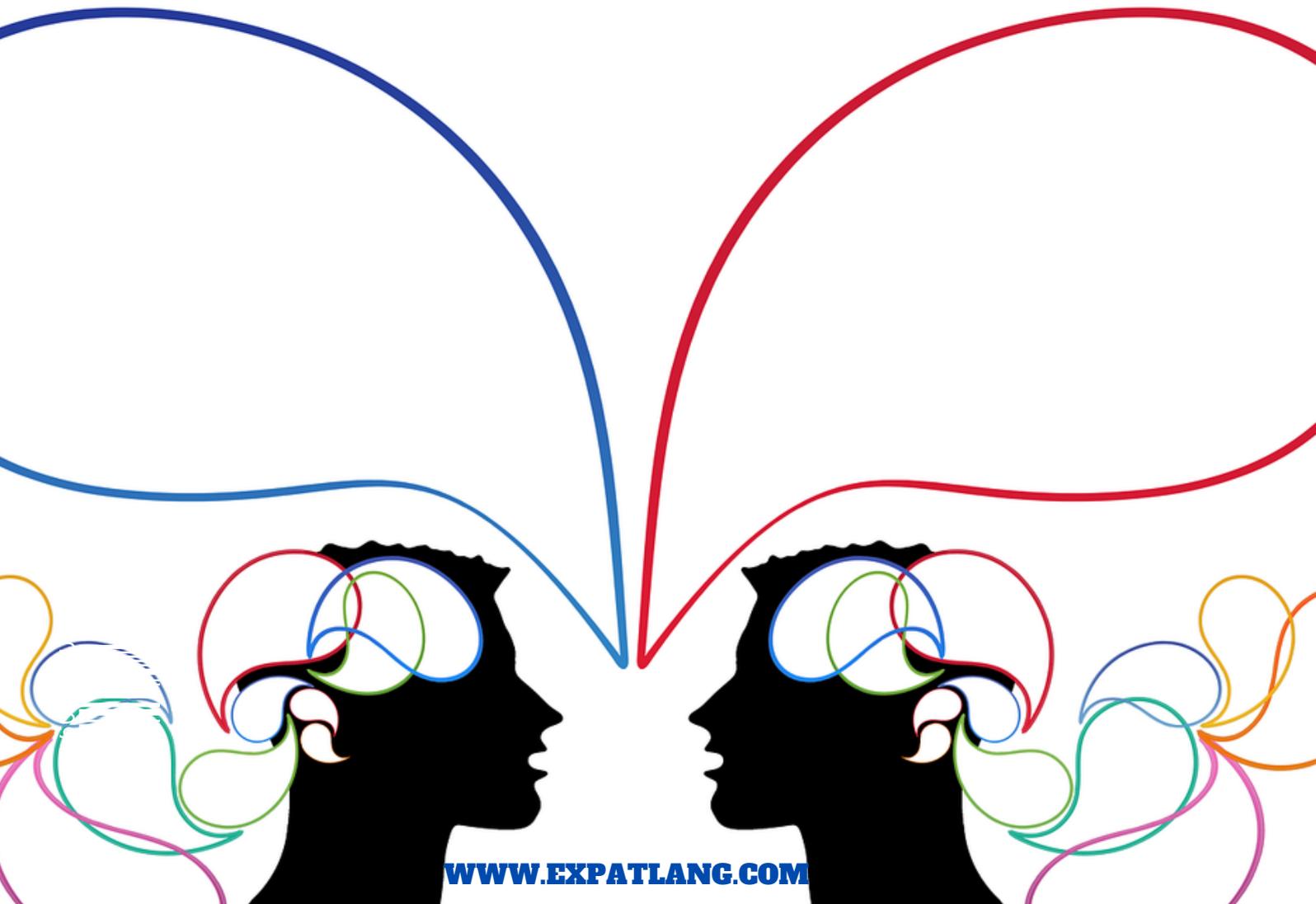


UNDERSTAND NATIVE FRENCH - FRENCH TO LIVE IN FRANCE

# EXPATLANG

**UNDERSTAND  
WITHOUT  
TRANSLATING**



**Are you ready to  
take your French  
listening skills to  
the next level ?**





# INTRODUCTION

When we start to work on any language document, for many people, the first reflex is to translate any word they don't understand.

Although translating is a perfectly acceptable way to learn a language and acquire new vocabulary, it's neither the most efficient, nor the most effective way.

Furthermore, the habit of translating every single new word is likely to hinder your abilities to communicate with native speakers at later stages.

Indeed, when we communicate in another language, there is always something that we don't understand - unknown words or new grammar concepts.

Unfortunately, in the heat of the action, it's not always possible to stop and look up the meaning of a specific word.

That's why we have to train our brain to explore a wide variety of ways to understand even when we have never seen the word before.

Expatlang's proud to offer you this booklet. In it, we've come up with a strategy to start understanding without translating. This will come in handy when you work on [Expatlang's podcast - Understand Native French](#).

Start right now on the next page with a clear distinction between the concepts of understanding, interpretation and translation.

# UNDERSTAND, INTERPRET AND TRANSLATE

## WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?

Depending on the context, there are many different significations to these three words. For today's purpose, in the context of language learning, we'd like to use the following definitions:

**Understand:** when the meaning of a document or a conversation is perfectly clear.

**Interpret:** when there are various possible meanings to a document or a conversation and we have to choose one of them.

**Translate:** we take one word and find the closest equivalent in another language.

When we learn a new language, we should always focus on interpretation or in other words, we should try to read between the lines as much as possible. Translating should only be the last option when any of our attempts to understand or translate was unsuccessful.

The important question is now: **how can we understand without translating?**

That's an excellent question, thank you for asking. Before we share all of our secrets on the next page, take a little while to think about it. **When you work on a document for the first time, what can you rely on to understand its content apart from translating?**



# A FEW ELEMENTS TO USE TO UNDERSTAND WITHOUT TRANSLATING

Here are a few elements you can rely on to understand the content you're working on without translating:

- **Context** - Do the words or ideas developed around the word I don't know help me understand better?
- **Previous knowledge about the topic** - Do I know things about the topic in my own language that seem to be repeated in the document?
- **Logic** - When the document makes it obvious that a word designates something specific. For example a list of ingredients in a video recipe.
- **Cognates** - Words that are similar or close in the language you speak and your target language. *Example : Démocratie (FR) / Democracy (EN)*
- **Any graphic element** - Pictures, drawings, specific fonts, background etc.
- **Tone of the voice and music** - Many emotions and moods can be conveyed by both these aspects.
- **"Universal" concepts** - Frowning for aggressiveness, smiling for happiness or curiosity...)

# THE STRATEGY

As a language learner, you can't rely on your first contact with a document to define your level of understanding; you should always read/watch/listen several times. Each time, you'll understand a little more.

To make the most of your learning time, follow these steps to improve your understanding skills and avoid translating.

## I. Before you read

- **Ask yourself the following questions** - Why am I working on this document? What language elements should I pay attention to? What do I know about the topic in the target language? Are there certain words I should expect to find in this context?
- **Identify the source of the document** - What kind of document is it? When was it published? Is it related to a specific version of the language (regional, formal, informal...)? What kind of information is it most likely to give?



## II. Start working on your document

- **After reading / listening / watching once, ask yourself the following questions:** what percentage of the content have you understood? What are the key elements that have helped you understand? Can you make some hypothesis as per the general meaning of the whole document?
- **After reading / watching a second time:** Could you understand more after reading a second time? What other elements have helped you understand more this time? Can you already confirm some of the hypothesis you made after the first reading?
- **After reading a third time:** is the document clear now? Are there still words or sentences you don't understand? Highlight them in another colour. Are these particular words or sentences absolutely necessary to understand the document? Do they seem to serve your goals or specific skill you're working on? Is it necessary to translate them? **Finally, translate only what you believe is necessary.**

# UNDERSTAND WITHOUT TRANSLATING

## **DON'T TRANSLATE, INTERPRET**

In the heat of the action, it's not always easy to stop and translate. Learning how to decipher the context and all the different elements you have at hand, will help you cope in any situation.

## **USE ANYTHING YOU CAN TO UNDERSTAND**

Your native language is your comfort zone. But remember that there are tons of other elements that can help you out once you start speaking.

## **READ/LISTEN/WATCH SEVERAL TIMES**

You can't understand a document by going through it only once. Only translate what you think is necessary after the 3rd or 4th attempt.



# KEY IDEAS

**GREAT  
JOB !**



The purpose of this booklet was to give you an overview of the strategy you can implement to explore new channels of understanding. Although translating is comfortable - it keeps us close to our native language - it doesn't allow us to be efficient in all situations when we start using our target language.

If you decide to start working on [Expatlang's podcast - Understand Native French](#), this is the strategy we recommend you to apply and in order to make the most of your learning time, we also encourage you to use our **PREMIUM RESOURCES**. They'll provide valuable tools to boost your French listening skills and will also help you acquire new vocabulary and structures.

We really hope you've enjoyed this booklet. Feel free to send us a message and share your comments about this booklet as well as your insight about language learning in general. We also invite you to visit our [blog](#). for more tips on language learning and resources to discover French and the French culture.

We wish you all the best on your journey to learn French et à bientôt sur [www.expatlang.com](http://www.expatlang.com).