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)
FILM TITLES THAT GET LOST IN TRANSLATION

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? 🤔

GLOSSARY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>exp</td>
<td>explanation</td>
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<tr>
<td>phr</td>
<td>phrase</td>
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<td>vb</td>
<td>verb</td>
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<tr>
<td>adj</td>
<td>adjective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to drown</td>
<td>to die in water</td>
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<tr>
<td>liquid</td>
<td>something that flows</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>naked</td>
<td>with no clothes on</td>
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<tr>
<td>vt</td>
<td>verb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to recognise</td>
<td>to see or know</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kb</td>
<td>key word</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>random</td>
<td>not following a pattern</td>
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<tr>
<td>to give the ending away</td>
<td>to tell the story beforehand</td>
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<tr>
<td>familiar</td>
<td>something you know</td>
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<tr>
<td>hit</td>
<td>popular success</td>
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<tr>
<td>a tear</td>
<td>a drop of liquid from your eye</td>
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<tr>
<td>adjective</td>
<td>word that describes a noun</td>
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*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.