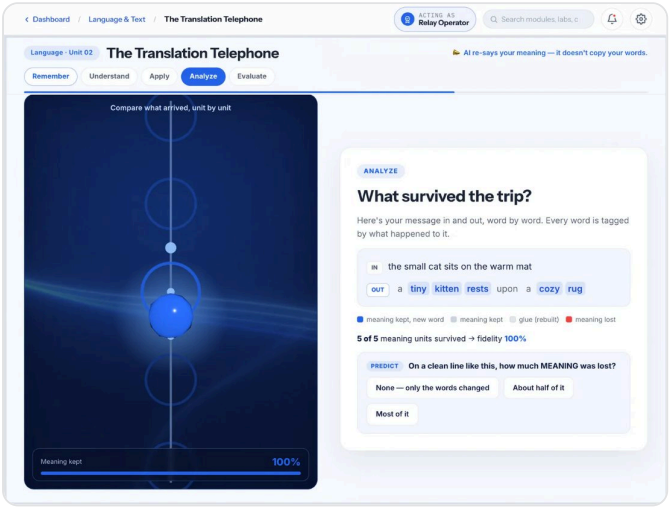
Module 03 · Language & Text · Unit 02 · Stage 2, Capabilities

The Translation Telephone

How words become meaning — and back

Grades 7–10 | **20 minutes** | Role: **Relay Operator**

Grade 7: About age 12–13 · Year 8 in the UK · Class 7 in India



The big idea

When AI rewrites or passes on a message, it does not copy your words. It keeps the meaning, the who, did what, to what and where, and says it again in new words. On a clear message the meaning survives completely. Meaning breaks when a message can be read two ways and the machine picks the wrong one.

The learner's job

Learners are the **Relay Operator** at Bureau of Plain Language · Relay Room. Someone sent a sentence through this room. What arrived was not what they said. Their task: send a message down the line. Find out what fell off.

By the end, learners can say

- I can name the journey a message takes: encode, whisper chain, decode
- I can explain that meaning is preserved while the exact words change
- I can compare an input and output and count how much meaning survived
- I can find an ambiguous message's breaking point and judge whether its meaning survived

Before class

- One computer or tablet for each learner or pair, with EdSutra open (this Module is part of the full EdSutra studio).
- Open the studio once on each device before class, so the Unit still runs if the internet drops.
- Play the first two steps yourself; the Unit scrolls down the page. The line is a small model built for this lesson, as it says.
- Write two headings on the board, "Meaning words" and "Glue words". You will sort words under them in Understand.
- Best after Language & AI Intro.
- Units open in order, and Module 1 comes first. To start a class here, switch on Open every Unit in Settings → Teachers & parents.

Words to introduce

Meaning unit: A word that carries meaning: who, did what, to what, where, which kind.

Glue word: A small word like the, on or a, which the model rebuilds freely.

Encode: Turn words into their meaning, dropping the exact wording.

Decode: Build a new sentence, in fresh words, from the meaning.

Fidelity: Meaning units that survived out of the total, as a percentage.

Ambiguity: When a message can honestly be read in two different ways.

Paraphrase: Saying the same meaning in different words.

Running the lesson 25 minutes

Open 4 min

"In the game of Telephone, a message changes as it passes along. When an AI passes on your message, does it keep your words, your meaning, or both?"

Write "I saw her duck" on the board. Ask: what are two things this could mean? If a machine passed it on in new words, which meaning would arrive? Come back to it in Evaluate.

Step	What learners do	Ask the class	Listen for
1. Remember 3 min	Learners read how the line works, with its three stations (Encode, Whisper chain, Decode), and predict what actually travels down the line.	• What travels down the line: the words, or what they mean? • What happens at Encode, and what happens at Decode?	The meaning travels. Encode keeps the meaning and drops the wording; Decode builds new words from it.
2. Understand 4 min	For "the small cat sits on the warm mat", learners tap the words the AI must keep, then press Check my picks and compare what went in with what came out.	• Which words carry the meaning, and which are just glue? • The line said "a tiny kitten rests upon a cozy rug". Is that wrong?	Five meaning words (small, cat, sits, warm, mat) came back in new words. Glue words like "the" and "on" were rebuilt.
3. Apply 5 min	Learners pick a postcard or type their own message, tap the meaning words they predict must survive, and send it. The meaning capsule shows what was kept.	• Did your predicted meaning words match the meaning capsule? • If you typed your own message, which words did the line treat as glue?	Each kept unit has a job label (who, did what, where). The words out are new; the meaning is the same.
4. Analyze 4 min	Learners read their message in and out, word by word, with each word colored by what happened to it. They count the units that survived and predict how much meaning was lost.	• How many meaning units survived? What is the fidelity? • If every word changed, how can no meaning be lost?	All units survived, so fidelity is 100%. Different words are not wrong; only lost meaning counts.
5. Evaluate 5 min	Learners pick an ambiguous message ("I saw her duck" or "the chicken is ready to eat"), predict what happens, then drag the fuzziness dial to find where it flips and judge whether the meaning survived.	• At what point on the dial did the message flip to the wrong meaning? • Why did this message break when the cat message never did? • Look at our two meanings on the board. Which one arrived, before and after the flip?	It breaks because the message has two readings. Past a tipping point (40 for duck) the line picks the wrong one.

Steps follow Bloom's revised taxonomy, in the order the Unit presents them.

Deepen the thinking

Critical thinking	When 2 of 3 units survived, the line called it "Mostly". When can losing one unit matter more than the percentage suggests?
AI thinking	How would you rewrite "I saw her duck" so no machine could misread it? Which words would you add?
Ethics and fairness	A doctor's note or a school rule is passed through an AI rewriter and one word is misread. Who is responsible for checking the meaning arrived?
Connect to life	When you retell a story or a movie to a friend, which parts do you keep exactly, and which do you say in your own words?

Misconceptions to listen for

"The AI stores and repeats my exact words."
Understand shows the words coming back new: "small cat" becomes "tiny kitten". It keeps the meaning units and builds fresh words.

"Different words mean the AI got it wrong."
Analyze counts the units: on a clean line all of them survive, 100%. Same meaning is what matters, not same words.

"When AI misunderstands, it is just random."
Evaluate shows the break happens at an ambiguous word, at a tipping point you can find. Clear messages did not break on this line.

In real life the card learners see at the end of the Unit

- When a translation app rewords your message, new words can still carry exactly the same meaning.
- An AI rewrite of a sentence may use all-new words. What matters is whether the meaning survived.
- Headlines and signs can be read two ways. When a message is ambiguous, AI can pick the wrong meaning.

Try it this week. Play telephone with friends or family using a sentence with two meanings, like "I saw her duck". Which meaning survives to the end?

Watch out for. Different words don't mean the AI got it wrong; lost meaning does. Meaning usually breaks at ambiguous words, not at random.

Talk about it. Have you ever been misunderstood because your words could mean two things? What happened?

Exit ticket

1. What travels down the line: your words or your meaning?

   _____

2. Name one meaning word and one glue word in "the happy child ran to the big park".

   _____

3. Why did "I saw her duck" break when the cat message did not?

   _____

Going further

For homework, use the "Try it this week" telephone game. Learners can also rewrite one sentence in all-new words, swap with a partner, and count how many meaning units survived.