

CHAPTER 3

Translation and interpreting: bridges across languages and cultures

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This chapter looks at how translation and interpreting make communication across languages and cultures possible. After completing the chapter's activities, students will be able to:

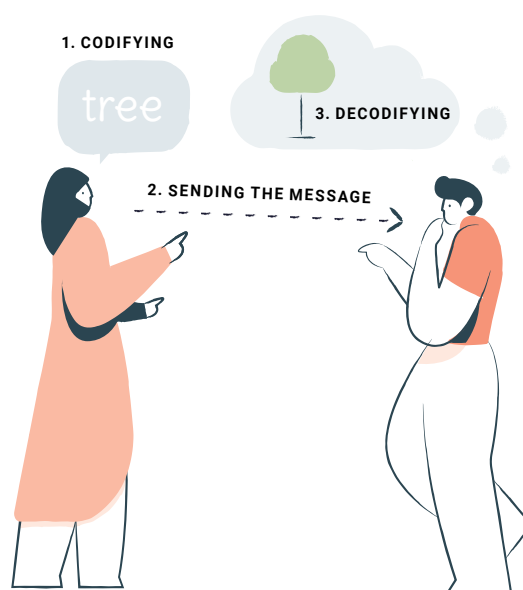
- Explain the complexity of communication across languages
- Describe the value of translation and interpreting as a form of communication across languages
- Distinguish between an interpreter and a translator
- Give examples of misunderstandings inherent to communication, even in the absence of language barriers
- Describe some of the difficulties translators and interpreters face and must overcome

3.1. INTRODUCTION

Communication involves concepts and codes. Concepts are ideas that live in the imagination of human beings. Codes are the tools humans can use to share ideas with each other. One thing all humans have in common is the ability to partake in the use of a code that allows for communication... We do not all use the same code, however, as we saw in chapter 1!

Each code –or language– is developed in the context of its users. Eskimos can describe multiple shades of white in their code, while speakers of languages from hot climates have the ability to refer to different kinds of heat, for example. Context explains why different groups have developed different languages, and even different versions of different languages! It also explains why languages are so deeply connected to the way their users perceive the world.

What happens, then, when individuals from different groups come into contact? They want to communicate, but do not share the same code or, most importantly, the same lens through



which they make sense of the world around them. Translation and interpreting are two professional activities that involve transferring messages across languages to make such communication possible.

Effectively decoding and recoding messages between people is, as we will see, anything but a simple, automatic task. The widespread belief that anyone who is bilingual can establish effective communication between two par-



DID YOU KNOW THAT...

the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is available in 524 languages?

That is actually not a huge number of translations, considering there are over 7100 languages in the world! Even so, it is the most translated document of all time.

ties is comparable to the idea that anyone who knows how to hold a pair of scissors can give you a nice haircut. Someone with the skill set to cut your hair properly has learnt a range of techniques that go far beyond the simple use of scissors. Similarly, someone with the skill set to be a good translator, or a good interpreter, has learnt techniques that go far beyond proficiency in two different languages.

DID YOU KNOW THAT...

International Translation Day is celebrated every year on 30 September?

It is a day to pay tribute to the work of language professionals. That work, according to the UN, “plays an important role in bringing nations together, facilitating dialogue, understanding and cooperation, contributing to development and strengthening world peace and security.”

What techniques, you ask? Keep reading! There are slight but important differences in the case of translators and that of interpreters. This chapter explores the differences and similarities between the two and gives you the background information you need to understand why machines cannot yet replace humans when true, full, reliable, effective communication across languages is required.

3.2. WRITTEN COMMUNICATION: TRANSLATION

3.2.1 What is translating?

Translating means transferring written messages between two languages (whereas **interpreting** involves oral messages). To do a good job, translators analyse the messages they work with to ensure that they are aware of any nuances connected to the text’s target audience (i.e. the people who will read the translated version of the text), the historical and social context of the culture in which the original text has been produced, the format involved, the inferred intended aim of the author, and anything else that defines the nature of the text. It is also important to consider the register used, i.e. the way things are said according to the relationship between speakers. For instance, as demonstrated in supplementary exercise 3E (“Thanks”, available in the [Resource Bank](#)), we do not express ideas in the same way when talking to friends as we do when talking to parents or to passers-by in the street. After considering all the aspects in question, the translator produces a **target text** (the same set of messages in the language of the new audience) with the goal of creating an effect in the target reader as similar as possible to that which the original author created through the **source text**.

There are many different ways of expressing the same idea. A skilled translator is aware of the options available and knows how to choose the best way to convey any given message, taking all the factors mentioned above into account.

WHAT CAN I PASS ON TO MY STUDENTS?



- **Translating means transferring written messages, not words.**
- **Translating involves taking a wide range of textual and contextual elements into consideration to successfully transfer a message to another language.**

3.2.2. Translation cannot happen in a void: context is crucial

A translator tasked with translating a poem will focus on many different dimensions of the original text. In addition to paying attention to meaning, they will look for ways to convey a feel and an effect as similar to the original ones as possible: that includes considering the original text's rhymes and rhythms and the images it evokes.

Think about a different kind of text now. If the text to be translated is a theatre play with young characters, the challenge for the translator would be to find natural target language vocabulary that such characters would be likely to use in the target culture. Let's say, however, that one of the characters is a judge. The language used by that character would probably be formal and technical, requiring a completely different register or style from the translator.

Finally, consider an assignment from a company that wants to have a multilingual website. The goal of the translator would be to find appealing expressions, replicating marketing vocabulary and techniques typically used in each of the cultures associated with each of the languages into which the website is to be translated. What kind of image does the company want to convey? Seductive, friendly, interesting, rigorous, serious, effective, authentic, etc.? What kind of language and expressions are customary in each country for each style? If a website reads like a translation, it will definitely lose some of its appeal!



DID YOU KNOW THAT...

the difference between “We will be present at your funeral” and “We will bury you” caused a historic political crisis?

During the Cold War, it was best practice for leaders on both sides to make carefully calculated speeches so as not to inflame the already dire situation. However, things took a turn for the worse when the Soviet premier Nikita Khrushchev was quoted out of context and his words were interpreted as a threat despite his original intentions. What his reference to a funeral actually meant was: “We will outlast you.”



WHAT CAN I PASS ON TO MY STUDENTS?

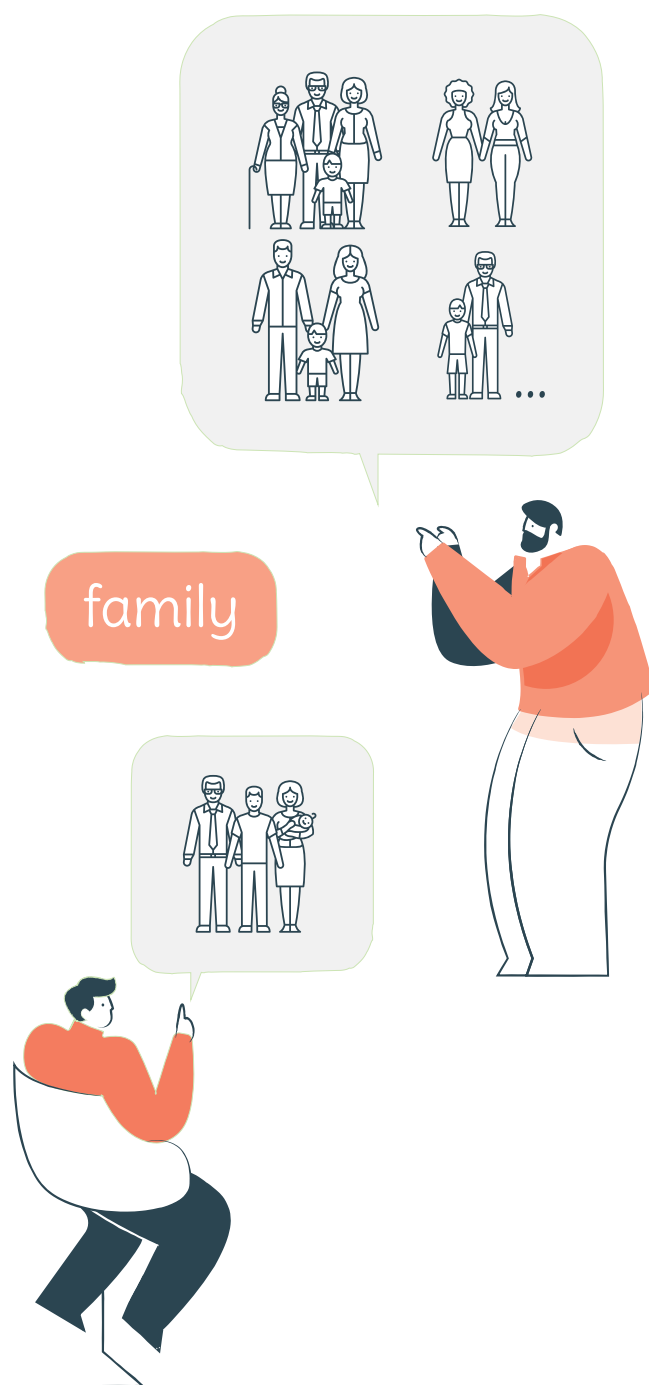
- **Different texts use different means to have a specific effect on readers.**
- **Translating entails producing a target text whose effect on readers is as close as possible to that which the source text would have had.**
- **A good translation does not read like a translation, but rather sounds natural and authentic.**
- **Each country and each culture has different expressions and standard language or uses different registers to achieve similar goals.**

3.2.3 Different languages reflect different ways of making sense of the world

Translators often deal with words and expressions that refer to complex realities in the original language. Such realities (whether imaginary or factual) might not have an equivalent in the target culture and it can therefore be hard to find the appropriate words to convey them.

Take, for instance, the traditions described in activity 3C (“World traditions”). Now think about the amount of decision-making that goes into choosing the best option to fit in the limited space of subtitles, for example!

As mentioned in chapter 2, culture can be very visible, as it is in folklore and in traditions such as those described in activity 3C. But the trickiest challenges for translators and interpreters lie in the least visible cultural manifestations: for example, in certain cultures it is absolutely taboo to ask a person about their age or marital status when you first meet them; in others, doing so is a friendly way of breaking the ice. And here is the thing: we go about our lives applying an endless number of such cultural norms without even realising it! Cultural awareness is definitely one of the key assets of a skilled language professional.



WHAT CAN I PASS ON TO MY STUDENTS?

- Translators often transfer messages that are embedded in very particular cultural realities. Some of them do not have an equivalent in the target culture!
- Translators need to choose the best option for transferring such culturally embedded messages to the target language.
- Translators require great awareness of both the source and the target cultures to be able to make sound decisions.

3.2.4. Could machine translation replace translators?

As you have probably realised by now, translating is a complex task that requires human involvement. If translators were merely walking dictionaries, their target texts could end up being as inadequate as the text produced in activity 3A (“A discombobulated text”). That can actually happen when machine translation (e.g. Google Translate) is used.

Machine translation can be helpful to get the gist of a text. It can come in handy while browsing the internet, for example, to find out what different web pages are about. But machine translation has some important limitations, including its inability to consider context or the different meanings a word may have (polysemy). Additionally, machines are not good at grasping and conveying human intentions and goals. Last but not least, they are incapable of creativity!

Humans communicate with emotions. They have goals. They behave in context. At present, machine translation cannot always decipher all the layers of communication, one of the most human behaviours there is. Only a human translator can guarantee good quality, safe in the knowledge that the intention of the original –in all its multi-layered complexity– has been effectively recoded in the target language.



DID YOU KNOW THAT...

machine translation led to a singer being called a cow? When Netta Barzilai won the Eurovision Song Contest in Lisbon, Israel’s Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, took to Twitter to congratulate her. But Microsoft Translator failed to grasp the sentiment. Netanyahu meant to say “Netta, you’re a real darling,” using the word *kapara*, a Hebrew term of endearment. That word contains the three Hebrew letters that spell “cow”, however, hence the unfortunate “Netta, you’re a real cow.”

WHAT CAN I PASS ON TO MY STUDENTS?

- **Translating is a complex task that requires human involvement because machine translation cannot consider context or grasp the intentions and emotions behind a text.**
- **Machine translation can be useful to get the gist of a text.**
- **Only a human translator can deal with and successfully transfer the complexity of communication.**



3.2.5. So, what does it take to be a good translator?

Skilled translators have typically received specialised training. Some people become specialised translators in a field they know very well, where their insightful knowledge and a natural predisposition to understand nuances and their implications allow them to become very good at their job.

At any rate, translators need to have developed multiple skills over time. Translation involves writing fluently in two languages in a wide variety of registers, and the ability to make creative use of the resources available in each language to effectively convey nuances, humour, irony or rhymes, for example. It also involves good analytical and research skills, as the levels of specialisation and sub-specialisation in the topics translators have to get to grips with are endless.

Professional translators tend to specialise in just a few fields. The particularities of translating legal documents are very different from those of translating audiovisual material (movies, shows, sit-coms, etc.), for example. And within the audiovisual arena, the decisions a translator makes will be very different if their

target text is to be used for dubbing or for subtitling. Think of translation as a profession with numerous sub-professions!

DID YOU KNOW THAT...

in Chinese, the sign below actually says “Caution: slippery floors”?



WHAT CAN I PASS ON TO MY STUDENTS?

- Translation involves writing fluently in two languages and in different registers. Very importantly, it involves being analytical and creative when conveying cultural knowledge, humour, irony and other nuances.
- Translators can specialise in a variety of topics and text types.
- Each specialisation has its particularities, which explains why professionals tend to focus on just a few fields.

3.3. ORAL COMMUNICATION: INTERPRETING

3.3.1. Like translating, but with spoken language

The fundamental difference between translation and interpreting is that translation is a written activity while interpreting is oral (and also visual in the case of sign languages). They both have the goal of transferring messages from one language to another, but the orality of interpreting gives the task a very specific nature. Interpreting is also greatly conditioned by the setting and context in which it takes place (conference interpreting, healthcare interpreting, court interpreting, etc.) and by the techniques used to convey messages (simultaneous rendering, note-taking for long consecutive rendering, etc.). Take a look at chapter 6, which talks about the profession of interpreting.

3.3.2. As ancient as communication itself

It is almost impossible to be certain when interpreting was first performed as a professional activity, since interpreting has always existed as a means of communication between people of different cultures and languages. One of the first pieces of evidence of the profession's existence dates back to Ancient Egypt and the rule of Tutankhamun (1333-1323 BC), in the form of a bas-relief showing a person interpreting between the pharaoh's general Haremhab and a delegation of Syrian and Libyan vassals. The interpreter is depicted as a duplicate character, to represent his alternating attention to the parties he is mediating for.



Bas-relief dating back to the rule of Tutankhamun (1333-1323 BC), showing a person interpreting between the pharaoh's general Haremhab and a delegation of Syrian and Libyan vassals.

Throughout history, the figure of the interpreter has been present in one way or another whenever different cultures and civilisations have come into contact.

Alexander the Great relied on interpreters in many of his conquests, from the Persian Empire to India. Christopher Columbus included interpreters in his crew when he set out on his expedition to the Americas in 1492. However, because his original aim had been to reach India from the west (and he had not expected to find American territories on the way), he took the wrong interpreters! His voyage diaries show that young native people were kidnapped and taught Castilian so they could serve as language mediators. There are more examples of children acting as language brokers in chapter 4.

WHAT CAN I PASS ON TO MY STUDENTS?

- **Translators work with written texts; interpreters work with oral speech, or with gestures in the case of sign languages.**
- **Interpreting has always existed as a means of communication between people of different cultures and languages.**



3.3.3. Modes of interpreting

Historically, interpreting was performed to help speakers engage in dialogue. One person spoke, the interpreter relayed the message, another person responded, the interpreter relayed the message, and so on. Interpreting was a constant to and fro, just as in the Ancient Egyptian bas-relief!

That is still the way interpreting happens today... sometimes! Over time, different modes of interpreting have been developed, and it is no longer always a case of to and fro. When technology is used (isolated booths and audio equipment), it is not necessary to wait for people to finish speaking and for the interpreter to relay what they said, because trained interpreters are able to offer a conversion into the target language while they are listening to the original message. And sometimes the original message does not come from someone speaking but from a text that the interpreter reads out loud in the language of the listener.

The different modes of interpreting that exist today are described below, with examples of when they are typically used.

Liaison interpreting

Liaison comes from French and it means “link”. This was the first-ever mode of interpreting. The interpreter waits for each party to finish speaking to begin offering the conversion of their messages. It may look easy, and it may actually be easy when the conversation is straightforward, but things can soon get tricky! Have you ever tried translating a joke? Or mediating between two people who are not getting along? Or between people who think they know where the other is coming from but have actually completely misread the situation? Typical

DID YOU KNOW THAT...

during the period of splendour of the Ancient Greek and Roman Empires, slaves were expected to master a wide range of languages and help the nobility communicate?

situations in which liaison interpreting is used include doctor’s appointments, factory visits and parent teacher meetings.

Simultaneous interpreting

How hard is it to rub your stomach in circles and pat your head at the same time? **Simultaneous interpreting** is similar: you listen to a message in one language while reproducing it in another. It takes a great deal of training to be able to perform those two tasks effectively at once. Simultaneous interpreting is usually carried out with the help of technical equipment, because input sound needs to be isolated from output sound to avoid a cacophony. Typical situations in which simultaneous interpreting is used include international summits with delegates from different countries (think of supranational organisations like the UN or the European Parliament) and conferences that experts from different countries attend to discuss topics in their field of specialisation.

DID YOU KNOW THAT...

simultaneous interpreting was introduced after WWII? The Nuremberg trials, at which leaders of Nazi Germany were prosecuted, were conducted in four official languages: English, French, Russian and German. The technological developments of the time allowed adventurous, highly capable professionals to use a new interpreting technique.

Consecutive interpreting

Although, technically speaking, liaison interpreting is performed consecutively, the term **consecutive interpreting** is generally reserved for situations in which the interpreter has to absorb a great deal of information (e.g. a whole speech) before re-rendering it. Rather than facilitating dialogue, the goal is to make a monologue accessible to a wide audience. Because the interpreter needs to remember a great amount of detailed information, this mode requires a very specific **note-taking technique** that professional interpreters take months to learn and develop in specialised training programmes. Typical situations in which consecutive interpreting is used include specific acts at international gatherings when a participant needs to address the crowd but technical equipment is not available, such as a toast at a gala dinner or a welcome speech before a celebration.

Sight translation

Sight translation is really a hybrid. It does not only involve spoken information: the source text rendered orally by the interpreter is actually a written document. Highly developed skills are required to be able to take a document written in one language and read it out loud flawlessly

and fluently in another! Documents that might require sight translation during an interpreted encounter include treatment plan instructions at a doctor's surgery and draft agreements under discussion at business meetings.

3.3.4. A tricky trade

A major implication of interpreting, as translation with spoken language, is that things happen on the spot, with limited time to react. Interpreting is characterised by immediacy. Interpreters therefore constantly need to make quick decisions. How do you translate a concept that has no exact equivalent in other cultures? How do you manage a misunderstanding without interrupting and creating more confusion? You have to think on your feet!

DID YOU KNOW THAT...

interpreters save lives? Every day, thousands of individuals around the world are saved by the good work of an interpreter in a hospital or a war zone.

Interpreters are continually making decisions about two equally important things: (1) how to best convert messages to remain faithful to the original intent; and (2) how to manage the situation they are mediating. What would you do if you were interpreting between a parent and a teacher and could tell both were becoming increasingly frustrated because of their different ideas about what is best for the child's education? Professional interpreters are trained to identify potential conflict, their own bias, and the decision-making tools that can help them most in each situation. Chapter 6 of this Teacher's Book explores a key element of the profession: **codes of professional conduct**.

WHAT CAN I PASS ON TO MY STUDENTS?



- **There are four different modes of interpreting: liaison interpreting, simultaneous interpreting, consecutive interpreting and sight translation.**
- **Each mode of interpreting is used in different kinds of situations or for different kinds of communicative needs.**

ADD NOTHING!
OMIT NOTHING!
CHANGE NOTHING!



3.3.5. What makes a good interpreter?

It is probably clear by now that becoming an effective interpreter is no simple task. A wide range of skills are needed to be a good interpreter, over and above mastering different languages. The first requirement is... general knowledge! Professional interpreters must have a deep knowledge of the cultures linked to the languages they work with, as well as broad general cultural knowledge.

A skilled interpreter will also have developed very specific cognitive skills! Memory, concentration and self-control are key in the face of stress and disruptive emotions. To accurately reproduce the messages they have just heard, interpreters not only need to draw on their analytical skills (to understand every nuance) and creative abilities (to render the messages in a different code); unlike translators, they also have to remember everything after hearing it only once.

If part of a message is left out or even slightly modified, the essence of the message may change profoundly. The consequence for the parties trying to communicate is that they are no longer in control of their communication. They cannot be sure that the ideas they want to share with each other are being conveyed ac-

curately. They are left powerless over their exchange process.

Here is a helpful mantra for interpreters: add nothing, omit nothing, change nothing! Activity 3B (“The map messenger”) and supplementary activity 3D (“I’m not a parrot!”, available in the [Resource Bank](#)) have been designed to test your students’ memory and concentration skills. Spoiler alert: they might find these activities challenging! They might find that the messages involved end up distorted. Ask them to think of the consequences of distorting messages during a doctor’s appointment or when talking to the police, for example. Misunderstandings can be very costly!

So, here is the real secret: in order to add nothing, omit nothing and change nothing, interpreters use a set of technical skills that allow them to perform the different modes of interpreting described previously. For instance, they always think of information in the context in which it is presented, they focus on the relationship between the different pieces of information they hear, and they pay attention to speakers’ motives. They also train their memory and hone their note-taking skills in a similar way to how a marathon runner builds up their core muscles. They know discipline will take them far!



WHAT CAN I PASS ON TO MY STUDENTS?

- Interpreters constantly need to make quick decisions related to converting messages into another language and managing the situation they are mediating.
- Mastering different languages is not enough; interpreters need a wide range of skills: general knowledge, memory, concentration, self-control, etc.
- Accuracy is a gold standard: interpreters add nothing, omit nothing and change nothing when they transfer messages from one language to another.

3.4. CONCLUSION

There are several factors that make conveying (written or oral) messages between different languages a complex task. And yet there is a widespread belief that helping people communicate across languages is as simple as parroting messages back and forth. Well, here is the crucial difference: a parrot has no idea of the meaning behind the sounds in words and expressions. Furthermore, a parrot is only capable of reproducing a few sounds over and over again.

Conveying messages entails transferring meaning from one code to another. In this chapter, we have seen how meaning is directly connected to context, emotions, intentions, cultures and expectations. Meaning is extremely human, so coding and decoding meaning for others can be extremely complex. We should never underestimate the role of a go-between using linguistic and cultural knowledge to help others communicate!



FURTHER READING

- Baigorri-Jalón, Jesús (2015). "The history of the interpreting profession". In: Holly Mikkelsen & Renée Jourdenais (eds.). *The Routledge Handbook of Interpreting*. Routledge.
- Baker, Mona; Saldanha, Gabriela (2021). *Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies*. 3rd edition. Routledge.
- Grossman, Edith (2010). *Why Translation Matters*. New York: Yale University Press.

TEACHER'S NOTES

ACTIVITY 3A. A discombobulated text

In this activity, students will...

- See the importance of context.
- Practise paraphrasing.
- Discuss what translation involves.

ESTIMATED
TIME



30 MIN

How to use this resource

-
- STAGE 1** · Ask the class to brainstorm about types of written communication. **7'**
 * Examples: letters, e-mails, news, reports, etc.
 · Announce the kind of text you are going to work with today: a narration.
 · Demonstrate paraphrasing, that is: conveying the same meaning with different words. As a class, come up with different ways of expressing the following concepts: house, long, now, how, when.
 * Examples: [house: dwelling / home / my place / property], [now: at this very moment / not always], [how: the way in which], [long: extended / not short]
-
- STAGE 2** · Hand out all the strips of paper upside down. Every strip is numbered. In a large class, several students can share a single strip. In a small class, each student can have more than one strip (but they must be non-consecutive). Make sure no strips are left over. **3'**
 · Ask the students to turn their strips over without showing their classmates what is written on them. Give them a minute to paraphrase the content of their strips. Ask them to come up with and write down an alternative way of expressing the meaning of the words on their strips. You might need to help any students who find this challenging.
-
- STAGE 3** · On the board, write the words/expressions the students have come up with in the order of the numbers on their strips. The sentences on the board will form an incoherent text. Students might start commenting on that. Refrain from discussing it with them until this stage of the activity is completed. **10'**
 · Ask the class: Does this text make sense? Is it easy or hard to understand?
-
- STAGE 4** · Share the original text with the class (you can project it or hand out copies of it) and read it together. **10'**
 · Ask students to compare the text on the board and the text they have just read. How are they similar? How are they different?
-
- STAGE 5** · Explain that words do not work in isolation. They cannot be treated as separate entities. Their meaning is whole when presented in context. **5'**
 · Use examples from the two texts to illustrate this point.
 * Examples: "to spend", "appealing", "they changed their mind", "but", "yet"
 · Ask your students: Would you have chosen the same words if you had known this was the text from which the words on your strip were taken?
 · As a group, reflect on translation practices: How would this exercise be different/similar if the original sentences were in a different language? Would a dictionary be helpful? To what extent? Have you ever used Google Translate?

Prep time suggestions

- Print out words chart and cut out paper strips.
- Prepare original text: you will either project it or hand it out.
- Read chapter 3 of the Teacher's Book *Inclusion, Diversity and Communication Across Cultures* (<https://pagines.uab.cat/eylbid/en/content/teachers-book>) for further background information on the topic of context and translation.

Variations

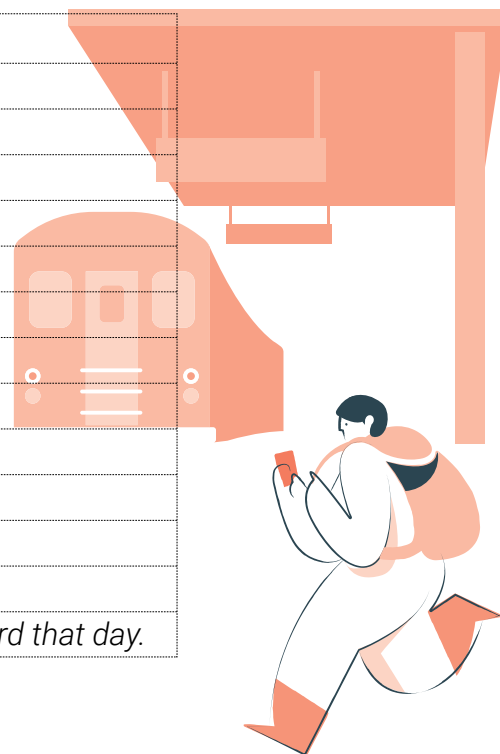
- You can change the text or prepare other short texts to make the activity more exciting or entertaining for your students.
- This activity can be supported by looking more closely at dictionary entries and/or working with machine translation (e.g. Google Translate or DeepL).

3A. A discombobulated text**ORIGINAL TEXT**

James' family wanted to spend the day at Oxford, so they went to the station to take a train. So many places were appealing so they changed their mind, and everybody but James got off at Reading Station. He had lost his phone, yet somehow he managed to find it, although he ended up spending the day looking for it, and finally nobody went to Oxford that day.

James' parents desired to waste some time in Oxford, so they walked to the underground to catch the wagon. Plenty of spaces looked nice! Then they introduced changes their heads. All of them except James disappeared on Reading place. He possessed forgot his cell, still in some way he directed to search for it successfully. He died wasting 24 hours searching for it, and in the end they didn't reach Oxford that day.

1. James' family	15. James got off
2. wanted	16. at Reading Station.
3. to spend	17. He had
4. the day in Oxford,	18. lost his
5. so they went to	19. phone,
6. the station	20. yet
7. to take a train.	21. somehow
8. So many places	22. he managed
9. were appealing!	23. to find it.
10. So	24. He ended up
11. they changed	25. spending the day
12. their mind,	26. looking for it,
13. and everybody	27. and finally
14. but	28. nobody went to Oxford that day.



TEACHER'S NOTES

ACTIVITY 3B. The map messenger

In this activity, students will...

- Work on active listening, memory skills, accuracy and reformulation under pressure.
- Discuss the challenges of being a messenger

ESTIMATED
TIME

50-60 MIN

How to use this resource

- PRELIMINARY STAGE** · Show an example of consecutive or liaison interpreting being performed at an event (see chapter 3, section 3.3.3, of the Teacher's Book *Inclusion, Diversity and Communication Across Cultures*, (<https://pagines.uab.cat/eylbid/en/content/teachers-book>), for more information about modes of interpreting). There is a list of suggested videos in the [Resource Bank](#), including recordings of interpreting in a press conference, in a diplomatic meeting, and for different public services. You can also ask your students if any of them have previous experience in interpreting. 15'
- Ask the class to reflect as a group on the challenges interpreting may entail.
 - * Examples: finding the right words in another language, remembering what has been said, having to think quickly, etc.
 - Announce that you will be playing the messenger game, the goal of which is to do an accurate drawing, following instructions from someone else, in a limited amount of time. The fastest drawing wins... as long as it is accurate!
-
- STAGE 1** · If possible, go to the playground. Divide your students into groups of three. 10*
- Student A is to be positioned at one end of the classroom/playground and given the text, which students B and C are not allowed to see.
 - Student B is to be positioned at the other end of the classroom/playground and given a piece of paper and a pen.
 - Student C will be the messenger, taking messages from A to B.
-
- STAGE 2** · Student A reads the instructions (one at a time) from the text to student C. A must not let C read the card! 10-15'
- Student C goes over to student B to pass on the original message. Make sure B cannot hear anything other than what C from their own team tells them! If there is not much space between teams, have the students whisper.
 - Student B uses the instructions provided by student C to do as detailed a drawing as possible. C cannot help B draw, and B must not let other students with the same role see what they are drawing!
-
- STAGE 3** · When all the drawings are done, return to your normal classroom setting. Collect the drawings. Project the original text and, optionally, the map with the solutions (available at the [Resource Bank](#)). 5-10'
- As a class, rank the drawings and choose the most accurate one.
-
- STAGE 4** · Discuss the experience, with prompts regarding the message-conveying process. Examples: 10'
- Did any messengers go blank when they reached student B? What were the most difficult pieces of information to transmit? Why? Did you get tired/frustrated? Why?
 - Revisit your earlier group reflection: what challenges does interpreting messages for others entail?
 - * more if you go to the playground

Prep time suggestions

- Optional: choose a video with an example of consecutive or liaison interpreting from the online [Resource Bank](#).
- Print out the text on cards for students A and the map for students B.
- Read chapter 3, section 3.3.3, of the Teacher's Book *Inclusion, Diversity and Communication Across Cultures* for more information about modes of interpreting.
- Allow extra time if you will be going to the playground.

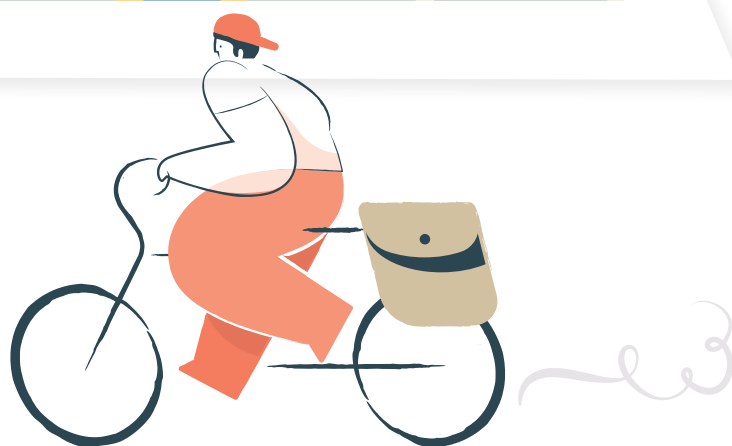
Variations

- You can prepare more texts so that every student can take a turn at being the messenger. Alternatively, use a longer text and split it into three sections, with students swapping roles for each section.
- With bilingual groups or in a world languages class, this activity can also be carried out with a language code switch. Ask student C to pass on the message to student B in a different language that they both speak.

3B. The map messenger**CARD FOR STUDENT A****Instructions**

1. Okay, let's do this! You have to draw a map. Let's start with its main feature, the cathedral, which is located at its centre.
2. To the right of the cathedral there is a history museum, next to which is the old market, where you can buy cheap groceries at any time of day.
3. Behind the old market there is a big park with a playground and a lake with ducks and boats. People really like spending summer evenings there.
4. In front of the cathedral there is a river, giving a really beautiful view from the cathedral's bell tower, which only opens to the public between 10 and 12 o'clock on Sunday mornings.
5. To the right of the park there is a primary school and a very popular café. To the left of the park there is a secondary school and some fast food restaurants offering quick snacks.
6. To the left of the cathedral there is a shopping area where you can find pretty much anything you might need, from clothes and shoes to souvenirs and electronics. The cheapest postcards are sold in the little shop just next to the cathedral.
7. In front of the shopping area there is a bridge that crosses the river and leads to the financial district, where there are large buildings and the city's highest skyscrapers. Some of them have accessible rooftops. The best views are from the communications tower and the sports and media centre.

Described map



TEACHER'S NOTES

ACTIVITY 3C. World traditions: matching game and taboo

In this activity, students will...

- Find out about different cultural traditions.
- Explore the challenges that may arise when communicating about unfamiliar traditions.
- Explore the challenges that may arise when trying to communicate without using certain words.
- Discuss the impact of cultural differences on communication.

ESTIMATED
TIME

40 MIN

How to use this resource

- | | | |
|----------------|--|------------|
| STAGE 1 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Introduction to the topic – matching game.</u> As a class, match each tradition's description with its name, its country/countries of origin, and the corresponding picture. Read the descriptions provided aloud and help your students match them up with the other items. You could project the sheet for everyone to see (recommended, so the students can see the pictures in colour) or give each student a printed sheet on which they can connect the dots themselves. Once all a tradition's items have been matched up, give your students the chance to discuss what they know about it from personal experience. | 10' |
| STAGE 2 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Play taboo.</u> Student A is given a prompt card and has to help student B guess what tradition it refers to. Student B is not allowed to see the card and student A must avoid using the forbidden key words listed on it. Student C acts as a referee, watching over student A's shoulder and pointing out any forbidden words used. Students take turns at playing each of the three roles. The tradition's country/countries of origin must not be mentioned under any circumstances. After the activity, distribute the sheet with the descriptions to your students. | 15' |
| STAGE 3 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Group discussion.</u> Talk about the challenges of communicating when you are not familiar with the tradition involved or cannot use certain key concepts/words. What was difficult? Why? What strategies did student A use to make student B understand? Discuss your own context. Ask your students: How would you translate the names of these traditions for someone from your country who knows little or nothing about them? Would a word-for-word translation make sense? Would any of the strategies used by student A work? What other strategies could be used to come up with a comprehensible but concise solution? | 15' |

Prep time suggestions

- Read the descriptions of the traditions provided.
- Get ready to project the sheet for the matching game in class.
- Print and cut out as many sets of cards as there are groups for stage 2.
- Read chapter 2 of the Teacher's Book *Inclusion, Diversity and Communication Across Cultures* (<https://pagines.uab.cat/eylbid/en/content/teachers-book>) for background information about cultures.
- Read chapter 3 of the Teacher's Book *Inclusion, Diversity and Communication Across Cultures* (<https://pagines.uab.cat/eylbid/en/content/teachers-book>) for background information about translating across cultures.

Variations

- Taboo can be played as a group game. Divide the class into two teams and have students take turns at helping their teammates guess what tradition the card they are holding refers to.
- Consider giving your students homework before playing these games. They could use Wikipedia to research each of the 10 traditions, to find out where and when it happens and what it involves.
- If taboo proves too challenging, consider the possibility of letting students use just one of the forbidden words listed on each card.

3C. World traditions: matching game and taboo



• Eid al-Fitr •

• Spain



• Schultüte •

• Germany, Austria

• Guérewol •

• USA



• Thanksgiving •

• Turkey

• Spring Festival •

• Russia, Ukraine, Belarus

• Day of the Dead •

• Japan



• Hanami •

• Niger

• Diwali •

• China

• Tió de Nadal •

• India



• Maslenitsa •

• Mexico

Descriptions to read aloud in class

Picture	Name	Country	Language family
	Tió de Nadal	Spain	A Catalan Christmas tradition in which a piece of cut wood has a face painted on it and is given a hat and covered with a blanket. Children hit it with a stick while singing a song and it poos small gifts.
	Spring Festival	China	A festival that celebrates the beginning of a new year on the Chinese calendar and sees Chinese families hold annual reunion dinners. Streets are decorated with red lanterns and envelopes. Dragon and lion dances and fireworks are common during the festival.
	Diwali	India	The Hindu festival of lights. It symbolises the spiritual victory of light over darkness. People decorate their homes with oil lamps and candles, light fireworks, and give each other gifts and sweets.
	Day of the Dead	Mexico	A Mexican festivity in which family and friends gather to remember those who have died. People build altars and use colourful calaveras and flowers to honour the dead. They also visit the graves of the deceased, taking them their favourite food and beverages as gifts.
	Schultüte	Germany, Austria	A large, decorated, cone-shaped container, usually made of paper, which is filled with toys, chocolates, sweets and school supplies. It is given to children on their first day of school to help calm their nerves.
	Thanksgiving	USA	Originally a harvest festival and now, in the United States, a day whose centrepiece is a dinner that usually consists of turkey, potatoes, corn, green beans, cranberry sauce and pumpkin pie. Thanksgiving parades are held in many cities.
	Maslenitsa	Russia, Ukraine, Belarus	An Eastern Slavic religious and folk holiday involving outdoor celebrations in which people wear traditional clothes. Its traditional symbol is the scarecrow. Sleigh rides are very popular. People make pancakes and crepes to eat and share with friends.
	Hanami	Japan	An outdoor party celebrated under blossoming cherry trees in Japan. The trees' blossoms only last a week or two. Thousands of people fill parks and hold parties that usually go on until late at night.
	Eid al-Fitr	Turkey	A Muslim religious holiday that celebrates the end of fasting for Ramadan. A specific Islamic prayer is said in an open field or a large hall. The celebration takes place in the tenth month of the Islamic lunar calendar, beginning at sunset on the night of the first sighting of the crescent moon.
	Guérewol	Niger	An annual courtship ritual competition in Niger, in which men in ornamentation and traditional face painting dance and sing in front of marriageable women. Group singing is accompanied by clapping, stamping and bells.

Taboo cards

**Eid al-Fitr****Forbidden words:**

Fasting – Ramadan – Prayer –
Lunar calendar – Muslims – Sunset – Moon

Tió de Nadal**Forbidden words:**

Stick – Gift – Christmas – Sing – Poo –
Wood – Hit

Guérewol**Forbidden words:**

Courtship – Men – Marriageable women –
Dance – Sing – Face painting – Ornamentation

Thanksgiving**Forbidden words:**

Dinner – Turkey – Parades – Pumpkin –
Harvest – Potatoes – Cranberry

Hanami**Forbidden words:**

Outdoor – Cherry – Tree – Blossom –
Park – Party – Night

Spring Festival**Forbidden words:**

New year – Red – Fireworks – Dinner – Lion –
Dragon – Lantern

Day of the Dead**Forbidden words:**

Dead – Calaveras – Colourful – Altar –
Grave – Flowers – Honour

Maslenitsa**Forbidden words:**

Traditional clothes – Scarecrow – Pancake –
Crepe – Sleigh – Folk – Outdoor

Schultüte**Forbidden words:**

Cone – Paper – School – Chocolates –
Sweets – Toys – Nerves

Diwali**Forbidden words:**

Lights – Candles – Oil lamps – Sweets –
Gifts – Fireworks – Darkness