

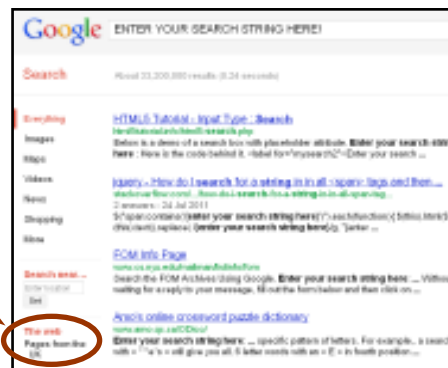
Google's a translator's best friend

After entering the search string in the field above, click on this button to see all the hits of the index provided by Google (10 hits shown per page)



After entering the search string in the field above, click on this button to be taken directly to the Internet address of the first hit of the index provided by Google

Selects only hits stored on servers with the final extension of that country, thus presumably – but not necessarily! – with information in its main or official language(s)



Search engine Google

URLs (Internet addresses):

| | |
|--|--------------|
| www.google.com | (UK English) |
| www.google.co.uk | (French) |
| www.google.fr | (German) |
| www.google.de | (Italian) |
| www.google.it | (Spanish) |
| www.google.es | |

Tips and tricks for effective searches (note that searches are not case sensitive):

| | | |
|--------------------|---|--|
| “AAAA BBBB CCCC” | = | returns hits containing the words (as many as you want) in this exact sequence |
| “XXXX * YYYY ZZZZ” | = | returns hits containing the sequence of words XXXX, something unspecified in the middle and then YYYY ZZZZ (the * is a <i>wildcard</i>) |
| +KKKK | = | returns hits containing this word (+ is not necessary for a single word) |
| –JJJJ | = | returns hits that do not contain this word |

You can use these symbols in combination to perform advanced textual searches, e.g.:

+“XXXX * YYYY ZZZZ” +KKKK –JJJJ (leave one blank space between the search criteria)

EXERCISES AND ASSIGNMENTS FOR HOMEWORK

These practical exercises will be discussed in class, addressing any problems that you encounter, doubts, questions, etc. The exercises are based on the topics that have been introduced and explained in class, so make sure that you read the handouts, slides and class notes carefully before working on them. The guided tasks are designed to help you explore a range of related skills and practise a variety of Internet search strategies that should be of interest to you for language learning and translation purposes.

The exercises are numbered for your convenience and should be completed in the order in which they are presented on the worksheet. Each exercise focuses on a language-related question or practical translation-oriented “problem” on which you should work using the Internet (as well as any other resource that you find helpful, in particular a good monolingual English dictionary). You are strongly encouraged to take each guided task as a starting point to explore any other issues that catch your attention and that you find interesting or useful.

- ***Exercise 1 – “array” vs. “range”***

Using Google (with searches limited to the .uk domains) and the search strategies that have been shown to you in class (also see the handout on the syntax for effective searches), find the adjectives that most frequently collocate with two nouns that are considered (near-)synonyms, i.e. “array” and “range” (some suggestions on how to do this are provided on the slides). Look at a number of search results (say approximately 100) for each of the two nouns, and then arrange their adjectival collocates roughly in order of frequency, from most to least frequent. Then compile two separate lists with 10 items each, showing the most frequent adjectival collocates of “array” and “range”, respectively. Now compare the two lists: to what extent do they overlap? Do you notice any similarities or differences in the most common collocational patterns of “array” and “range”, which are considered (near-)synonyms?

- ***Exercise 2 – “on the brink of” vs. “on the verge of” vs. “on the cusp of”***

The three English phrases “on the brink of”, “on the verge of” and “on the cusp of” have a very similar meaning. However, they are used in fairly different ways, as they have distinct sets of collocates and also convey different evaluative attitudes. Using Google and the search strategies that have been illustrated in class, find the words that most frequently follow (i.e. collocate to the right with) each of these three phrases. Look at a number of search results (as many as you deem necessary) for each of the three phrases, and compile three separate lists with 10-15 items each, showing the most frequent right-hand collocates of “on the brink of”, “on the verge of” and “on the cusp of”, respectively. Now compare the three lists: are there collocates that frequently appear in all three lists? In contrast, are there collocates that appear in one or two of the list(s), but are absent from the other(s)? Which of the three phrases seem to consistently convey (i.e. be associated with) negative events/ideas/concepts/notions, etc.? Which of the three phrases tend to at least occasionally express (i.e. be associated with) neutral or positive events/ideas/concepts/notions, etc.?

- **Exercise 3 – “Google’s a translator’s best friend”**

Some slides used in class are entitled “Google’s a translator’s best friend”. This is a pun or a play on words, as there is a fairly clear allusion to a well-known phrase (this linguistic phenomenon is known technically as “intertextuality”). Do you recognise the phrase that is being “echoed” in the title of the slides? If so, do a search on the Internet using Google to verify and double-check your intuition. If you cannot recognise the hidden reference, search the Web to find out the original phrase that is being alluded to in the slides (you need to search for similar sequences of words, with a trial and error approach, starting from shorter versions in which some of the elements of the phrase are omitted, changed, or replaced by the wildcard *).

- **Exercise 4 – colligation of the lemmas “good” and “condition”**

Explore the colligational patterns of these two phrases: “in good condition” vs. “in good conditions”. Which of the two seems to be more widely used?

- **Exercise 5 – unusual animal sounds**

Devise creative searches to find out from the Internet the verbs used in standard English to describe the sounds produced by the following four animals (as in *lions* > *roar*, *dogs* > *bark*, etc.): *penguins*, *kangaroos*, *pandas*, *toads*. Be aware that in some cases it may be impossible to find correct/accurate/clear answers...

- **Exercise 6 – groups/sets of animals and fruits**

Devise creative searches to find out from the Internet the nouns used in standard English to describe groups or sets of the following animals and fruits (as in *pack of wolves*, *bunch of grapes*, etc.): *fish(es)*, *birds*, *bananas*, *blueberries/bilberries*. Be aware that in some cases different options may correspond to subtle differences as to which kind of group/set is being referred to...

- **Exercise 7 – “free range”**

In (British) English the phrase “free range” is used to describe certain types of foods. First of all, use Google to find out what types of foods are most commonly defined “free range” in English (a couple of examples/nouns will be particularly common in connection with this phrase). Then check what “free range” means when it occurs in connection with those nouns, using reliable English-language sources (and/or cross-checking the information coming from a variety of websites, including those of online dictionaries, if any of them are helpful). Finally, explore “parallel” sources and websites in Italian to find suitable equivalents in Italian of the phrase “free range” (depending on the nouns used in connection/collocation with it). To this end, you need to generate hypotheses of (partial) possible equivalent translations in Italian, and verify if they are attested, how they are used, how often they occur, in which Italian-language sources (asking yourself e.g. how varied and reliable these are).

- **Exercise 8 – “spin doctor”**

Have you ever come across the English expression “spin doctor”? Who is a “spin doctor” and what does he/she do? Find out the meaning of the phrase and provide a suitable explanation in English in your own words. In what field does the phrase “spin doctor(s)” seem to be most often used? How did the phrase originate? Does “spin doctor” seem to have mostly negative, neutral or positive connotations? Find the name of a spin doctor who became particularly prominent in Britain in the late 1990s, and who was associated with the New Labour Party during Tony Blair’s premiership. Is the expression “spin doctor” used as a loan word in Italian? Explore Italian websites to find out if/how/where it is used. Is this English phrase used by Italian newspapers? Does it occur in institutional contexts? Do you think it is a good idea to use the loan phrase “spin doctor” in Italian texts? Are you happy with the attested Italian translations of the expression “spin doctor”? After you have understood who a “spin doctor” is and what he/she does, try to come up with a translation into Italian of this phrase which is better than the ones that are already attested/used on the Web.

Note that differently from the previous worksheet, the following questions and exercises do not look exclusively at linguistic issues, but also focus at least to some extent on the cultural dimension, showing you how the Web can be exploited as a sort of encyclopaedia which can help you to understand culture-bound elements that are familiar to the source-text readers, but may be unknown to you as the translator and to your target audience. You are strongly encouraged to take each guided task as a starting point to explore any other issues that you find interesting or useful.

- **Exercise 9 – “zero-day”**

In specialised English the phrase “zero-day” is used in a fairly technical field to refer to some specific situations and events. Using Google, try to understand the meaning of this phrase, find out in what specialised domain it is commonly used, and what are its most frequent collocates in English. Is this English phrase also used in technical texts written in Italian as a loan word? Does it seem to have the same meaning in Italian as it has in English?

- **Exercise 10 – “a spate of” vs. “a volley of”**

Using Google (with searches limited to the .uk domains) and the search strategies that have been shown to you in class (see the handout on the syntax for effective searches), find the most frequent right-hand collocates of the two similar phrases “a spate of” and “a volley of”. Look at a number of search results (approximately 100) for each of the two phrases, and try to arrange their right-hand collocates roughly in order of frequency, from most to least frequent. Then compile two separate lists with about 20 items each, showing the most frequent collocates of “a spate of” and “a volley of”, respectively. Now compare the two lists: to what extent do they overlap? Do you notice any similarities or differences in the most common collocational patterns that they display? Do you think that these two phrases have a predominantly positive or negative semantic prosody? Do these two phrases have exactly the same semantic preference? To answer this last question, you may want to consider which of the two phrases is more often associated with crimes and illegal actions and which one, on the contrary, tends to be more commonly used to introduce right-hand collocates indicating the use of foul language or rude/aggressive words.

- **Exercise 11 – “June 16”**

June 16 marks a very special day for the English language, and in particular for literature in English, as this date is associated with one of the greatest literary masterpieces of all time. Do you know the title and the name of the author of the very famous book based on the fictional story that is supposed to have taken place on this date? In particular, the events that are narrated in the book are set on June 16 of a year at the very beginning of the 20th century. Which year was it exactly, and what weekday was June 16 in that particular year? In what city do the fictional events narrated in the book take place? Every year celebrations are held to mark the anniversary of June 16 and pay tribute to the legacy of this literary masterpiece; what is the name traditionally given to this annual celebration by literature enthusiasts? If you do not know any of the answers to these questions, look for the missing pieces of information on the Web (without restricting your searches to any country-specific domains, as in this case you are looking for cultural references and factual information/knowledge, so it makes sense to search on as many websites as possible, at least in the first instance, provided that the sources you find are reliable and accurate!).

- **Exercise 12 – translating collocations into English: “rivelando grande abilità”**

This passage is taken from the beginning of the personal profile of Alberta Ferretti, an Italian businesswoman:

“Alberta Ferretti è nata nel 1950 a Cattolica, una piccola città sulla costa adriatica. Ad appena 18 anni ha aperto un negozio che vendeva abiti femminili dei più importanti stilisti. Ha presentato la sua prima collezione nel 1974, rivelando grande abilità nella scelta di stili e materiali.”

Your task is to translate the three-part collocation “rivelando grande abilità” (verb + adjective + noun) into English. You can take as a starting point the possible equivalents of the individual words, i.e.:

| | | |
|-----------------|---|---|
| <i>rivelare</i> | = | reveal, show, demonstrate, display, exhibit, etc. |
| <i>grande</i> | = | big, large, great, etc. |
| <i>abilità</i> | = | ability/abilities, skill/skills, prowess, etc. |

Generate a number of possible English translations for “rivelando grande abilità”, combining these constituent words in different collocational and colligational patterns (you can use the individual words above, or others that seem suitable equivalents to you). Search for the actual occurrences of the various collocations on google.co.uk to check whether any of your hypotheses are good candidate translations into English of the Italian phrase “rivelando grande abilità”. Based on the evidence that you find via Google, can you choose a suitable collocation/translation into English of which you are reasonably confident?

- **Exercise 13 – Humphrey**

“Humphrey” was the name of a fairly peculiar character associated with the British government for a few years since the late 1980s, when Margaret Thatcher was Prime Minister. More specifically, even though “Humphrey” was not a human being, he became an honorary member of the staff of the official residence of the Prime Minister at 10 Downing Street in central London. Find out who “Humphrey” was, in what sense he became associated with the staff of the British government when Margaret Thatcher was in office, and what happened to him when new tenants moved into 10 Downing Street in the 1990s.

- **Exercise 14 – “dressing down” vs. “dress down day”**

The phrase “dressing down” is used in (informal) English in an idiomatic sense, i.e. to mean something that does not have anything to do with the usual basic meanings of the constituent words “to dress” and “down”. Search for the expression “dressing down” on the Web to: (i) understand its meaning; (ii) find out how it is properly used in informal English, i.e. with what other words it typically occurs in actual complete sentences (to do this you need to find out what verbs are normally used in connection with “dressing down” in its idiomatic sense and the complete construction of a typical sentence). Then think about a suitable equivalent expression in Italian that would be appropriate in the relevant contexts you have found on the Web, possibly with the same informal register.

A “dress down day” is a specific kind of event – note that this phrase is not related to the idiomatic meaning of “dressing down” above. Find out what a “dress down day” is, where it normally takes place, who are the people who typically take part in it, and for what reasons. Is there an equivalent expression in Italian? Are you familiar with a similar concept or event in Italy? How would you translate the phrase “dress down day” into Italian, e.g. if you were to translate for an Italian audience one of the English-language texts found on the Internet in which this phrase occurs?

- **Exercise 15 – “soft spot”**

The phrase “soft spot” is used in (informal) English in an idiomatic sense, i.e. to express a meaning that does not have anything to do with the basic literal sense of the constituent words “soft” and “spot”. Search for this expression on the Web to: (i) understand its meaning; (ii) find out how it is normally used in informal English, i.e. with what other words it typically occurs in actual complete sentences (to do this you need to find out what verbs are normally used in connection with “soft spot” in its idiomatic sense and the complete constructions of typical sentences). Then think about a suitable equivalent expression in Italian that would be appropriate in the relevant contexts you have found on the Web, possibly with the same informal register.

However, “soft spot” is also a semi-technical medical term which is used to refer informally to specific parts of the body of young children. Find out what “soft spots” (in this other sense) are, on which part of a baby’s body they are located, and why they are particularly sensitive areas that need to be protected and regularly checked in the early months of the baby’s life. What is the equivalent semi-technical expression in Italian (typically used for example by parents to refer informally to those body parts)? Find out the more formal technical medical terms to indicate “soft spots”, both in English and Italian (in this case you want to find the more accurate specialised terms that would be normally used by doctors or specialists in the two languages).

Note that you are not expected to translate the following two passages (I and II). You are only asked to focus on some specific parts to think about how you would translate those points into Italian, because they contain some interesting linguistic and/or cultural issue.

Passage I is an extract from the description of “Hogs of War”, a popular PlayStation game.

Passage II is the beginning of the 2005 book by the English writer Nick Hornby entitled “A long way down”.

- **Passage I – “jet packs” (line 9)**

Do you know the meaning of the phrase “jet pack”? How would you translate it into Italian? This is a fairly unusual word, and unless you’ve played with “Hogs of War” before it’s unlikely that you know what it refers to. Most paper or online monolingual and bilingual dictionaries (including recent ones) will be of no help in this case. One of the exciting things you can do when you use the Internet to help you translate is use the Web as a sort of “visual dictionary”. This strategy works particularly well when you have to translate concrete nouns, especially when you need to understand what an object actually is or what it looks like in the first place.

Log on to www.google.com and click on the “Images” link that you find at the top of the search engine’s default page. When you are in “Google images” (as shown by the logo of the search engine) enter the string “jet pack” (including the double quotes on either side) into the search field and click the “Search Images” button. You will then see a series of small pictures, most of which show you what a “jet pack” is. This should help you to understand what sort of device a “jet pack” is, in case you’re not familiar with it. With this visual information, you should be able to come up with one or more suitable translations into Italian. Then verify your candidate translations into Italian to check whether they are actually attested in Italian-language webpages. Would it be a possibility and a good idea to use “jet pack” as a loan word in the Italian translation of this text?

- **Passage I – “blow the swine to pigdom come” (line 18)**

The last line of the passage contains a pun, as it is based on a common idiomatic expression in English, which however is slightly modified in some parts. Use Google to find out which “original” idiomatic expression is alluded to, and explain why the modification is relevant to the whole passage.

Is it possible to translate the final part of the passage into Italian using a similar pun? What translation would you propose for the very last part of the passage, trying to preserve a similar style and to achieve an equivalent impact on the readers of the target text?

- ***Passage II – “left-wing councils banning ‘Baa Baa Black Sheep’” and “EEC directives banning British sausages” (lines 14-15)***

This passage (which is the beginning of the novel) contains a cultural reference to controversial socio-political events that took place in the UK a few years ago. If you were translating (the beginning of) this book into Italian, you would probably not understand the reference, unless you were living in Britain at the time of these events, or keeping up-to-date on a regular basis with current affairs through the British media.

Assuming that you do not understand the reference hidden in this sentence (as is most likely the case), check on the Internet to find out first of all what “Baa Baa Black Sheep” is, and secondly to understand why the narrator of the novel is mentioning it in connection with a ban issued by left-wing councils. What is the story behind this reference which leads the narrator to include “left-wing councils banning ‘Baa Baa Black Sheep’” and “EEC directives banning British sausages” in the list of pros when considering whether the assistant bank manager from Guildford should leave his life behind and emigrate to Sydney? Can you find good, reliable and authoritative sources to verify the cultural elements hidden in this reference which make it a meaningful allusion in the original text?

After you have checked on the Web and understood the factual information behind this cultural reference which is deeply embedded in Britain’s recent history of socio-political controversies, how would you translate this part of the novel into Italian? Would you try to preserve the original cultural reference (perhaps with some kind of explanation for the target readers)? Would you rather omit it, or perhaps replace the original reference with something that the Italian readers would more easily relate to, as it is closer to the target culture? In this specific case, which would be the best translation in your opinion?

PASSAGE I

Hogs of War



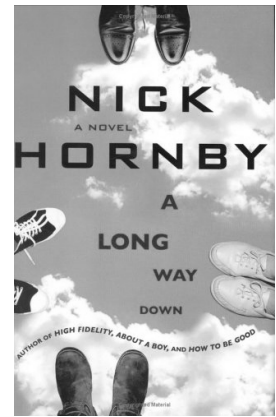
There are 25 missions of varying complexity to keep the single player occupied, but it is in the multi-player mode that *Hogs of War* really becomes truly demonic fun. As with Worms, you can pit your military might against up to three friends and putting your friendship temporarily to one side, blow them all over the countryside. It's heart-warming in the extreme to see your friend's pig cowering (and they do cower) as you level a rocket launcher at him, his trembling trotters covering his eyes as you prepare to turn him into scorched crackling.

As you progress throughout the game, you're faced with a dizzying variety of weapons, a staggering 50 in all, from sniper rifles to jet packs, from tanks to heavy artillery, each with its own special brand of havoc wreaking characteristics and abilities. Another great feature is the chance to earn points and then spend them gaining extra abilities which you can bestow upon various members of your troop, eventually promoting them from lowly Grunt all the way through to expert Spymaster.

It's true to say that the graphics are a little too much on the basic side but the overall gameplay rescues *Hogs of War* from any of its shortcomings by being just so much fun. The satisfaction of preparing to atomise an enemy pig is both indecently intoxicating and psychopathically addictive, so you can only begin to imagine what it's like to actually fire the thing and blow the swine to pigdom come.

PASSAGE II

**Hornby, Nick (2005) *A long way down*.
London: Penguin Books (pages 3-4)**



Can I explain why I wanted to jump off the top of a tower block? Of course I can explain why I wanted to jump off the top of a tower block. I'm not a bloody idiot. I can explain it because it wasn't inexplicable: It was a logical decision, the product of proper thought. It wasn't even very serious thought, either. I don't mean it was whimsical—I just mean that it wasn't terribly complicated, or agonized. Put it this way: Say you were, I don't know, an assistant bank manager in Guildford. And you'd been thinking of emigrating, and then you were offered the job of managing a bank in Sydney. Well, even though it's a pretty straightforward decision, you'd still have to think for a bit, wouldn't you? You'd at least have to work out whether you could bear to move, whether you could leave your friends and colleagues behind, whether you could uproot your wife and kids. You might sit down with a bit of paper and draw up a list of pros and cons. You know

CONS aged parents, friends, golf club

PROS more money, better quality of life (house with pool, barbecue, etc.),
sea, sunshine, no left-wing councils banning "Baa Baa Black
Sheep", no EEC directives banning British sausages, etc.

It's no contest, is it? The golf club! Give me a break. Obviously your aged parents give you pause for thought, but that's all it is—a pause, and a brief one, too. You'd be on the phone to the travel agent's within ten minutes.

Well, that was me. There simply weren't enough regrets, and lots of reasons to jump. The only things on my "cons" list were the kids, but I couldn't imagine Cindy letting me see them again anyway. I haven't got any aged parents, and I don't play golf. Suicide was my Sydney. And I say that with no offense to the good people of Sydney intended.