

The Art of Translation: Carrying Stories Across Languages

COMPREHENSION • VOCABULARY • DISCUSSION

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Reading Passage

Read the passage carefully. Each paragraph is labelled with a letter for easy reference.

- A** Translation is an intricate art that goes beyond mere words; it is about conveying meaning, emotion, and cultural nuances from one language to another. For instance, when translating a novel like Gabriel García Márquez's 'One Hundred Years of Solitude,' a translator must capture not only the story but also the magical realism that defines Latin American literature. This requires a deep understanding of both the source and target languages, as well as the cultures they represent. A successful translation invites readers into the world of the original text, allowing them to experience the same emotions and connections as the original audience, thus bridging the gap between different linguistic backgrounds.
- B** Moreover, translators often face challenges such as idiomatic expressions and cultural references that do not have direct equivalents in another language. For example, the English phrase 'kick the bucket' translates literally to Spanish as 'dar una patada al cubo,' which would confuse Spanish speakers who are unfamiliar with the idiomatic meaning. Instead, a translator might choose to use a culturally relevant expression like 'estirar la pata,' which means 'to kick the bucket' in a way that resonates with Spanish speakers and conveys the intended meaning effectively. This kind of creativity is essential in translation, as it helps maintain the integrity of the original message while making it accessible to a new audience. Ultimately, the art of translation enriches both languages, fostering understanding and appreciation among diverse cultures, and allowing for a deeper connection between people who speak different languages.

Vocabulary Glossary

Key words and phrases from the passage. Study them before attempting the exercise below.

WORD / PHRASE	DEFINITION	EXAMPLE SENTENCE
intricate	very detailed and complex	<i>The artist made an intricate pattern on the vase.</i>
conveying	sharing or expressing something, like a message or feeling	<i>The teacher was good at conveying ideas to students.</i>
nuances	small and important differences in meaning or feeling	<i>She noticed the nuances in his voice when he was upset.</i>
magical realism	a style of fiction that mixes fantasy with real life	<i>The book used magical realism to tell a story about ghosts.</i>
idiomatic	using expressions that are natural to a native speaker	<i>He used idiomatic phrases that only locals understood.</i>
resonates	makes a strong connection or has a special meaning	<i>The song resonated with many people who heard it.</i>
integrity	keeping something whole and true to its original form	<i>The artist's work showed integrity by staying true to her vision.</i>
enriches	makes something better or more meaningful	<i>Traveling enriches our understanding of different cultures.</i>

Vocabulary Exercise — Fill in the Blank

Use one word or phrase from the glossary above to complete each sentence. Each item is used only once. Answers are on the final page.

1. The _____ design of the building impressed everyone who saw it.
2. He struggled with _____ his feelings to his family.
3. Understanding the _____ of language can help in learning a new one.
4. The author's use of _____ _____ made the story both strange and familiar.
5. The phrase 'break a leg' is an example of an _____ expression.
6. His speech _____ with everyone who had shared similar experiences.

Comprehension Questions

These questions are different from the online practice test. Choose the best answer (A, B, C, or D). Answers and explanations are on the final page.

Question 1

What is one key skill a translator must have according to the passage?

- A. Understanding both languages and cultures.
- B. Being able to write long novels.
- C. Traveling to the country of the original text.
- D. Knowing many different languages.

Question 2

Why might the phrase 'kick the bucket' cause confusion in translation?

- A. It is an idiom that does not translate directly.
- B. It is a phrase commonly used in business.
- C. It is a simple phrase with a clear meaning.
- D. It is only used in children's books.

Question 3

What does the passage suggest about the impact of translation on cultures?

- A. Translation creates misunderstandings between cultures.
- B. Translation helps enrich languages and cultures.
- C. Translation is only useful for learning languages.
- D. Translation makes cultures more similar to each other.

Question 4

What can be inferred about the author's view on translation?

- A. It is a simple task that anyone can do.
- B. It requires creativity and cultural knowledge.
- C. It is only needed for old texts.
- D. It should be done quickly to be effective.

Question 5

What is the author's purpose in mentioning the novel 'One Hundred Years of Solitude'?

- A. To show that translations can change original stories.
- B. To illustrate the challenge of translating cultural elements.
- C. To suggest that only famous books need translation.
- D. To highlight that some books are better in the original language.

Discussion & Writing Prompts

Each prompt references a specific detail from the passage above. Use for classroom discussion or a short written response (150–200 words).

1. In Paragraph A, the passage discusses the role of capturing magical realism in translation. How might this specific challenge affect the reader's experience of a translated novel?

2. Paragraph B describes how idiomatic expressions like 'kick the bucket' require creative solutions in translation. Can you think of a similar idiom in your language, and how would you translate it for an English speaker?

3. The passage states that translation enriches both languages and cultures. Do you agree with this statement, and can you provide examples from your own experience where translation has led to a deeper cultural understanding?

Answer Key

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

Q1 A

Q2 A

Q3 B

Q4 B

Q5 B

VOCABULARY EXERCISE

FIB1 intricate

FIB2 conveying

FIB3 nuances

FIB4 magical realism

FIB5 idiomatic

FIB6 resonated

Comprehension Question Explanations

Why the correct answer is right — and why each wrong option is incorrect.

1. What is one key skill a translator must have according to the passage?

✓ A — Understanding both languages and cultures.

The passage states that a translator must have a deep understanding of both the source and target languages and cultures.

✗ B — Being able to write long novels.

The passage does not mention writing novels as a skill for translators.

✗ C — Traveling to the country of the original text.

Traveling is not mentioned as a requirement for translators in the passage.

✗ D — Knowing many different languages.

While knowing languages is beneficial, the passage emphasizes understanding specific source and target languages.

2. Why might the phrase 'kick the bucket' cause confusion in translation?

✓ A — It is an idiom that does not translate directly.

The passage explains that 'kick the bucket' is an idiomatic expression that lacks a direct equivalent in other languages.

✗ B — It is a phrase commonly used in business.

The passage does not associate the phrase with business.

✗ C — It is a simple phrase with a clear meaning.

The passage highlights the complexity, not simplicity, of the phrase.

✗ D — It is only used in children's books.

The passage does not mention its use in children's books.

3. What does the passage suggest about the impact of translation on cultures?

✓ B — Translation helps enrich languages and cultures.

The passage states that the art of translation enriches both languages and fosters understanding among cultures.

✗ A — Translation creates misunderstandings between cultures.

The passage suggests translation builds understanding, not misunderstandings.

✗ C — Translation is only useful for learning languages.

The passage highlights broader cultural enrichment, not just language learning.

✗ D — Translation makes cultures more similar to each other.

The passage does not claim that translation makes cultures more similar.

4. What can be inferred about the author's view on translation?

✓ B — It requires creativity and cultural knowledge.

The passage discusses the creativity and cultural understanding required for effective translation.

✗ A — It is a simple task that anyone can do.

The passage describes translation as complex and intricate, not simple.

✗ C — It is only needed for old texts.

The passage applies the need for translation broadly, not just to old texts.

✗ D — It should be done quickly to be effective.

The passage does not emphasize speed as a factor in effective translation.

5. What is the author's purpose in mentioning the novel 'One Hundred Years of Solitude'?

✓ B — To illustrate the challenge of translating cultural elements.

The passage uses the novel as an example to show the complexity of capturing cultural nuances in translation.

✗ A — To show that translations can change original stories.

The passage does not suggest translations change stories.

✗ C — To suggest that only famous books need translation.

The passage does not limit the need for translation to famous books.

✗ D — To highlight that some books are better in the original language.

The passage does not argue that original languages are superior.

MORE B2 LEVEL READING PRACTICE

Letters Refugee Camp Family Story Hope — <https://www.esl-tests.com/reading/b2/letters-refugee-camp-family-story-hope>

Global Health Preparedness Lessons Recent Pandemics — <https://www.esl-tests.com/reading/b2/global-health-preparedness-lessons-recent-pandemics>

Climate Migration Communities Move — <https://www.esl-tests.com/reading/b2/climate-migration-communities-move>