

COMMUNICATION

Across languages

LEVEL

Intermediate (B2)

NUMBER

EN_B2_3071X

LANGUAGE

English

Learning outcomes

- I can compare how ideas are expressed in different languages and discuss language ability.
- I can talk about my mother tongue and discuss the range of similarities and differences across different languages.



Warm-up

Mediation means to assist people in conflict.

In a linguistic sense, it means to enable understanding between different language speakers.

Have you ever **mediated** between people to help resolve a conflict?

What **language skills** might be needed to **mediate** in a linguistic sense?

Have you ever helped someone out when they had difficulties understanding your **mother tongue**?





Language vocabulary

Complete the statements (a-f) using the correct vocabulary item (1-6).

1 **monolingual**

a _____ of a language means having a very high language ability.

2 **multilingual**

b When you _____, you use skills such as interpreting, translating and paraphrasing to help people understand.

3 **acquisition**

c Many people are _____, meaning that they can only speak their mother tongue.

4 **command**

d If you have a good _____ of a language, you're pretty comfortable speaking it, and can get by in most situations.

5 **mastery**

e A _____ speaker can get around different languages and cultures well, as they speak more than two languages fluently.

6 **mediate**

f The process of gaining skills and building vocabulary in a foreign language is called _____.



Talking about your language ability

Complete the activity below.

To the right are some examples of how you might talk about your language ability.

- Can you **relate** to any of these statements?
- How would you **describe** your own ability?

Language acquisition is challenging. It's often easier to understand a language than to actually speak it.

Spending a year in France helped me gain a command of the language. I feel much more confident.

I started learning English at age 10, and feel that I have mastered the language.

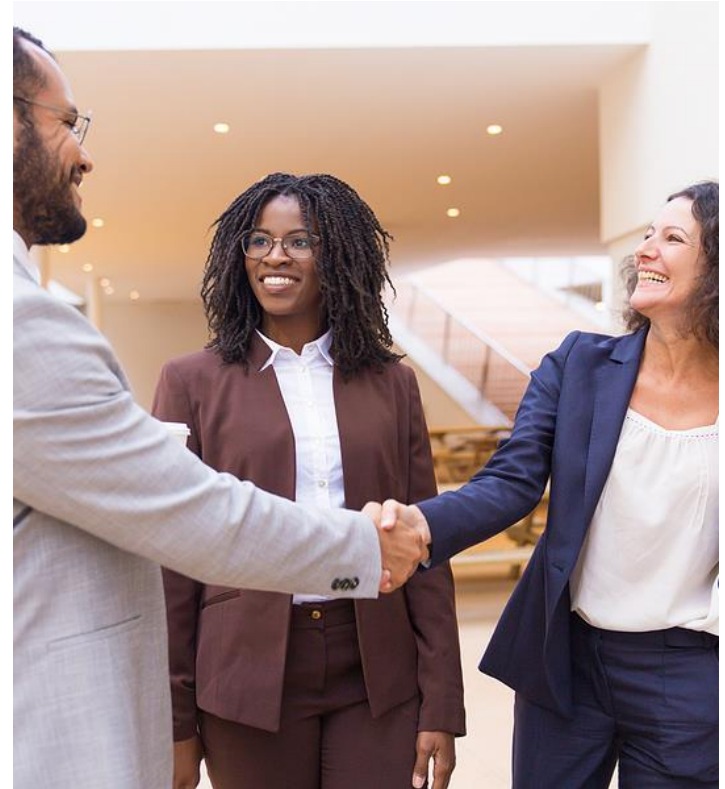


Mediation strategies

Imagine you are **on a tour of London** with your cousin, who speaks only a little English. You would use **mediation strategies** to help translate and summarise the tour guide's information.

Go through the list below:

- 1 Explaining **technical terminology** to help clarify the most challenging words
- 2 **Paraphrasing** to provide general ideas
- 3 **Breaking down** complicated information
- 4 **Adapting** the speech, delivery, and style to help convey the **tone and style** of the speaker.





Dialogue (1)

Read the dialogue and **answer** the questions.



Sarah

I've been learning German for three years now. The hardest part is those articles—I'm never sure. Der? Die? Das? Who knows!

Oh really? I wouldn't think a thing like that could be difficult! I guess I just automatically know which to use.



Julian



Sarah

Well in my mother tongue, we really only have one definite article. In terms of grammar, nouns aren't gendered. It's still new to me, I guess.

English and German have some similarities though, right? I find many English words are the same.



Julian

What does Sarah find difficult about German?

What is Julian surprised about?

What does Sarah say about English nouns?

What are Sarah and Julian's mother tongues?



Dialogue (2)

Continue the dialogue between Sarah and Julian. **Answer** the questions.



Sarah

You're right. I can often figure out the meaning of a word, but I have to watch out for false friends! Like gift and *Gift*!

Uh oh! In English, a gift is a present. In German, Gift is a poison—totally different thing!



Julian



Sarah

Exactly... I wouldn't want someone to think I'd given them poison for their birthday...

Why does Julian think German should be easy for Sarah?

What is a false friend, in language learning?

What is a gift in English?

What is *Gift* in German?



Watch out for false friends



I think Ellie is a very sensible person. I hope she wasn't offended by what I said.

I think you mean sensitive. That's one of those **false friends**!

A **false friend** here means a word that looks and sounds very similar in your first language and the language you're learning. The meaning, however, can be very different!



Discuss

What might be some challenging aspects of your mother tongue?



Have you ever been involved in a serious or funny language misunderstanding?



Language and culture vocabulary

Complete the statements (**a-f**) using the correct vocabulary item (**1-6**).

- | | | | |
|----------|---------------------------------|----------|--|
| 1 | intercultural competence | a | _____ in a foreign culture is said to be the best way to learn a language. |
| 2 | immersion | b | The study of the similarities and differences among languages is called _____. |
| 3 | linguistic register | c | A language that is still being used and spoken is called a _____. |
| 4 | comparative linguistics | d | A group of languages that all come from a common root is called a _____. |
| 5 | language family | e | _____ refers to how, when, and where a language is spoken. For example, you speak differently at work than with friends. |
| 6 | living language | f | _____ refers to the skills needed to understand and act respectfully towards people of different cultures. |





Linguistic register

Understanding the **linguistic register** means identifying the tone, style, and context of written or spoken language. How might the linguistic register **vary** in the examples below?



A prime minister addressing the nation

A presentation at a business conference

Cheering and talking about sports at a football match

An economic report in the newspaper



Language families

Read the table below. Are you familiar with some of these languages and language families?

Language family	Examples
Romance	French, Spanish, Italian
Germanic	English, German, Dutch
Niger-Congo	Bantu, Swahili, Igbo
Sino-Tibetan	Burmese, Tibetan, varieties of Chinese
Austronesian	Malay, Javanese, Tagalog





Discuss

Discuss the questions below **in breakout rooms** or **as a class**.

Share your thoughts and ideas in the main group afterwards (if using breakout rooms).



What insights have you gained about British **culture** from learning English? What other cultures do you associate with English?

How could you **immerse** yourself in a foreign language, if you didn't want to move abroad for an extended period of time?

Do you know of any languages that are **similar** to your mother tongue? Which languages are completely **different**?

Do you know what **language family** your mother tongue comes from?



Discuss

What's been the hardest aspect of learning English for you so far?

Describe it, then compare and contrast it to the challenging aspect(s) you mentioned earlier about your mother tongue.



Tricky English words

Read the words below aloud. **Complete** the activity in the red box.

penguin

thirsty

choir

squirrel

eighth

rural

Surveys of language learners found that the words below represent some of the most challenging to say. Are any of these tough for you? What makes them challenging?



End of the lesson

Idiom

It's all Greek to me

Meaning: This idiom is used to say that something isn't understandable

Example: I tried to read the instruction manual, but it was all Greek to me.



Additional practice



Fill in the gaps

Complete the sentences using the words in the red box.

- 1 Clarissa is _____. She grew up speaking both English and Tagalog, the language of the Philippines, at home.
- 2 When family visits from the Philippines, she occasionally helps them understand complex things in English. This process is called language _____.
- 3 Juan is _____. He learned English and Spanish at home, and then studied French at school.
- 4 French and Spanish are both connected to Latin. They are in the same _____.
- 5 Juan developed a good _____ of French while he was in school, but achieved _____ when he lived in France for two years.

multilingual
mediation
mastery
language family
command
bilingual



Figuring out idioms

All languages have idioms and phrases that can be hard to translate directly!

“The early bird gets the worm....

Why would I want a worm? This doesn't motivate me to wake up!

What do you think the idiom above means?

What are some idioms in your language? Translate them directly into English.

Now, try and explain their meaning to your teacher and classmates!





Discuss



Your friend has decided to learn your mother tongue as a foreign language.

What do you think will be a very easy aspect of your mother tongue for a student who is learning it?



Answer key

P.4: 1. (c) 2. (e) 3. (f) 4. (d) 5. (a) 6. (b)

P.11: 1. (f) 2. (a) 3. (e) 4. (b) 5. (d) 6. (c)

P.20: 1. bilingual 2. mediation 3. multilingual 4. language family 5. command; mastery



Summary

Languages:

- *monolingual; multilingual; acquisition; command; mastery*
- *to mediate*
- *Jane is **monolingual** and only speaks English.*
- *Alan has a good **command** of French and Arabic.*

Learning languages:

- *false friend; intercultural competence; immersion*
- *Though Polish and Czech have many similarities, there are also lots of **false friends**.*
- *A lot of businesses focus on **intercultural competence** among their employees.*

Different languages:

- *linguistic register; comparative linguistics; language family; living languages*
- ***Comparative linguistics** is the study of similarities and differences in languages.*
- *Swedish and Danish are part of the same **language family**.*



Vocabulary

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