


TEACHER'S NOTES

ACTIVITY 4B. Chinese whispers

In this activity, students will...

- Become more aware of non-linguistic aspects of brokering/interpreting.
- Identify some of the non-linguistic problems that young interpreters may face and discuss possible solutions to them.
- Discuss how brokering pushes young interpreters to develop problem-solving, interpersonal and communication skills.

ESTIMATED
TIME



50 MIN

How to use this resource

STAGE 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce the game (point 1 of 'THE GAME' instructions). • Prepare for the game (point 2 of 'THE GAME' instructions). 	5'
STAGE 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Play the game (point 3 of 'THE GAME' instructions). 	5'
STAGE 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Briefly ask the 'adults' in the groups if they managed to understand each other properly, and ask the 'interpreters' how they felt in the situation they were in. On the board, note down the words they use to describe their feelings. • Ask each group to draw up a table with three large columns and to fill in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The first column with a list of the communication problems they had during the game (misunderstandings, difficulty in getting the message, missing information, irritation, etc.). • The second column with the reasons for which those problems arose (not hearing properly, the interpreter forgetting something, different expectations regarding politeness, etc.). 	15'
STAGE 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask each group to fill in the table's third column with a description of the solutions to the aforementioned problems applied by any of the three participants. If any problems were left unsolved, ask the group to reflect on whether and how they could have solved them. 	10'
STAGE 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask a spokesperson from each group to read out their table to the rest of the class. Write relevant or recurrent problems, reasons and solutions on the board. • Reflect with your students: this game was played in one language. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What kind of additional problems would arise if the interpreter actually had to translate the same messages across two different languages and cultures, and why would they arise? • What would it take to find solutions to those additional problems? Would doing so be just too demanding, or would it make young interpreters more skilled in some way? 	15'

Prep time suggestions

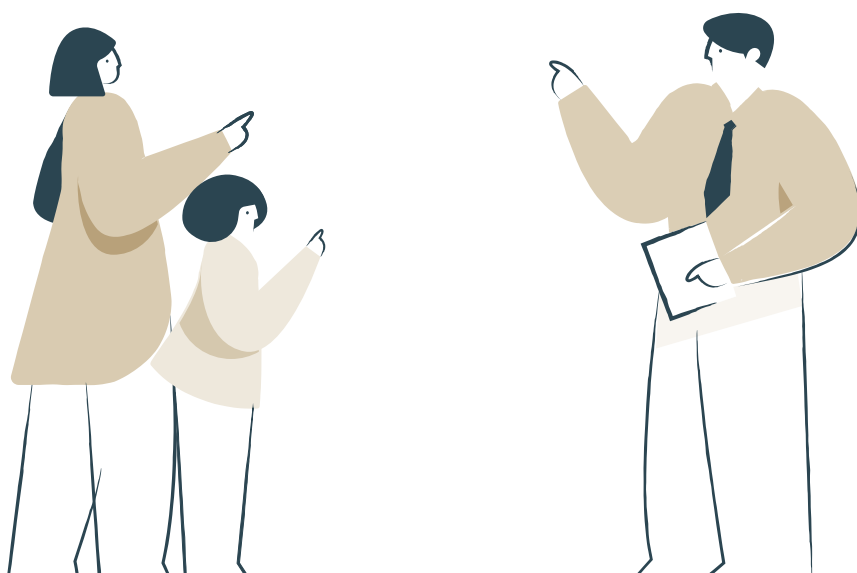
- If you teach in a language other than English, translate the situation and role descriptions into that language. Adapt them to the local culture as necessary to make them realistic.
- Print and cut out enough descriptions for the class.
- If you wish, you can prepare and print out the table mentioned in stages 3 and 4 above. It should have three columns with the headings "problems", "reasons" and "solutions".
- Read chapter 5 of the Teacher's Book *Inclusion, Diversity and Communication Across Cultures*, available online (<https://pagines.uab.cat/eylbid/en/content/teachers-book>), for extra background information on the topic of child language brokering and the feelings it evokes.

4B. Chinese whispers

When translating a conversation between two adults, young language brokers may be faced with problems that require more than language skills, such as dealing with new or awkward situations, memorising a lot of information at once, and managing misunderstandings.



What does it feel like to broker
between two adults – even if they
both speak your own language?



THE GAME

1. In groups of three, decide who is to play each of the three roles in the situation described: adult 1, adult 2 and the interpreter. All three will actually be speaking the language that is normally used in class, but adults 1 and 2 can only communicate through the interpreter – fictionally, they are speaking two different languages. The interpreter has to repeat, in their own words, what the adults say. The adults have to improvise what they say depending on how the conversation goes.
2. Give each student the description of their role. They should silently read through their own card and may ask you questions if they have doubts, but must not show or read out their card to the other students in the group.
3. Adult 1 starts the Chinese whispers game by reading out the passage at the end of their role description into the interpreter's ear (adult 2 must not eavesdrop!).

The interpreter whispers what they have just heard in adult 2's ear, repeating the message as faithfully as possible but using their own words.

Adult 2 responds as they see fit, according to their role description, again whispering in the interpreter's ear.

The whispered conversation goes on – through the interpreter – for five minutes.



Roleplay – the parent-teacher conference

It is going to be a long afternoon at the school. It is parent-teacher conference day! Each parent has five minutes to speak to each teacher.

Start the meeting by reading this

ADULT 1

the maths teacher

You are the interpreter's maths teacher. The student has not been performing very well lately and you are determined to make that clear to their parent, even if you have to be blunt to do so. You are feeling pressured because other parents are queueing up, which makes you nervous. And when you are nervous, you tend to speak fast...

Good afternoon, how do you do? I see you've brought your child with you, which is good because s/he can interpret for us. It's also awkward in a way, because we have to talk about the constant decline in his/her marks during the past few months. Now, I'm aware you were unable to attend past parent-teacher conferences, but his/her marks have been falling since the start of the year, and I'm worried that s/he might end up failing maths. S/he can still remedy the situation though, as I keep telling him/her in class. I'm actually willing to give him/her extra tests so that we can bring his/her average up, but to achieve that, of course, the results will need to be much better than what I'm seeing in class!"

ADULT 2

the parent

You believe your child – the interpreter – is a brilliant student. They have never mentioned any problems at school and always performed well at their old school in your home country. In your family and culture, teachers are to be respected and appreciated. You have brought a small home-made cake for each teacher as a thank-you gift. You were unable to attend the previous conferences and are absolutely determined to give out your gifts today.

INTERPRETER

adult 1's pupil,
adult 2's child

You try to interpret as honestly as possible, without intentionally distorting information.