

Lesson: *Film titles that get lost in translation!*

This is a quick, easy, ready-to-go lesson that will inspire your students. It'll also give them opportunities to improve their speaking, listening, reading and writing skills. This lesson comes with Teacher's Notes, a Resource Sheet, a PDF of the lesson, and an audio file. Simply follow the lesson ideas for a fantastic class that'll really motivate your students.

1 Warm-up

Film descriptions

In pairs, students play a game. They take turns describing one of the films on the Resource Sheet. Their partner has to name it. Or, you could write the film titles on the board. Students take turns describing one of them. Other students listen and identify the film.

2 Lesson activities

Go through the activities for the lesson on the sheet: the Pre-reading, Reading I and Reading II activities. You could do this lesson as a *listening* activity. In order to do this, tell your students to turn over the sheet so they can't see the text as they do the exercises.

If your students' listening level is low, stop the recording after each paragraph and check their understanding.

After finishing that, and if you've done this as a listening activity (not a reading), let your students read the text as you play the recording again. This is good for developing their listening skills as they can see the connection between the written and spoken language.

3 Follow-up activities

Retell it!

Assign a paragraph (or two, etc.) to each student. Students have a minute or two to try to remember the text. When they're ready, students try to recount the information, using as much of the language as possible. Or, ask for volunteers to retell the information, using as much of the original language as possible (or even by heart if they can).

Film title translations

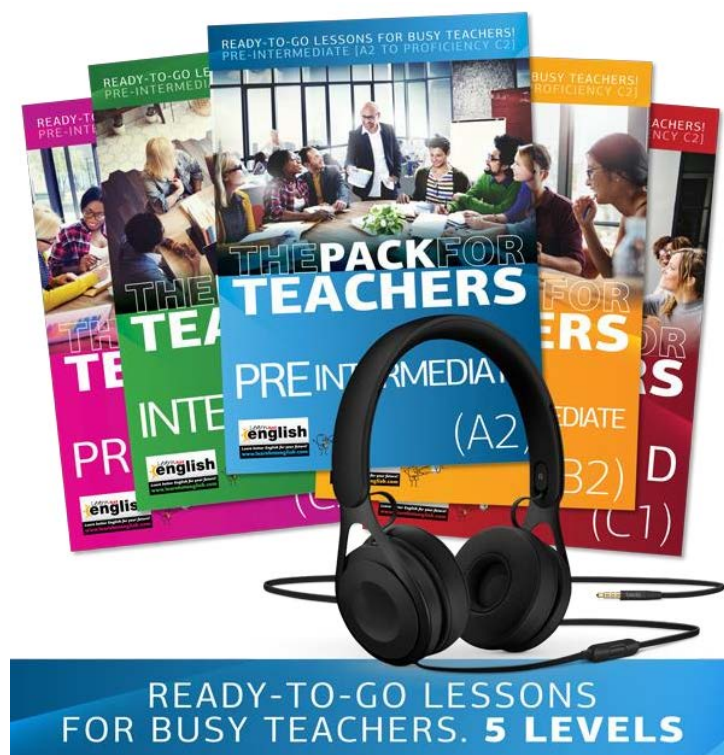
Using the films from the warmer activity (or any other films), students create a title for the same film in their own language. The translated film title should be more descriptive of the film rather than a literal one. When they're ready, students read out their translated film titles. Other students listen and then identify the film.

Dialogue

In pairs, students write a dialogue of an interview between a reporter and someone involved in one of the films from this lesson: an actor, the director, the producer, etc. Tell your students to make the interview as funny, silly or serious as they like. When they're ready, ask for volunteers to act out their dialogues (using notes, not reading it out word-for-word). Other students listen and vote on the best ones.

Translation fun

Students choose a short paragraph in English from their book or any other source. Then, they write a quick translation of the text into their own language. When they're ready, they give the translation to another student, who translates it back into English. Finally, students compare their translated texts to the original English version.



Resource Sheet

In pairs, play a game. Take turns describing one of the films below. Your partner has to name it.

- Taxi Driver (1976)
- Seven (1995)
- The Big Lebowski (1998)
- Amelie (2001)
- Casablanca (1942)
- The Good, The Bad and The Ugly (1966)
- The Sound of Music (1966)
- Erin Brockovich (2000)
- Terminator 2: Judgment Day (1991)
- The Matrix (1999)
- The Lord Of The Rings: The Two Towers (2002)
- Apocalypse Now (1979)
- To Kill a Mockingbird (1962)
- 2001: A Space Odyssey (1968)
- Die Hard (1988)
- Life is Beautiful (1997)
- Jurassic Park (1993)
- Aliens (1986)
- Beauty and the Beast (2017)
- Blade Runner (1982)
- Gone with the Wind (1939)
- Back to the Future (1985)
- Jaws (1975)
- It's a Wonderful Life (1946)
- Raiders of The Lost Ark (1981)
- GoodFellas (1990)
- Pulp Fiction (1994)
- Thelma and Louise (1991)
- The Shawshank Redemption (1994)
- The Dark Knight (2008)
- Star Wars: Episode V — The Empire Strikes Back (1980)
- The Godfather (1972)



Objective To improve your listening and reading skills.

Think about it How often do you watch films in English? What films have you seen lately? What did you think of them? Have you seen any unusual translations of foreign films in your country? What were they?

Exams This reading and listening activity will help prepare you for English exams such as PET and TOEFL.

READ & LISTEN II

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THESE TRANSLATIONS ARE SCARY!

NON APRITE QUELLA PORTA



FILM TITLES THAT GET LOST IN TRANSLATION

Answers on page 44

1 Pre-reading

Look at the list of translated film titles below. What do you think the original film titles were in English?

- *He's a Ghost*
- *Urban Neurotic*
- *Smiles and Tears*
- *The Great White Shark*
- *The Man Who Killed His Mother*
- *Young People Who Traverse Dimensions Wearing Sunglasses*

2 Reading I

Read the article once to check your answers from the Pre-reading task.

3 Reading II

Read the article again. Then, complete the sentences with the words from below.

1975 Japanese Spanish

The Shawshank Redemption

Sylvester Stallone 1971

- _____ starred in the film *The Expendables*.
- Jaws* came out in _____.
- Vanilla Sky* was originally a _____ film.
- Captain Supermarket* was a film title for the _____ market.
- The French Connection* was released in _____.
- The Ones Who Escaped* was the French title for the film _____.

Die *Slowly*. *Smiles and Tears*. *Six Naked Pigs** – they're all famous films, but you probably know them by their more familiar titles: *Die Hard*, *The Sound of Music* and *The Full Monty*. Many foreign movies end up with unusual titles. But why?

In most cases, the film title has little or no meaning in another language. A **literal translation** won't help, so the title has to be changed. Quite often, the new title is a logical translation of the original. For example, *The Expendables* (2010, starring Sylvester Stallone and Jet Li) became *The Mercenaries* (*Los Mercenarios*) in Spain, and *Jaws* (1975, starring Roy Scheider and Robert Shaw) was *The Great White Shark* (*Der weiße Hai*) in Germany.

But other changes are somewhat **random**. Spanish film *Abre los Ojos* (literally: Open Your Eyes, 1997) was given the title *Vanilla Sky* (2001) for US audiences. And the Italian title for *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (1974) was *Don't Open The Door!*

Other translations are simply ridiculous. Mel Brooks' film *The Producers* (1968) became *Please Do Not Touch the Old Women in Italy*. *The Naked Gun: From the Files of Police Squad!* (1988, starring Leslie Nielsen) is known as

The Gun Died Laughing in China, and *Army of Darkness* (1992, starring Bruce Campbell) was given the title *Captain Supermarket* for the Japanese market, apparently based on the fact that film character Ash (Campbell) once worked in a supermarket.

Sometimes, the title is used as a way of explaining the film. *The French Connection* (1971) was known as *Flashpoint: Brooklyn* in Germany, presumably because most of the film **takes place** in New York. And the Danes **opted for** *The Boy That Drowned in Chocolate Sauce* as a title for *Willy Wonka & The Chocolate Factory*, even though Augustus Gloop doesn't actually die when he falls into a river of chocolate early on in the movie.

Woody Allen's film *Annie Hall* (1977) is *Urban Neurotic* for the German market (which could really be the title for any Woody Allen film), and the **hit** 1999 movie *The Matrix* (starring Keanu Reeves) is known as *Young People Who Traverse Dimensions Wearing Sunglasses* in France.

But in some cases, the translators go one step further and even **give the ending away**. *Thelma & Louise* (1991, starring Geena Davis and Susan Sarandon)

is known as *An Unexpected End* for Mexican audiences. In France, *The Shawshank Redemption* (1994, starring Tim Robbins and Morgan Freeman) is *The Ones Who Escaped*. Hitchcock's *Psycho* (1960, starring Janet Leigh and Anthony Perkins) became *The Man Who Killed His Mother* in Portugal. And *The Sixth Sense* (1999, starring Bruce Willis and Haley Osment) is *He's a Ghost* for Chinese audiences.

Now what's the point of that? ☹

*FILM TITLES

Die Slowly was the German translation of *Die Hard*; *Smiles and Tears* was the Spanish translation of *The Sound of Music*; and *Six Naked Pigs* was the Chinese translation of *The Full Monty*.

GLOSSARY

a tear *n*
liquid that comes out of your eyes when you're sad
naked *adj*
with no clothes on
familiar *adj*
if something is "familiar" to you, you recognise it or know it well
a literal translation *exp*
a translation of each individual word, not the overall meaning of the original text
random *adj*
if you describe events as "random", they don't seem to follow a plan or pattern
to take place *exp*
if something "takes place" in an area, it happens there
to opt for *phr vb*
to choose
to drown *vb*
if someone "drowns", they die in water / a liquid
a neurotic *n*
someone who is frightened or worried about things that aren't really important
a hit *n*
if a film is a "hit", it's very popular
to give the ending away *exp*
to say what happens at the end of the film