Module 4

Learning objectives

- Think about what makes a good story!
- Consider the benefits of adapting and translating stories.
- Find out more about translation and versioning.
- Translate an early literacy resource.
- Familiarize yourself with open licensing and why it's important
- Learn about the different Creative Commons licenses that are available and how they can be used.
- Find out more about Open Educational Resources, how and where you can access them, and how they can be used.
- Understand how you can adapt open content to suit your purposes.

4.2 What makes a great translation? Recommendations for storybook versioning

Introduction

Now that we've taken an indepth look at finding and adapting open content, in this second part of Module 4, we are going to focus on storybook translation and creation. We are going to use this guide: *'What Makes A Great Translation?'* that was developed by the Results in Education for All Children (REACH) Project and funded by the REACH trust fund at the World Bank and the Global Book Alliance. Keep in mind that translation is just one way we can adapt content.

First things first! Before we get into the basics of what makes a great translation. Let's start with what makes a good story. Let's begin!

What makes a good story?

In the context of the African library, what kind of stories are good stories? Keep in mind these stories are going to be read aloud to the children in your communities, and made available for children to read themselves.

Do you have books on your shelves that are representative of the languages spoken in your communities? When children page through the picture books you have available, do they see girls and boys that look like themselves, with the same hair and skin tone? Do they speak the

same languages? Do the characters have the same kind of houses and furnishings? Do the characters in the books do the same kinds of jobs as the people who visit your library?

Representation is important.

When selecting a story book, think about how the children in your community will relate to that book. Think about your own library's catalogue of story books, how many mother tongue resources do you have? How many different languages are spoken in your community? Do you have early literacy resources that represent each of these language groups?

In this paper, African Children Deserve Stories about Themselves - The Intersecting Roles of African Authors, Illustrators, Communities and Languages in Story Creation, the authors pose a 'simple question with no easy answers…'

If all young children deserve books in their own language, how do we make it happen?

All children are curious and should be able to read about other children from around the world. But children also want to see themselves and where they come from in the books that they read.

In his 2015 essay, *Culture to Free Our Children: Looking Back at My Work over Five Decades*, Meshack Asare, the prize-winning children's author and illustrator wrote:

> I took on the task of creating the kind of children's books that I would have loved to have when I was a child. At that time, most books that we saw were written and published abroad and imported to Ghana. My goal then was to create books in which local children engaged in their usual activities and real-life experiences in environments and conditions that were familiar to them.

In 2011, speaking about the importance of African publishers, Bibi Bakare-Yusuf, co-founder and publishing director of Cassava Republic in Nigeria, pointed out the need for beautiful African books for African children:

> In contrast to their Western and Asian counterparts, many African children grow up without ever having seen, let alone owned, beautiful, well-illustrated books which inspire them to a life of reading, beauty, learning and curiosity for the world. With a youthful population, there is a pressing need to produce more content that will invite children to dream, to question, to imagine, to look to the past with a view to understanding the present and provoking the future. There are simply not enough publishers on this continent catering for the kind of varied tastes required to transform this continent.

"Achọrọ m akwụkwọ ahụ!" Ka Anil kwuru."Mba, ee e, ọ bụghị nke ahụ!" Ka onye na-ere ahịa na-ekwu. "Were nke a."

"The books, though mainly written by authors from another continent, have knowledge that African children need…" - Dr Nkem Osuigwe

This excerpt and image is taken from *'I want that one!',* available on the StoryWeaver website. The story was translated into Igbo by AfLIA's Dr Nkem Osuigwe. Does what's happening in this illustration resonate with you and your family? Could you see yourself translating this story too? The book was written by Mala Kumar and illustrated by Soumya Menon for Pratham Books. (CC BY)

In a blog post published on the StoryWeaver website, titled: *#FreedomtoRead2019: AfLIA on Building Literacy and Strengthening Africa's Cultural Identity with StoryWeaver*, Dr Nkem Osuigwe wrote about the kinds of storybooks she would like to see made available for African children.

> When I met Pratham Books' StoryWeaver online, I was curious. The creative commons platform has quite a number of colourfully illustrated and easy to understand children's books that one can read online and store offline for future uses. The books, though mainly written by authors from another continent, have knowledge that African children need – building relationships, honesty, forgiveness, respect and love for other human beings, stories about nature (flowers, insects, weather/climate, human body, planets and geography) as well as books that promote arts and craft. The stories on the platform that amaze me most are those that have the capacity to build the curiosity of children about science, inventions, calculations and naturally occurring phenomena. The platform also has stories for children written by Africans.

Fati looked over at her father. He was busy and not looking her way.

Quietly, Fati started to climb the mango tree. She thought, "I will sit here. It is a good place to rest and eat ripe mangoes."

So, she sat and ate.

"We ate mangoes" - Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie

This excerpt and image is taken from the beautifully illustrated and written *'Fati and the Honey Tree'.* Do you recognize yourself in the images and storyline? The book was created by the OSU Library Fund and illustrated by Therson Boadu for the African Storybook Initiative (2018). (CC BY)

In her 2009 TED Talk, Nigerian author Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie talks about 'the danger of a single story'.

Watch the TED Talk here:
https://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_ngozi_adichie_the_danger_of_a_single_story/>

She describes growing up on a university campus in eastern Nigeria:

> My mother says that I started reading at the age of two, although I think four is probably closer to the truth. So I was an early reader, and what I read were British and American children's books. I was also an early writer, and when I began to write, at about the age of seven, I wrote exactly the kinds of stories I was reading: All my characters were white and blue-eyed, they played in the snow, they ate apples, and they talked a lot about the weather, how lovely it was that the sun had come out. Now, this despite the fact that I lived in Nigeria. I had never been outside Nigeria. We didn't have snow, we ate mangoes, and we never talked about the weather, because there was no need to. What this demonstrates is how impressionable and vulnerable we are in the face of a story, particularly as children. Because all I had read were books in which characters were foreign, I had become convinced that books by their very nature had to have foreigners in them and had to be about things which I could not personally identify. Now, things changed when I discovered African books. There weren't many of them available, and they weren't quite as easy to find as the foreign books. But because of writers like

Chinua Achebe and Camara Laye, I went through a mental shift in my perception of literature. I realized that people like me, girls with skin the colour of chocolate, whose kinky hair could not form ponytails, could also exist in literature. I started to write about things I recognized. Now, I loved those American and British books I read. They stirred my imagination. They opened up new worlds for me. But the unintended consequence was that I did not know that people like me could exist in literature. So what the discovery of African writers did for me was this: It saved me from having a single story of what books are.

Discussion prompt 4.1.1 – Moodle forum

Read the paper, African Children Deserve Stories about Themselves - The Intersecting Roles of African Authors, Illustrators, Communities and Languages in Story Creation.

With a focus on the section titled, 'The role of communities in story creation' on pages 13—16, discuss the ways in which your library community could play an important role in story creation and re-telling.

Think about this in terms of:

- Mother tongue language and resources
- Translation of stories
- Creation of original stories
- Publishing platforms

Compile your discussion notes and contribute towards the conversation on the Moodle forum.

*This is a completion exercise, although the discussion won't be marked, feedback must be provided within the group via Moodle, this counts towards your course completion requirements.

Retelling stories

What kind of stories are good for retelling? Ideally these stories should:

- Be in the children's home language, or a language they understand and speak well
- Be representative of the children in the community and reference things the children are familiar with, like weather, geography, jobs etc.
- Be enjoyable
- Be easy to remember
- Have a recurring sequence
- Have patterns like rhyme, rhythm and repetition
- Contain memorable events and characters

- Have clear, interesting pictures

Is there anything else you've picked up in your experience as a storyteller that you'd like to add to this list?

Adapted from source: TESSA: [Teaching early reading in Africa - with African Storybook]

Activity 4.1.1 - Research, Moodle

In this activity, you're going to use the idea of 'retelling the story' to help you to identify what makes a good story. Think about a storybook that you think will be a good story for children to retell. Try to do this activity with a small group of children.

1. Choose what you believe is a good children's story. Think about what makes it good in the context of your library and the community it serves. You can download a story or find a story in a book on the library shelves.
2. Write down three important reasons why you think this is a good story, and share these thoughts with your cohort group. Discuss their story choices with them.
3. After you've had a conversation with a colleague, or someone from your cohort group, if you have any doubts about your story selection, feel free to choose another story.
4. Without reading the story again, retell the story yourself in your own words. Reflect on this: was the retelling hard or easy, and what did you gain from the experience? What do you remember best about the story? Think about this because it's probably what's made it a good story.
5. Now read more about retelling stories below and do the activity with a group of children.
    a. Call a child, or small group of children together.
    b. Read the story in the way that you would normally tell a story: show the children the picture of the cover, read the title and talk about what it tells us about the story, ask children predictive questions, such as 'what do you think the story is about?' or 'who do you think is the main character?'. Don't forget to introduce any new swords before you start. Ask the children if they are familiar with these new words? Then read the story.
    c. After you have read the story, ask the children some simple, closed questions about it.
    d. Ask the children to make up some questions about the story to ask you and to ask each other.
    e. Retell the story yourself, and ask the children to help with some simple prompts: 'Why did she do that?' or 'What happened when…?'
    f. Ask if anyone would like to retell the story. Encourage at least one child to give it a try.

g. Ask if the children liked the story and why? Try to get an idea about which aspect of the story made an impression on them.
h. Did the children notice anything in the story that you did not pick up on?

6. When you have finished reading and retelling the story, write down some feedback using the following questions to guide you.
    a. Did the children enjoy the story? If yes, why? If not, why not?
    b. How well did the children retell the story? What was easy for them, and what was not so easy for them?
    c. What will you change or improve next time?
    d. Could you put the children in smaller groups and ask them to retell the story, perhaps you could give them some props?
    e. What part of the story was most engaging for the children? What did they get excited about?
    f. Compile your feedback notes and submit them on Moodle. Discuss them with your cohort group and compare your experience. Do you think this experience has changed the way you will select stories going forward?

Adapted from source: TESSA: Teaching early reading in Africa - with African Storybook

*This is a completion exercise, although the discussion won't be marked, feedback must be provided within the group via Moodle, this counts towards your course completion requirements.

The basics of translation

To get started on our journey of discovery about the basics of translation, we are going to use this guide: *'What Makes A Great Translation?'* that was developed by the Results in Education for All Children (REACH) Project and funded by the REACH trust fund at the World Bank and the Global Book Alliance. Saide's African Storybook and Room to Read contributed to the guide.

Mogau's Gift is available in seven South African languages on the Book Dash website. It is free to translate into other languages as well.

The book was written by Lorato Trok, designed by Rofhiwa Mudua, illustrated by Shadrack Munene and edited by Kelly Norwood-Young for Book Dash (2017). (CC BY)

More about the 'what makes a great translation' guide

If you are planning to translate a storybook from one language to another, and we hope you are, then these recommendations are for you. They offer helpful ideas on how to ensure the final story in the new language is high quality. A high-quality translation is one that was not necessarily translated word-for-word, but that retains the meaning and sensibility of the original story in the new language. At the same time, the new story may adjust to the specifics of a new language (e.g. the complexity of certain words), as well as the cultural context that comes with

the new language. **Essentially, translating is creating a new version of a story in another language.**

There are no absolute rules for versioning. Each story, cultural context, and project requirements (such as adhering to specific reading levels) will lead to different ways of translating in each situation. Instead of outlining 'the right way to do it', this guide provides you with questions and examples to consider. The aim of these recommendations is to guide you to creating great translations that lead to exciting, engaging stories for children in more African languages.

High quality translations are important because they hold the power to create more quality stories for children to read. This is valuable especially in languages where written stories are scarce. Is this the case in your community? With quality translations, a publisher, library, NGO, or writer can take a single story and multiply it into more.

What is translation all about?

This guide is for the translation of storybooks, specifically for early grades. It is important to note the differences between a children's storybook intended to be used for reading pleasure, and a reader intended to support a child's classroom learning.

Translate
Verb

1. To carry or move from one place or condition, to another place or condition.
2. To express the sense of something (words or text) in another language.
3. To explain in terms that can be more easily understood.
4. To change into another form or medium.
5. To transfer from one language into another language.
6. To change the words of one language into the words of another language that have the same meaning.

All of the explanations above are taken from or adapted from entries in a range of online English dictionaries. They are all acceptable meanings of 'translate', although it might seem surprising that the word includes the idea of carrying and moving.

The word 'translate' was created over a long time and it has layers of meaning to it, as well as traces of other languages in it. Like many words in English, it is a borrowed word - borrowed from another language and adapted to an English word form.

*'To 'translate' in the sense of 'passing from one language to another,' was adapted from a French word - **traduire**. The French word is an adaptation of the Latin word **traducere**, which means literally 'to lead across'.*
- Dictionary of Untranslatables. A philosophical lexicon, page 1139

Discussion prompt 4.1.2 – Moodle forum

Let's think about the meaning of the word translate in our communities.

- What is the word (or words) for 'translate' in another language that you know?
- How would you explain that word?
- Does the explanation contain any of the ideas suggested above?
- Does it add something new to how we understand the activity of translating?

The ideas contained in all the definitions listed suggest that translating involves some or all of these activities, usually in relation to language:

- Move
- Transfer
- Change
- Express
- (Make) sense
- (Make) meaning

Are there any activities and ideas you want to add to this list?

Think about this and contribute towards the conversation with your cohort group on the Moodle forum.

*This is a completion exercise, although the discussion won't be marked, feedback must be provided within the group via Moodle, this counts towards your course completion requirements.

Here is a technical description of the process of translating:

> A careful analysis of exactly what goes on in the process of translating, especially in the case of source and receptor languages having quite different grammatical and semantic structures, has shown that, instead of going directly from one set of surface structures to another, the competent translator actually goes through a seemingly roundabout process of analysis, transfer, and restructuring.
> That is to say, **the translator first analyses the message of the language into its simplest and structurally clearest forms, transfers it at this level, and then restructures it to the level in the… language which is most appropriate for the audience…**

Source: Nida, E.A and Charles, R. Taber (1984), The theory and Practice of Translation. 4th Impression: Brill-Leiden: The Netherlands (bold added)

This is a useful approach to translation, and there are some important terms to consider. **A grammar** of a language consists of its formal patterns or conventions for creating sentences and phrases (and other expressions).

Semantics is the study of meaning, and **semantic structures** are the principles for **making meaning** with language in **specific contexts**. Both spoken language and visual language (which includes writing) have grammatical and semantic structures; and translators need to pay attention to both aspects.

Below is an example of a translated storybook where the source and receptor languages have quite different grammatical and semantic structures because they are from very different language families. The story was written in Luganda (source language) and then translated by the author into English (receptor language, also known as the target language or goal language). The English translation of the story was the source language for the Kiswahili translation.

The English and Kiswahili translations are both potential source languages for wider translation of the storybook, especially in East African contexts (where the structures and vocabulary of Kiswahili might be more familiar to local translators than English structures and vocabulary). Luganda remains another source language for being able to read the original source text by the author.

What are the limits of literal (direct) translation?

Look at these examples of literal translation from English into isiZulu, isiXhosa, Setswana, Kiswahili and Lubusuku. Can you see any challenges for the child reader who is learning to read African languages? Can you see any other issues to consider, for example, what if the translated text has to fit in the same space on a page or screen as the English text?

English:	Translated to isiZulu as:
I use blue. (e.g. = a blue colour pencil)	Ngipenda ngombala oluhlaza njengesibhakabhaka.
	Translated to Setswana as:
I use yellow.	Ke tshasa mmala o serolwana.
	Translated to Kiswahili as:
I use red.	Ninatumia ya rangi nyekundu.
	Translated to Lubukusu as:
I use green.	Ndumikhila ye lekondo lwe lunyasi.

Source: Molteno, Vula Bula and African Storybook

In the above examples, expressing the colour vocabulary required more letters and words in the target language than in the source language. It is also possible to express something in an African language using fewer letters and words than in the English translation.

Kiswahili:	Translated to English as:
Nitakuja kesho.	I will come tomorrow.
Ulilala?	Did you sleep?
Alilala?	Did she/he sleep?
Anakula?	Is she/he eating?

An important difference between English and Kiswahili is how the two languages deal with gender in their structural forms (she/he). What issues might arise with regard to expressing the gender - for example, of characters in a story - when translating from Kiswahili to English? What issues do you need to consider for the languages you work with?

Sometimes it can be difficult to find in the target language an equivalent word or expression for a particular word or sentence in the source language. This can be the case for:

- **Words used in daily language**, for example, 'cellphone', 'hijab', 'ugali', 'pizza', 'uhuru', 'safari', 'ubuntu' (and see more examples in 'Translation and pictures' further along in this guide.
- **Specific terms in content subjects** such as Maths and Science (for example, a storybook about various shapes that make up a 'Polygon' family', like quadrilateral, rhombus, scalene, isosceles, or terms related to COVID19, like coronavirus).

Translating figurative expressions - for example, metaphor, symbolism, and personification - from one language to another also presents specific challenges. For each of the following examples, identify the meaning of what is expressed, and why it requires more than literal translation to carry the meaning:

English:	Meaning?	Target translation?
The flames in the fireplace crackled and roared.		
I told you a thousand times! Have you got ears?		
The sun came up like a big, bald head.		
You're a star!		
The room was freezing so she lit the fire.		

An important lesson from this is that direct, literal translation is not enough! It should only be seen as a possible first step of a translation process - that is, analyzing the message of the language into its simplest and structurally clearrest forms. More work has to be done by the translator so that the translated story appropriately conveys the meaning of the source language

to the new audience. (And this is easier if the two languages share grammatical and semantic structures).

What is ‘translation’ and what is ‘adaptation’?

It is possible to both translate and adapt storybooks. The two activities are related but serve different purposes. The difference is briefly explained as follows:

- Storybooks are **translated** in order to have stories available in many languages - one storybook can be translated many times, into many different languages. Translation is usually from one language to another language, and the story stays the same.
- Storybooks are **adapted** so that they can be made more familiar to readers in a particular place, or easier to read for children that are at a lower reading level, or more challenging for those at a higher reading level.

Adaptation might be from one reading level to another reading level, in the same language; or the new storybook might be another level and language. Below is a translator’s description of the process of adapting a story. She raises an important point about adapting a more complex story or text to a simpler one:

It’s important when adapting a story that is more complex and has more words to a story that is simpler and has fewer words and simpler sentences / words, to ensure that the version you work on still makes sense as a story and does not become disjointed. Often when I adapt a story down for a lower reading level, I find that it becomes somehow bare so I need to do something else to still make it interesting, flowing and meaningful. Reading through first to get a sense of the story is important before starting off with adaptation or translation.

- Dorcas Wepukhulu

Changing a text to a simpler level is one type of adaption that may or may not be part of translating a story. Sometimes a storybook might stay at the same reading level, but a different type of adaptation of the story is required to make it more appropriate for the new audience, especially to make it **culturally appropriate**. When translating from one language to another language, a different type of adaptation or ‘versioning’ is often required.

Discussion prompts 4.1.3 – Moodle forum

If I translate a story from a different cultural background, I may find it necessary to version in simple ways affecting only names and activities in the story to enhance its meaning in the new language.

In Resource 1 in the Resources section of this guide, translators explore how to address character names in their story.

- What decision did the translators make?
- What decisions have you made, or do you think you would make, about using or changing the original names of characters when you translate into another language?
- What decisions have you made, or do you think you would make, about the original names for places, games, songs, and special days.

'Don't worry, we will study soon. Please play!' Bedilu begged Tarik. In the end, the boys played Kisara.

'Mwishowe, Bedilu na Tarik waliamua kucheza.'

(Kisara is a game in which players take turns throwing flat stones or coins into a small hole, standing about a meter and a half from the hole.)

- What decisions did the translator make in this storybook excerpt above (Shepherd and his best friend) about the character names when he translated them into English? Do you know another name for the same type of game?

Think about these points and contribute towards the conversation with your cohort group on the Moodle forum.

*This is a completion exercise, although the discussion won't be marked, feedback must be provided within the group via Moodle, this counts towards your course completion requirements.

The excerpt and image above is taken from the English version of '*Tarik na rafiki yake*', which can be found here in Kiswahili on the African Storybook website. The book was written by Biniam Asfaw, translated by Ursual Nafula and illustrated by Isaac Okwir for the African Storybook Initiative (2017). (CC BY)

What if a language has more than one version?

There are many dialects and versions of English in England and across the world. Is this the same for any of the languages present in your community?

Every language has many versions. But not all versions of language are equal in terms of how users value them (or don't value them). Some languages and language versions have been given more resources by powerful groups in society, resources such as promotion in schools and universities, dictionaries, newspapers and other media. This is a social and a political issue, but what does it mean for translation?

The other challenge that constantly comes up is the issue of dialects and regional preferences. There are language groups that have several dialects, some more prominent than others. Some have established orthographies while others don't have. For example, the Kiswahili spoken in Tanzania is different from that spoken in Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda, DRC and Burundi. Although Tanzania and Kenya are closest in terms of accepted grammar, there are still differences in spellings and vocabulary. There is the spoken and the written. Children growing up are exposed more to the spoken than the written so in translating, the question is which one should be used? Does one go by what experts lay down or by what contemporary children are familiar with?
Language is alive, it evolves as user needs arise.
- Dorcas Wepukhulu, 'What are the issues in translating and versioning stories for early reading in local African languages?' (2016)

Have you experienced any particular issues around language or language versions in your day-to-day work at the library, and when planning early literacy events? If so, what kind of issues? How have you addressed these them?

You can also see Resource 4 in the Resources section for a perspective on 'pure languages' as this may be relevant to discussions that could arise when discussing language and translations.

To an extent, the versions of the languages that translators work with depend on what they are translating and for whom they are translating. It can be very useful to work as a translation team to compare approaches, share decisions and best practices - as you can see in the case study in Resource 1.

It is also important for translators to compare interpretations and to have a checking process to quality assure their work. But sometimes it can be difficult for translators - and other language professionals - to agree on the best version to use in translated material. Resource 3 shares the experience of a group of translators re-translating a particular story book into isiZulu (from

English).

Translation and pictures

In an illustrated storybook, each page has information in writing and a picture. The written text and the associated picture should work together to create the meaning of the story. What do you think about the pictures for Chicken and Millipede below? Do the pictures support the meaning of the sentences? Do the sentences support the meaning of the pictures?

Chicken and Millipede were friends.	*They were to play football.*	*Chicken was the goal keeper.*
Page 1	Page 2	Page 3
Millipede scored three goals!	*Chicken was annoyed.*	*Chicken swallowed Millipede.*
Page 4	Page 5	Page 6

Then, Chicken met with Millipede's Mother.	*'Help Mother! Chicken swallowed me!' cried Millipede from inside Chicken.*	*Millipede tasted bad. Chicken felt sick.*
Page 7	Page 8	Page 9
To read the ending, search for this story, '*Chicken and Millipede*' at www.africanstorybook.org. This story was written and translated by Winny Asara and illustrated by Magriet Brink for the African Storybook Initiative (2014). (CC-BY)		

Here are an additional three single pages from different storybooks.

Child as a Peacemaker	Nonkungu and the Imbulu	Akai's Special Mat
An erotot from another community came by. He saw the baby. He was surprised. He asked himself, "Where is the mother?"	*Nonkungu took off her clothes and gave them to the girl. When the girl took off her rags. Nonkungu saw that she had a tail! Nonkungu was afraid. She realized that girl was really an imbulu. They walked a little further, and then Nonkungu asked,*	*Akai also knew where her grandmother's manyatta was located. She often went to drink camel milk with her grandmother.*

	"Please give me back my clothes and beads."	
This story above was written and translated by John Nga'sike and illustrated by Jacob Kono for the African Storybook Initiative (2015). (CC-BY)	This story above was written by Alan Kenyon and Viv Kenyon and illustrated by Wiehan de Jager for the African Storybook Initiative (2014). (CC-BY)	This story above was written and translated by Winny Asaraby Ursula Nafula and illustrated by Catherine Groenewald for the African Storybook Initiative (2014). (CC-BY)

What do you think an 'erotot' is? What is an 'imbulu'? What is a 'manyatta'? The translators decided to use words from the source language in the English translations. This is possible because the pictures help the reader to understand what the borrowed word means.

Discussion prompts 4.1.4 – Moodle forum

See this picture from a set of 12 pictures for a storybook called '*Advice from an Old man*'. Follow the prompts below and contribute to the discussion in the Moodle forum.

- The picture shows a family of a mother, father and two sons. After looking at the picture, would you say this is a happy family? Why or why not? Consider their body language and facial expressions.
- What other information can you observe in the picture? For example, does it take place in a city? Does it take place in the present time or the past? Where does it take

place?

- What translation decision would you make if the text with this picture read: ‘Father left home during a bad storm’.

*This is a completion exercise, although the discussion won't be marked, feedback must be provided within the group via Moodle, this counts towards your course completion requirements.

This story above, ‘*Advice from an Old Man’*, was written by ዮሱፍ መሐመድያሲን and ጀማል ዓብደልቃድር, translated by Angesom Abadi and illustrated by Adonay Gebru for the African Storybook Initiative (2017). (CC-BY)

Activity 4.1.2 - Research, Moodle

Now that you are familiar with the basics of translation, you should feel confident enough to identify and translate a storybook.

You can do this activity on your own, or with a colleague or someone from your cohort group. Use the resources provided in the Resource section, as well as the links below, and try your hand at translating a book that you would be proud to put on your library shelves and use during your story hour event.

As you now know, African Storybook provides extensive translation guidelines.

Here is a link to a PDF document that explains how to use their website: https://www.open.edu/openlearncreate/pluginfile.php/285341/mod_resource/content/5/Getting%20started%20on%20the%20ASb%20website%20V2.pdf

Here is a link to a PDF document that explains how to translate an African Storybook online: https://www.open.edu/openlearncreate/pluginfile.php/285342/mod_resource/content/3/Translating%20an%20African%20Storybook%20online%20V2.pdf

You are more than welcome to source your story on the StoryWeaver platform. This online book repository is similar to African Storybook, however they carry a larger number of stories. Although they are based in India, they already host a wide variety of storybooks in African languages.

See a YouTube translation guide here: StoryWeaver Translate Tutorial 3.0

See their translation tools and tips here: https://storyweaver.org.in/translation_tools_and_tips

- Identify and translate a story book from either of the websites listed above. The books on these websites are openly licensed and free to download, adapt and translate. More about that in the next section.
- Share your translation with your cohort group and describe how you've added value in the context of 'what makes a good story?'
- Note the challenges you faced in making a translation that is true to the meaning of the story and also valid for the target language you have chosen to translate to.
- Upload your translated story, or a link to the story online to the Moodle.

*This is a completion exercise, although the discussion won't be marked, feedback must be provided within the group via Moodle, this counts towards your course completion requirements.

Resources

1. **Resource 1: Case study about translation planning**
2. **Resource 2: African Storybook translators' experiences**
3. **Resource 3: Case study about Chicken and Millipede (uNuku noShongololo)**
4. **Resource 4: Extracts from article**
5. **Resource 5: Translation template**
6. **Resource 6: Translator's checklist**

Resource 1: Case study about translation planning

Resource 1 is from a case study about a translation project to create reading material for early literacy (Early Readers) - this is an extract of the notes from the four translators' planning meeting. As you read Resource 1, notice the specific aspects of language that the translators focus on, and the decisions they make about shared approaches to the work.

CAPOLSA's* first Early Grade Readers were published in iciBemba, siLozi, ciNyanja and chiTonga in 2013, and in kiKaonde, Lunda and Luvale in 2015. These languages have similar grammar and phonology (system of sounds) as well as some word forms in common. Some of the stories were written in and translated between these languages. The conceptual transitions involved in translations among similar languages are easier when translation is between languages with completely different structures and vocabulary. Translators decided to translate from the English source text into four of the African languages, and then translate the remaining material from those African languages.

The planning meeting brought together four expert translators. In addition to discussing the ideal approach to translation, the agenda also included the following:

**CAPOLSA (Centre for Promotion of Literacy in sub-Saharan Africa) is a literacy organization that publishes material in some of the local Zambian languages.*

CAPOLSA Early Grade Reader story read aloud from tablet
This Zambian Grade 1 teacher is reading aloud to a child one of the stories published in CAPOLSA's first edition of Early Grade Readers. The stories were composed by Zambian writers in one of the seven indigenous languages used for initial literacy instruction.

Orthography

Zambian languages are mutually intelligible so it is possible to have text spelled in a similar way across the languages. Together with language academics and other experts, CAPOLSA has developed a simplified orthography. The test is written in a manner that the language is spoken. This is to help young readers to connect the letters and sounds more easily. Each translator was given a guide with the rules for spelling the specific languages.

Content, Style and Vocabulary

The meeting strongly emphasized the need to have content that is appropriate for young minds, with the style of writing and vocabulary suitable for developing minds. The work should be free of grammatical errors. They also agreed that certain core words or word forms - which carried particular meaning - should be retained from one language to another.

Names of Characters

One major issue was about whether or not they should maintain the names that were in the original language in the translated stories. It was agreed that it would be ideal to keep the original names because this retains the sense of originality of the story. It would also make the recognition of the stories easier by children if they came across the stories in the other languages. It was felt that young readers might have problems with some names due to unfamiliar spelling, such as 'Bontle'. For those names, similar names in local languages were to be used.

It was also noted that the stories in the English version might appear shorter than the translated ones. This was because translating these stories exactly as they were in the source language would have made the stories in the target languages appear disjointed. Translators needed to read, understand the story and write it in a way that was fitting and meaningful to the Zambian audience.

Mode of Translation

There were several stages for completing the translations. The first stage involved each translator translating five to eight stories from the English version to their language of expertise (to be completed in one week by each individual). Meaning is more likely to be retained as only a small number of stories was translated from the source language to the receptor language, and then to two other receptor languages (at a later stage).

Source: Quality Assurance Report: CAPOLSA Story Translation Activity for SAIDE (2017) by Ephraim Mhlanga

Resource 2: African Storybook translators' experiences

Resource 2 reflects some of the experience of African Storybook translators in their own words. The comment highlighted in bold describes translation as an activity that requires a translator to negotiate between languages. What do you think of this description?

African Storybook is a literacy organization that aims to address the shortage of contextually appropriate books for early reading in the languages of Africa.

What do the <u>underlined</u> words in Resource 2 mean in the context of your work?

One:

> I translated stories from Sesotho into Setswana. I found the process to be more interesting, less time consuming and easier than when English is the source language. Sesotho, Sepedi and Setswana are grouped as Sotho languages and some words are related and mean the same things, whereas some words mean opposite things and/or have totally different meanings, for example, in South Sotho 'Ke lapile' means 'I'm hungry' and in Sepedi and Setswana it means 'I'm tired'. In isiXhosa and isiZulu, 'Lambile' means hungry, just as it means in South Sotho.
>
> There is some inter-connectedness to African languages even if they do not fall under the same language group. When translating from one African language to the other, the translation is based more on the **<u>cultural aspect</u>** of the language and its people, unlike in English where some translators concentrate on finding meaning of words in English to translate to an African language.
>
> Xolisa Guzula, a UCT Doctoral student in language and literacy and bilingual education, translated 21 African Storybook stories from isiZulu to isiXhosa. Xolisa said that this form of translation is re-telling the story for the target group and it did not feel like she was translating. Xolisa explains that isiXhosa translation is riddled with complexities. "There are issues of literal translation and of imposing English onto isiXhosa in ways that just do not make sense in the language. **Translation is a constant negotiation between the source language and the target language,**" she says.
>
> *Source: "What are the issues in translating and versioning stories for early reading in local African languages?" (2017) by Lorato Trok*

Two:

> One of the first things we noticed at the start of the project was that when a story is translated into some languages, the text is much longer than in the original language. This meant that the text couldn't fit into the textbox on the page, and the font size of the text had to be reduced in order to facilitate this. When a story is translated from English into African languages, often the story becomes more difficult because it becomes longer

(with more words / sentences). Does this become an **adaptation** because the translation changes the level of the language?

Source: 'Translating and adapting stories' (2014) by Lorato Trok and Tessa Welch

Think about what happens when the font size is reduced? It makes it harder for young children to read the stories. The same is true when you add words and sentences, a simple story becomes a lot more complex.

Three:

In translation how does someone translate a story that is context-specific? Does translating perhaps go very much hand in hand with **versioning**? If I translate a story from a different cultural background, I may find it necessary to version in simple ways affecting only names and activities in the story to enhance its meaning in the new language. But **cultural translation** is also more complex than choosing names for characters and activities which are more suited to the target language.

Source: 'What are the issues in translating and versioning stories for early reading in local African languages?' (2016) by Dorcas Wepukhulu

Resource 3: Case study about Chicken and Millipede (uNuku noShongololo)

In a translation workshop in Kwazulu-Natal, the team involved in finalizing the isiZulu translations had conflicting opinions. As a result, the team did a collective translation exercise using a story called Chicken and Millipede. Chicken and Millipede is an early level story with one sentence per page. You will recall that this story has been discussed in previous sections, see below for some examples of the isiZulu translations. The isiZulu version of the story can be found here on the African Storybook website.

Then, Chicken met with Millipede's Mother. *UNkukhu uhlangana nomama Shongololo. (isiZulu)*	*'Help Mother! Chicken swallowed me!' cried Millipede from inside Chicken.* *"Ngisize Mama!" kukhala uShongololo.*	*Millipede tasted bad. Chicken felt sick.* *UNkukhu uzuzwa engaphilile.*
Page 7	Page 8	Page 9
To read the ending, search for this story, '*Chicken and Millipede*' at www.africanstorybook.org or for the isiZulu version *'UNkuku no Shongololo'*, click here. This story was written by Winny Asara with the isiZulu version translated by KwaZulu-Natal subject advisors. It was illustrated by Magriet Brink for the African Storybook Initiative (2014). (CC-BY)		

As the illustration and English sentence was projected page by page, each of the 21 participants translated the text sentence by sentence. When they were done, they passed their translation to the person sitting on their left to review. Each translation was different And there was considerable debate about what was correct. Here is a summary of the issues raised:

1. There is a difference between the written and spoken forms of the language: whereas one would write, 'Baya ukuyodlala ibhola', one would probably say 'Baya ko dlala ibhola' (page 2).

2. There are more expressive and less expressive ways of saying things. For example, for the sentence, ‘Chicken was annoyed’ on page 3 - some words or phrases for ‘annoyed’ or ‘irritated’ in isiZulu are simply more expressive and interesting to read (and hear) than other words. Translators also looked at the picture to make sure the translated words could express the chicken’s facial expression.

3. Translations will vary according to dialectical differences. For example, for the sentence 'Millipede tastes bad’, one person translated it as, ‘uShongololo unam bitheka kabi’, and another ‘uShongololo akanambitheki kamnandi’.

4. The translator has to be aware of the context in order to choose the correct word. For example, ‘Chicken feels sick’. The sense that needs to be conveyed is that he is nauseous (‘ukucanusela’) - not simply that he generally feels unwell (‘ukugula’).

5. Punctuation, punctuation, punctuation! Many of the translators didn’t get round to inserting the quotation marks into the sentences.

There was no single translation that could be taken in its entirety and used as the official translation, so the efforts of various participants were combined. You can view the translation at http://www.africanstorybook.org/index.php?id=15102.

Source: ‘In even the simplest of stories, there are translation issues” (2016) by Tessa Welch

- What are the advantages and disadvantages of a group approach to a translation?
- How can translators make the most of shared expertise and resources, and sometimes agree to disagree?

Resource 4: Extracts from article

These extracts are from an article that was originally published on:
https://theconversation.com/its-time-to-rethink-whats-meant-by-mother-tongue-education-96475

It's time to rethink what's meant by 'mother tongue' education.
- Lara Stephanie Krause

Extract one:

The issue of mother tongue education has been fiercely but sporadically debated in South Africa since 1994. In the past two and a half years, student protests at universities across the country have breathed new life into the discussions.

Proponents of mother tongue education tend to argue that children should be taught in the language they first learned and spoke at home. Those who oppose this approach argue that English is a 'global language' and should be the main language of instruction throughout the school system and into higher education spaces.

But in a country steeped in colonialism and apartheid it's not far fetched to supect that the common understanding of the idea of 'mother tongues' is coloured by outside influences.

A mother tongue is taken to be a language that has a name: Xhosa, Tswana or Sotho, for instance. It refers to the standard version of that language, transcribed in most cases by 19th century European missionaries based on how they understood and conceptualized the way people spoke in the immediate vicinity of the rural mission station.

But what they were transcribing were actually regional dialects, not pure versions of pristine languages tied to an authentic and timeless cultural identity. Decades of schooling practices institutionalized and continuously reinforced the missionaries' notions.

Here's the problem: those supposedly 'pure' languages often bear only a loose family resemblance to the way that modern people in both rural and urban areas actually speak. [End]

Extract two:

The frame of reference for European missionaries and colonizers when transcribing African language practices was an idea of languages existing as autonomous structures each spoken by a distinct group of people.

Versatile and flexible African listeners and speakers communicating efficiently thought necessarily agreeing on one distinct, correct way of speaking didn't fit this 19hth century European frame of reference.

But to translate bibles and develop grammars for their ‘educational’ and Christian agenda, missionaries had to make African ways of speaking fit European ideas of language and grammaticality. Their Western concept of language forced them to be selective, to choose some ways of speaking for standardization and writing purposes and to ignore others.

The result is that most of today’s ‘African languages’ and so-called mother tongues are not defined by the way African mothers speak but by how white Europeans wrote them into being decades ago.

The good news is that some shifts are happening in how African languages are discussed and understood. [End]

Resource 5: Translation Templates

Story template	
Title of story (source language)	
Language	
Title of story (target language)	
Name/s of story writer/s	
Name of translator (or adaptor)	
Name of illustrator	
Summary of story (source language)	
Summary of story (target language)	

Reading level of the story (use an x to mark your selection)	☐ Level 1 (first words) (1-11 words per page) ☐ Level 2 (first sentences) (11 to 25 words per page) ☐ Level 3 (first paragraphs) (25 to 50 words per page) ☐ Level 4 (longer paragraphs) (50 to 75 words per page) ☐ Level 5 (read aloud) (75 to 150 words per page)

Ensure that the story has the right *number of words per page for the reading level. The reading level does not have to be the same for both languages. Remember that when the font size is*

reduced? It makes it harder for young children to read the stories. The same is true when you add words and sentences, a simple story becomes a lot more complex.

Type the new story and / or the story translation in the table below.

Page	Story in source language	Story in target language
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		
8		
9		
10		
11		
12		

Resource 6: Translator's Checklist

- ☐ Always read through the whole text first to understand the meaning.

Words

- ☐ Is word choice appropriate for the audience? (for example, simple vocabulary for early literacy)
- ☐ Is vocabulary varied? (for example, interesting and different adjectives)
- ☐ Keep your own spelling style sheet for consistency (make a note of your decisions about spelling and other word conventions)
- ☐ Are there words that will be difficult to translate into the target language? How will you address this?
- ☐ Is there a word count to check? Number of words per page? (This can be especially important for early reading and leveled readers)

If the translation is for illustrated material

- ☐ Does each page of written text make sense with the pictures on the page?
- ☐ Does each page of written text make sense with the sequence of pictures in the whole book?

Letters and special characters

- ☐ Are the letters and symbols correct and consistent?

Punctuation

- ☐ Are there full stops or question marks at the end of every sentence?
- ☐ Are there capital letters at the start of every sentence?
- ☐ Are there capital letters for proper nouns (for example, names of people and places, if appropriate)?
- ☐ Is everything in the correct formatting of direct speech? Have quotation marks been included correctly?
- ☐ Is the spacing correct before / after punctuation (close up / open up spaces)?
- ☐ Are there any semicolons and ellipsis (for early literacy)? Try to avoid them.
- ☐ Are there any sentences too long for the reading level (for early literacy)?

Licence

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Note, this type of licensing is discussed at length in the next section of Module 4, Open Licensing.