

## Translating Berlin #13 Radio Tower

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- 1. Starter activity: What do you know about Berlin?**
    - a) Name five facts about Berlin.
    - b) Name one cultural connection between Germany and the UK.
    - c) Name three English writers in the 1920s.
  - 2. Read the English text below about the Radio Tower.**
    - a) Where was the Radio Tower located?
    - b) Which role did the Radio Tower play in the 1920s in Berlin?
    - c) Who used to meet there, and why?
  - 3. Present the Radio Tower to your neighbour or group. Your presentation should contain the answers to 2a), b), and c).**
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The Radio Tower. Photograph by Martin Höhlig,  
1927 © Fred Richter

Berlin's status as the up-and-coming modern city in Europe was embodied in the newly built radio tower in western Charlottenburg, on Kaiserdamm. An iconic Weimar and contemporary Berlin photographic motif, the radio tower epitomised new technology, chic night-life, and tourism. With its architectural nod at the Eiffel Tower in Paris, it claimed cosmopolitanism and an equal footing for Berlin in comparison to other, older European capitals.

The tower was opened in 1926 to coincide with the third great German Radio Exhibition ('Große Funkausstellung', an institution which continues to this day). It was a construction by the architect Prof. Heinrich Straumer, who was also known for building houses in the English country-house style in Berlin Dahlem and Frohnau, affluent western parts of the city. The radio tower sported a restaurant a third of the way up, which could be reached by an ultra-modern lift. It features in numerous paintings, post-cards, and photographs of the time. The tower's observation deck is 126 metres above ground and allows a sweeping view across the western parts of the city and the surrounding countryside. The construction weighs 600 tons. Although it was used for radio transmission only for a short period of time, its status as a tourist hotspot never changed. Britons visited it as part of the 'modern' round of sights to see in Berlin: John Chancellor, for instance, included it in every tour he suggests in his guidebook *How to be Happy in Berlin* (1929). Not the least of the visitors were writers and lovers Vita Sackville-West and Virginia Woolf, who spent a memorable evening in the restaurant 55 metres above ground exchanging views on their relationship: 'it was SUPPRESSED RANDINESS. So there – You remember your admissions as the searchlight went round and round?', as Sackville-West wrote to Woolf on 6 February 1929. Gesa Stedman.



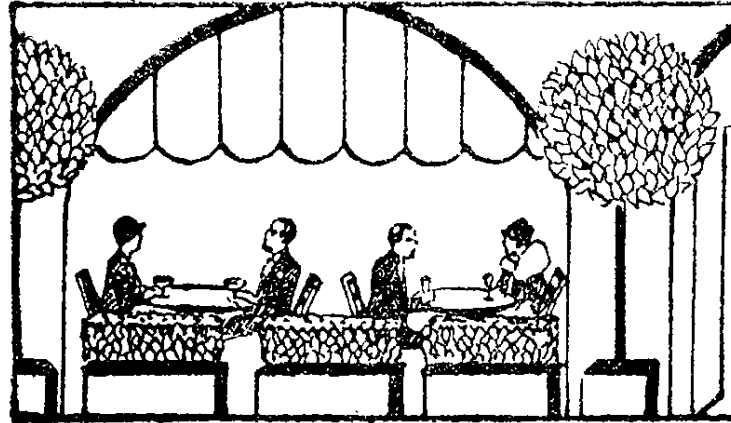
# John Chancellor

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## 4. Who was John Chancellor? Scan the QR code to find out.

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John Chancellor was the pseudonym of the crime fiction writer Ernest Charles de Balzac (1900–1971). He was the author of *How to be Happy in Berlin* (1929). Stefano Evangelista.



Vignette from John Chancellor,  
*How to Be Happy in Berlin* (1929), © Bodleian Library, Oxford

# Translation Theory

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## 5. Answer the following questions in pairs or in your group:

- a) Can you think of a German or English word or phrase that you cannot translate verbatim (exactly word for word) into the other language? What strategy would you use to translate it?
- b) Would you like to become a professional translator? Why or why not? What do you think would be the most interesting aspects of being a translator?

## 6. Read and discuss the text on translation theory.

- a) What is the difference between micro- and macro-level translation?
  - b) What is the difference between domestication and foreignisation?
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Translation theory often distinguishes between micro- and macro-level translation. The micro level refers mainly to the accurate translation of single words, terms, or shorter segments of a text from the source language into the target language. In this context, the emphasis is placed on linguistic accuracy. For the sake of precision, decisions on the micro level are often made independently.

The macro level, on the other hand, rather looks at a text in its entirety and takes into account not only linguistic accuracy, but also social and cultural aspects. For the sake of consistency, decisions on a macro level are often made for the entire text. How can local dialects be translated from one language into another? Should personal names be translated in such a way that their meaning can be understood in the target language? And how should certain cultural references be approached, especially those that foreign readers may not understand? All of these questions belong to macro-level translation.

Translation decisions, whether on the micro or macro level, can always be located between the poles of domestication and foreignisation. Domestication means not only translating a text, but also adapting its content to the culture of the target language. Foreignisation, on the other hand, means keeping a translation as close to the original as possible, both in terms of content and style.

# Das Image von Berlin

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## 7. Read the German text 'Das Image von Berlin'.

- a) How was the Berlin of the 1920s perceived in England?
- b) What did John Chancellor say about Berlin?

## 8. Translate the text into English. Choose:

- a) Translate the text directly.
  - b) Rewrite the text in simpler German. Next, translate your simpler version into English.
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Unweigerlich prägten die massiven politischen und sozialen Spannungen dieser Jahre das Image Berlins im Ausland. Als typisch für Berlin galt ein Mangel an Kultiviertheit und gesellschaftlichen Konventionen, denen man explizit oder implizit den Freiheitsdrang der Brit\*innen entgegensetzte. Die antideutsche Propaganda, die während und nach dem Krieg die britischen Medien beherrschte, hinterließ eine Wunde, die nur schwer verheilte. Am Ende der 1920er Jahre fühlte sich John Chancellor noch immer bemüßigt, Engländer\*innen von dem Irrtum zu befreien, dass es alle Männer, Frauen und Kinder im Deutschen Reich nach englischem Blut dürstete.

Stefano Evangelista, Gesa Stedman.

## Glossary

unweigerlich	inevitably
Spannung (f.)	tension
Mangel (m.) an	lack of
sich bemüßigt fühlen	to feel obliged
Irrtum (m.)	fallacy
dürsten nach	to thirst for

# An English Wife in Berlin

9. Read the excerpt from Chancellor's guidebook *How to be Happy in Berlin* (1929) and highlight all the words you know how to translate already.

10. Translate the text into German. Choose:

- a) Translate the text directly.
- b) Rewrite the text in simpler English.

Next, translate your simpler version into German.

## Funkturm.

This is a small edition of the Eiffel Tower, standing beside the huge exhibition halls in Kaiserdamm. Funkturm means Spark Tower; but things are not what they seem in the German language, so Spark Tower really means Broadcasting Tower. [...] Now that that's quite clear, there is little more to be said about it, except that there's a restaurant half-way up for those who like high food. An excellent view of the city is to be obtained from the top—at least, so I'm told.

John Chancellor, 'How to be Happy in Berlin', pp. 59–60.

## Glossary

exhibition halls	Ausstellungssäle (Pl.)
halfway	auf halbem Wege
to obtain	erhalten, erlangen

# Plenary

11. Talk about your translation process.

- a) Did any difficulties or problems arise?
- b) Which translation strategies did you use ...
  - I. ... to translate from German into English?
  - II. ... to translate from English into German?