“The limits of my language mean the limits of my world”

To me, it seems like the answer to the statement can only be ‘of course’, because, as humans, language is synonymous with most forms of communication. Talking, writing, even signing, is all connected to specific languages, and therefore limits one’s world, as we cannot possibly know every language. The saddest part of this statement, however, is undoubtably the fact that knowing some languages immediately opens more doors than others.

At my age, my mum could speak French, Italian, English and Thai to a considerable extent, yet I can speak only English fluently – despite having working knowledges of Italian, French, and Spanish. I believe that this is because I grew up in the UK, unlike my mother. In the UK, there is no culture of languages being a useful skill and, as a consequence of this, the number of people taking modern foreign languages to A Level standard has significantly decreased by more than 15% since 2010. It would be naïve not to recognise the British Empire’s obvious influence in English becoming one of the most dominating languages on earth, and how the learning of languages – especially those which are not the languages of colonisers – is so desperately necessary. My lack of linguistical knowledge limits every part of my life, from my studies – where in my French class I struggle with speaking and cannot always understand the subtle complexities to humour in another language – to my home life, where my mum’s family speak Italian and I do not.

Language is the easiest way to alienate, but also the easiest way to integrate and share cultures. Knowing languages other than your own is a sign of respect nonetheless, and it is one of my goals not to be walled into my country by my own ignorance.