

UNIT 2

The Variety of Languages

5 Days

Lesson 1 - Importance of speaking other languages - 2 Days

Lesson 2 - Your personal language history - 1 Day

Lesson 3 - Different forms of communication - 2 Days

Terms	Vocab
Bilingual	Lingua
Trilingual	
Polyglot	
Dialect	

Unit 2 - The Variety of Languages

Lesson 1 - Importance of speaking other languages

Day 1:

Discuss

- Speaking other languages
- Brainstorm ideas about when you might use another language. (e.g. traveling, singing foreign songs, etc.)
- What jobs might you have in which it would be useful to know another language? (e.g. doctor helping a patient who does not speak English, government positions)
- Do we have expectations of people to speak our language when they are in our country?
- Do we also expect people to speak our language when we are visiting their country?
- Some classes may at this point want to start a discussion of what we would gain or lose by having one universal language or of the history of Esperanto. But this will also come up in a later lesson.

Discuss

- Why are there so many different languages?
- Perhaps the first human words were formed by mimicking sounds in the environment, and different regions developed different sound patterns.
- Could there originally have been one universal language or many fewer languages than there are today, and they simply developed in different ways creating new languages.

Activity

Have students read aloud a version of the Tower of Babel story from the Bible. Look at this as an historical document. Was there someone who was trying to make a theory about how languages were developing, someone who thought that there was an original language that was now developing into many?

Homework

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Tower of Babel link

Day 2:

Activity

Experiment and see how language could change when it passes from one generation or one group of people to the next. Play whisper down the lane with a nonsense word.

- Number each student around the room.
- The teacher goes out into the hall with a nonsense word, such as sarguintifial, written on a piece of paper.
- The teacher calls one student out into the hall, says the word and shows it to the student.
- That student then stays out in the hall while the teacher returns to the class. The student in the hall is writing down the word from memory, right after seeing it from the teacher, but without looking at it, while the teacher sends the next student out into the hall.
- Student #1 says the word and shows it to student #2, who then stays, writes it down, and prepares to say it and show it to student #3.
- The last student will then write the word up on the board, announce it to the class, and compare it to the original from the teacher.
- Have students list the words they wrote down in order on the board to see how gradual the changes were. Make sure the list of numbers is already on the board.
- Look for changes such as consonants dropping out, vowels changing, the end of the word dropping off, the word splitting into two.

Discuss

- Does this happen to languages?
- These are changes that happen to words as they evolve over generations, across cultures, and into other languages.
- This experiment happened with a handful of people over 20 minutes, but imagine the changes that a language goes through over centuries and millions of people.
- There are so many different languages in the world, but we are going to find out during this year what similarities they have, and if some of them have in fact grown out of the same original language.

For Next Class

Have students ask the people in their household what languages they know or have at some point studied. Ask them to make a list of all of the languages known by their family. (You may want to discuss the difference between being able to say a few phrases in a language and speaking fluently.)

Homework

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Find out spoken languages at home

Unit 2 - The Variety of Languages

Lesson 2 - Your personal language history

Discuss

How many languages do you use?

Family background

Write the responses from the homework assignment on the board about family languages. See how many languages are represented by your class.

terms: *bilingual*, *trilingual*, *polyglot* (*lingua* = language or tongue in Latin; *glotta* = tongue in Greek)

Why are the words tongue and language so closely linked? Try to talk without using your tongue.

linguine was named for being the shape of a long, thin tongue

Dialects One language may have many different forms in the different regions in which it is spoken. The difference could be in pronunciation, vocabulary, or grammar.

Are there any dialects of English spoken in your family?

List English words that are from the Southern, New York, Midwest, or British dialects and the difference in prepositions/adverbs with idioms in different dialects.

e.g. *stand in line* vs. *stand on line*

fall down the stairs vs. *fall over the stairs*

slow up vs. *slow down*

put away the dishes vs. *put up the dishes*

go to the shore vs. *go down the shore*

Talk about some other languages that have many regional dialects, e.g. German, Chinese.

Peer languages Do you use words with your friends that your parents would not understand? Is slang a type of peer language that you would use with some groups of people but not with others. (There are some people around whom I am comfortable saying, "This is she," and other groups of friends I hang out with that I would only say, "It's me," to.)

Baby talk Does your family still use some words that originated with you when you were a baby. These would be words understood only by your family. My family calls all blankets "shoo-shoos" because that was my son's word for his blanket. Have students share their special family words.

For Next Class:

Students could prepare a dictionary of words or phrases in different dialects of English -or- a Personal Family Dictionary of special baby talk or family words

Activity

Have students read aloud a version of the Tower of Babel story from the Bible. Look at this as an historical document. Was there someone who was trying to make a theory about how languages were developing, someone who thought that there was an original language that was now developing into many?

Homework

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Terms

bilingual

trilingual

polyglot

Dialect

Vocabulary
lingua

Unit 2 - The Variety of Languages

Lesson 3 - Different forms of communication

Day 1:

Activity

Divide students into small groups. Have them come up with a list of other types of languages - languages that are used to communicate but that do not use spoken or written words. Think back to the experiment when you went to dinner and could not use words. What types of languages did you develop. What other type of language might there be for someone who cannot see?

List answers on the board, and for each one determine what could be communicated with this other type of language and with whom you would be most likely to communicate using this language.

e.g. music - to communicate or evoke emotions or to recall certain events or natural occurrences, relies on the sense of sound

art - can communicate anything from emotional to factual, different media could rely on different senses, sight and touch other languages: computer, symbols (mathematical, scientific), signs, sign languages

This could tie into lessons in a number of different classes - a good time to share what you are doing with other departments.

Activity

Talking Art on the website.

There are two pieces of art and two pieces of music. Have them listen to the pieces of music in complete silence, lying on the floor, lights off, and then afterwards discuss what was communicated to them without words. Look at the paintings for three minutes without saying anything and then ask them questions about the scenes.

An interesting point about the first piece of music is that it is by an Icelandic band names Sigur Ros, but the song is not sung in Icelandic. They are not singing real words, and the band decided not to name the song or the album. Discuss what message this might be sending about non-verbal communication.

Homework

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Talking Art

Day 2:

Activity

Review homework pages 7-8

Rebuses: students are in teams of three or four. Each team writes a simple sentence in English. The sentences are given to other teams for them to write in rebus form - pictures standing for words. They can add or subtract letters from words.

e.g. a picture of a frog -g +m = from When a team has figured out an answer, they go to the board to show it to the class

Discuss

- What is the object of language?
- Communication or sharing of ideas, feelings
- Does this mean there has to be another person involved besides ourselves; we listen to music alone, but somebody wrote it
- Limitations of signs and symbols richness of music and art versatility of words with grammar