

Create a multilingual word wall

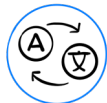
How does it work?

In this activity, museum professionals make a word wall with key words from the exhibition in Dutch and children's home languages. By using the wall, children and their families learn about the topic, make connections between languages, and feel more welcome. You notice it works when children and families use and compare languages.

Translanguaging forms



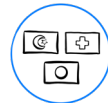
Combining languages



Translating



Using language brokers



Designing a multilingual landscape

What is the goal of the activity?

By using multilingual word walls, multilingual children (and their families):

- ◇ Understand the exhibition topic better.
- ◇ Connect Dutch museum words to their home languages.
- ◇ Feel like they belong when exploring the museum.



In short

Age group: All ages

Subject: Mathematics Science & Technology Both

How long it takes: Continuous (could take the whole visit)

Who can lead this?: Teacher Museum guide & museum educator Parents & caregivers



What do you need?

- ◇ A list of keywords or concepts for the exhibition or museum area
- ◇ Contact with a translation agency or native speakers in your network (or access to a translation tool)
- ◇ Contact with museum colleagues (designers, educators, technicians, etc.)
- ◇ Materials to make the word wall:
 - Physical: cards, tape, magnets, a sign, etc.
 - Digital: screens, projector, or online display

Step-by-step instructions

1. Choose keywords

- ◇ Decide which words are most important for children and families to understand the exhibition or museum area
- ◇ These keywords will be in Dutch
- ◇ Keep the number of keywords small (10-15) so the wall is clear and not overwhelming
- ◇ Many museum concepts and objects include the use of very complex or unfamiliar terms in any language. Consider choosing keywords for which translations may be readily available, and that are not too specialized.

2. Choose target languages

- ◇ Find out which languages visitors to the museum most often speak
- ◇ Consider which languages are common in the local area
- ◇ Decide which of these languages to choose for the translation

3. Translate keywords

- ◇ Translate each Dutch keyword into the chosen languages
- ◇ You can use a translation app (DeepL or Google Translate) or a translation agency

4. Add pictures or icons

- ◇ Add a simple picture or icon to each keyword to help children and families understand it
- ◇ Pictures help clarify meaning, even if someone cannot read all the languages

5. Decide the format

- ◇ Will the word wall be physical (cards, boards, signs) or digital (screen, projector)?
- ◇ Discuss options with designers or museum staff. For example, discuss the advantages and disadvantages of using physical vs digital materials.

6. Make the word wall

- ◇ Attach the Dutch keywords, the translations, and pictures to the chosen format
- ◇ Make sure the text is large and easy to read



Tips & Variations

Invite feedback

Place a small comments box where visitors can tell you if a word needs to be corrected or improved

Use an online word cloud tool

Use a free online word cloud tool. When you copy the exhibition text into the tool, it shows which words appear the most. This can help you choose good keywords

Consider using digital screens

Digital screens make it easier to add new languages or change words when needed

Make it participatory

Let visitors add their own translations. This helps the word wall grow and reflect the real languages spoken by children, families

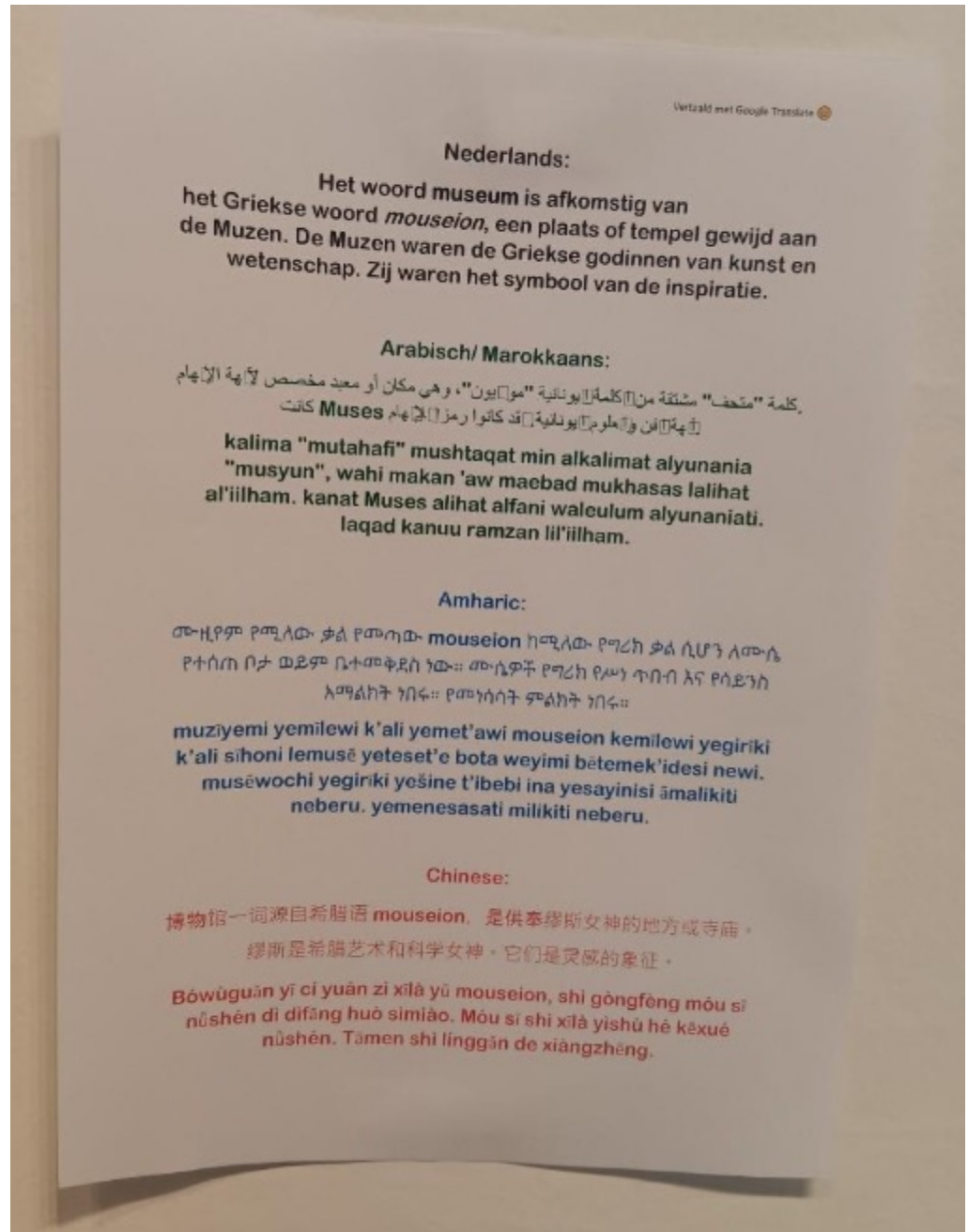
Who made this

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- ◇ Based on Multi-STEM's project at MuseumLab, where we added a multilingual word wall (see illustrations) to diversify the linguistic landscape
 - ◇ Developed by Multi-STEM, based on our research and the current literature on multilingualism in museums
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A multilingual sign accompanying multilingual word wall



A multilingual sign accompanying multilingual word wall at Museum Lab, where the etymology of the word 'museum' is explained in four languages. (Source: Mirona Moraru)