does the French-speaking translator keep the “English” as the language reference, possibly leading to a lack of meaning to a French-speaking reader? Does a compromise consisting of rendering “English” to “Anglais” appeal more? From my perspective as the writer, there is no easy solution to this dilemma. Just in English, there are countless examples of books, documents, paragraphs, even sentences, where the context and meaning are forever subject to debate between two or more English-speaking readers. Ultimately, it is the reader who must be the final arbiter, especially since a motivated writer can use these devices endlessly.