EdSutra

Teaching guide

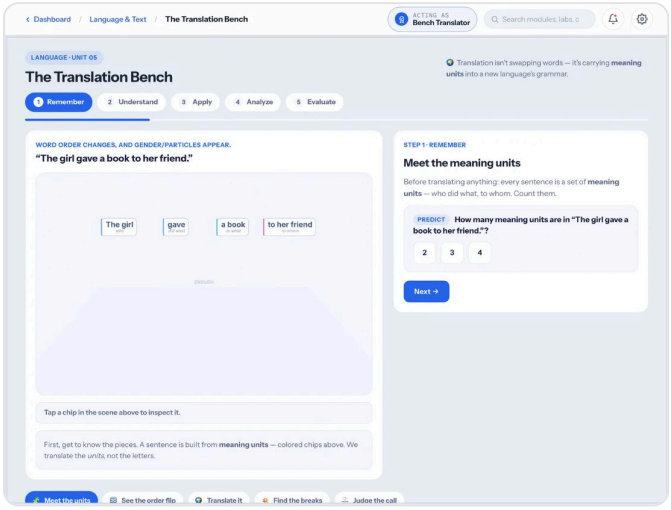
Module 03 · Language & Text · Unit 05 · Stage 2, Capabilities

The Translation Bench

How meaning moves across languages

Grades 7–10 | **30 minutes** | Role: **Bench Translator**

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



The big idea

Translation is not swapping words. A sentence is a set of meaning units (who did what, to whom), and translating carries those units into another language's grammar: the order can flip, and words gain gender or small grammar markers. Idioms and culture words can break or have no match, so a person checks anything important.

The learner's job

Learners are the **Bench Translator** at Bureau of Plain Language · Translation Bench. Two languages. One message. They do not carry the same things. Their task: move the meaning across. Say what could not come with it.

By the end, learners can say

- I can explain that translation preserves meaning units, not individual words
- I can describe how word order, gender, and particles differ across languages
- I can translate a sentence and predict which meaning units survive
- I can analyze why idioms and culture-specific words break in translation
- I can judge when a translation is faithful enough to ship vs. needs a human

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 Remember and Understand steps yourself. Each prediction reveals the translation; tap a chip in the 3D bridge to read its note.
- If any learners speak Spanish, Hindi, Japanese or another language, invite them to check the Unit's translations and add their own.
- Best after Language & AI Intro and The Translation Telephone.
- 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: One piece of meaning with a job: who, did what, to what, to whom.

Word order: The order a language puts its units in; Hindi and Japanese put verbs last.

Gender (in grammar): Words marked masculine or feminine, like Spanish la niña and un libro.

Particle: A small marker showing a word's job, like Japanese "o" for the object.

Idiom: A phrase whose meaning isn't its words, like "break a leg".

Borrowed word: A word taken from another language when there is no native one.

Fidelity: Meaning units that survived out of the total, like 1 of 2.

Running the lesson 30 minutes

Open 5 min

"If you swap every English word for its partner in Japanese, in the same order, will a Japanese reader understand the sentence?"

Write "Break a leg!" on the board. Ask: what does it mean, and what would it say if you translated it word for word? Write the guesses down and come back to them in Analyze.

Step	What learners do	Ask the class	Listen for
1. Remember 4 min	Learners see "The girl gave a book to her friend." split into colored chips on the bench and predict how many meaning units it has.	• What job does each chip do: who, did what, to what, to whom? • Why is "to her friend" one unit, not three words?	Four units: the girl (who), gave (did what), a book (to what), to her friend (to whom).
2. Understand 5 min	Learners predict where the verb "gave" goes in Japanese, then watch the chips fly across the 3D bridge into Japanese order. Tapping a chip shows its note.	• Where did the verb end up? Did any unit get lost? • Look at the small markers like "wa" and "o". What job do they do?	Japanese puts the verb last (Subject, Object, Verb). Every unit survives; only the order and the markers change.
3. Apply 6 min	Learners pick a sentence ("The girl gave a book..." or "The red car is fast.") and a language (Spanish, Hindi or Japanese), predict whether every unit survives, then reveal.	• What changed in Spanish that did not change in English? Look for gender. • Which language borrowed the English word "car"?	Plain sentences keep every unit. Only the surface changes: order, gender (la niña), markers, or a borrowed word.
4. Analyze 6 min	Learners test two hard cases, the idiom "Break a leg!" and the word "privacy", switching between Spanish, Hindi and Japanese to see which language maps, breaks or borrows each.	• What does "Break a leg!" become word for word in Hindi? • Why do Spanish and Japanese use a different phrase instead? • Check our guesses on the board. Were we right?	Word for word, Hindi gets "break your leg", which sounds like a threat. Spanish and Japanese use their own phrase.
5. Evaluate 4 min	"Privacy matters." goes into Japanese. "Privacy" has no native word, so it is borrowed, and the meter reads 1 of 2. Learners decide: ship it, or send it to a human translator.	• What does 1 of 2 tell you about this translation? • Which needs a human translator: a game chat, a menu, or a medicine label? Why?	One unit did not truly translate, so meaning may be lost. When fidelity is low, a human translator checks before it ships.

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

Deepen the thinking

Critical thinking	A translation app gives you a smooth sentence in a language you cannot read. How could you check whether the meaning survived?
AI thinking	The bench uses a small, hand-built phrase bank. A real translation AI learns from many example translations. Would it still break "Break a leg!"? Why or why not?
Ethics and fairness	Some languages have far less written text online than English. How might that affect translation apps, and who could be left out at a hospital?
Connect to life	Think of a saying your family uses. How would you explain it to someone from another country so the meaning, not just the words, arrives?

Misconceptions to listen for

"Translation is swapping each word for its foreign partner."
Understand shows the units reorder: in Japanese and Hindi the verb moves to the end. Translation carries meaning units, not single words.

"Any phrase can be translated word for word."
Analyze shows "Break a leg!" turning into a threat in Hindi. Idioms need an equivalent phrase, or they break.

"Every idea has a word in every language."
Japanese has no native everyday word for "privacy", so it borrows the English one. Some words have no slot to land in.

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

- Translation apps don't swap word for word: in Hindi or Japanese the verb moves to the end.
- Signs in several languages at hospitals and stations need careful translation, because a wrong word there really matters.
- Auto-translated captions can turn an idiom like "break a leg" into nonsense, or even a threat.

Try it this week. Ask someone who speaks another language how they'd say "it's raining cats and dogs". Is it word for word, or a different idiom?

Watch out for. Translation isn't swapping words. Idioms and culture words can break or have no match, so a person should check anything important.

Talk about it. Is there a word in a language you know that has no good English match?

Exit ticket

1. Where does the verb go in a Japanese or Hindi sentence?

   _____

2. Why did "Break a leg!" break in Hindi?

   _____

3. The meter reads 1 of 2. Ship it, or ask a human? Why?

   _____

Going further

For homework, use the "Try it this week" activity. Learners can also ask a family member to translate "The girl gave a book to her friend" into another language and mark where the verb goes.