

Language Lizard Unit: *Language, Customs, Culture in India (focus on similar/different, language)*

Multicultural Lesson Plans

Language, Customs and Culture in India

Kindergarten Unit: India

Title of Focus Book: [Buri and the Marrow](#) in Tamil/English
by **Henriette Barkow**

Focus Languages: Tamil, English

Grades: Kindergarten (activities may be adapted to suit other grades)

Topic: Language, Customs, Culture in India

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The three lessons presented in this unit of instruction have been designed to help students:

- Learn about different cultures and customs of people in India and in the United States;
- Hear and see new languages and text;
- Build an appreciation of the diverse languages present in the world and in the United States;
- Learn about other countries, such as India, and people similar to and different than themselves;
- Introduce important Social Studies concept such as Culture and Geography;
- Build positive relationships among students in the classroom to promote the acceptance of diversity among students as a part of the classroom environment.

The Language Lizard book used in these lessons is: *Buri and the Marrow* in Tamil and English. This book is available in many other languages, and other language combinations can be substituted for or used in addition to the dual languages presented here. There are also many additional dual language books which could be used to supplement these lessons.

This unit of instruction is easily aligned with state standards, and national standards in Social Studies and Language Arts. The National Council for the Social Studies Themes that these lessons support include: Culture, People, Places and Environment, Individual Development and Identity, Global Connections and Individuals, Groups and Institutions.

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Introduction to Lessons

As a class, have the students list all the countries they have heard of before. The teacher will write the responses on the board.

After they completed this, the teacher will show the students a basic world map and explain how the different colors on the map represent different countries. Make sure the students know that they live in the United States of America.

Next, have the students think of all the different languages they know of and write them on the board. Tell the students that in our country, many, many people speak English. Tell them that many other languages are also spoken in the USA.

Ask students what languages they speak at home. Tell the students that like the United States, many other countries have people who speak a variety of languages. Discuss that languages are a way to communicate. Have students suggest ways in addition to speaking, that they communicate.

Tell students that they are going to be learning about one of the languages and the culture of many people in India. Explain that India is a country where many languages are spoken, including Tamil, the language they will be learning about.

After hearing the introduction to the mini-unit, the teacher can help students locate the countries where the focus languages are spoken around the world. As a supplement, the teacher may offer instruction about these countries and the people who live in them currently. He or she may also share with students information about each of the languages, including presenting how these languages are represented in the United States, in the state where students reside and in the local community.

The teacher may also integrate learning about the languages, countries/regions/areas where the languages are spoken throughout the lessons. The CIA World Factbook Online provides excellent information on countries and people of the world.

<https://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/index.html>

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Lesson # 1

Title: Similarities and Differences of India and the United States

Grade Level: Kindergarten (activities may be adapted to suit other grades)

Duration: 20-30 minutes

Concepts: cultural and language similarities and differences

Skills: Listening, Speaking, Observing

Vocabulary: similar, different

Goals: The student will understand the importance of knowing and respecting each other's cultures. The student will learn about India and the Tamil language.

Learning Objectives

1. The student will locate India on a world map.
2. The student will discuss the culture of India.
3. The student will discuss what 'similar' and 'different' mean
4. The student will discuss the Tamil language

Anticipatory Set

The teacher will greet the students by saying "hello" in Tamil. The following website gives information on how to pronounce basic words:

<http://ccat.sas.upenn.edu/plc/tamilweb/lessons/lesson1a.html>

First ask the students to tell you what the word different means. Then have them tell you what similar or same means. Then, have the students pair up and stand facing each other. Give them two minutes to just look and observe each other. When the time is up, have the students list what they noticed was similar and different about themselves. This list can be made on the board for all the students to see. Before the students give their answer, make sure to discuss respectful answers that won't hurt the students' feelings.

Discuss the importance of having differences, because without them, everyone would look or act exactly the same and our lives would look very boring.

Procedures

After the students discuss their similarities and differences, have a short discussion about how there are lots of differences in the classroom, but that the classroom is just one small community. Have them think about the differences that they would see in the whole school, or their whole town and even the whole state! Ask the students to think about whether there are differences from state to state. Finally, from country to country.

Talk about India. India is a country on the Asian continent. Discuss the daily life of someone living in India. Discuss the similarities and differences between life in India and life in America. Help the students understand the concept of distance by relating it to the distances children know; such as the distance from their house to their friend's house or their house to their grandparent's house or their house to school. Explain that America is very far from India and show this to them on a globe. Place a large map on the floor and have the students physically move from the US to India to show that they have to pass a lot of water (can specify ocean if

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want) and other countries to get to India. Discuss ways in which people travel from India to the United States, and how people can communicate between these countries.

Show photos of India to the students so they get an idea of some of India's culture.

Travelforkids.com is a sight that gives further information. (Suggested books include: I is for India by Prodeepta Das, Shiva's Fire by Suzanne Fisher Staples, and India by Manini Chatterje, Anita Roy.)

Specifically, when talking about similarities and differences, language should be addressed. Use the website that is linked to let the children experience the look of the Tamil language and how the Tamil language sounds.

<http://ccat.sas.upenn.edu/plc/tamilweb/lessons/lesson1a.html>

Give students time to explore these images and audio files.

Explain that we have one letter to represent a sound such as B for the 'b' sound in bee. In the Tamil language the letters look and sound much different than the ones we use in our classroom. (This could be adapted to particular classrooms.)

Closure

Have a discussion about what similar and different mean. Review that people are all different. Discuss that people are different by: abilities, appearances, interests, location, celebrations/holidays celebrated, culture, physically, and appearance wise. The teacher will then remind students that India has several main languages, including Tamil, and that the USA's main language is English, although other languages including Tamil are also spoken here. Have students describe how the Tamil language and English language are similar and different. Hand students Buri and the Marrow to take a picture walk through. Have them explore the book on their own and point out how there are different symbols used in the book and the symbols are part of the Tamil language. Show them the English print in the book as well. This will help lead them into lesson two.

Assessment

The teacher will assess the students through their contributions to class discussion.

Materials/Equipment

chalkboard

chalk

globe

Website for more information on India: <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/>

Website: <http://ccat.sas.upenn.edu/plc/tamilweb/lessons/lesson1a.html>

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Lesson #2

Title: Importance of Language

Grade Level: Kindergarten (activities may be adapted to suit other grades)

Duration: 30-40 minutes

Concepts: cultural differences and similarities, language importance, embracing **differences**

Skills: writing, listening, working with a group, presenting

Vocabulary: Similarities, differences

Learning Objectives

1. Students will discuss why language and symbols are important in different cultures.
2. Students will create symbols to create their "own" language.

Anticipatory Set

The teacher will review some of the similarities and differences the students talked about from lesson one. (Remind students that there are similarities and differences between two people in their classroom and between two people in different locations.) To reinforce how far away India is, have the students physically walk on the large map again from US (country living in) to India. The teacher will hold up the book Buri and the Marrow and point to the Tamil title. The teacher will ask the students: Does anyone remember what language this is? What do you think those symbols mean? Look at the picture. How does the lady look different from you? How does she look similar to you?

Procedures

Once the students have time to think about the symbols, the teacher will then say the following: Like we mentioned yesterday, this book is written in two languages. One is in English, the language we (most of us) speak. * This statement can be adapted to suit the individual classrooms and the languages represented there.

The other language is called Tamil. Many people in India speak this language. Tamil is also spoken in other countries around the world, including the USA. This is a very special book because people who speak different languages can read the same story.

The teacher will then begin reading the story. He/she will ask the following questions and/or discuss the following points:

1st opening: The teacher will point to the Tamil sentences and explain how many people from India could read those sentences.

2nd opening: How do you think Buri is feeling? Would you be scared if a lion said it wanted to eat you?

3rd opening: How do you think they are going to save Buri from the animals?

4th opening: Look at the buildings on the page. Some of the buildings look different than the buildings around our school. What are some differences? What are some similarities?

Last opening: Was it a happy ending?

Once the story is finished, the teacher will remind the students how important similarities and differences are. This book is important because it was written in two languages instead of one. The woman in this story is supposed to be from a different country. We were able to learn a little more about another culture. It helps us understand why similarities and differences are important.

The students will then do an activity to gain an understanding of how important language is. The teacher will place the children in groups of four. As a group, the students will collaboratively recall something about the setting, appearance of character/environment and write one sentence.

After all the groups are finished with their sentence, the class will come together as a whole. The teacher will write all the letters, A-Z, on the board. The class will go through each letter and think of a symbol for each letter. If they have trouble coming up with a symbol, the teacher can ask them for an object that starts with each letter. For example, if they were having trouble finding a symbol for "M" they could draw a picture of a glass of milk.

This part of the lesson could be adapted for older students by having them create their own symbols of whatever they choose. This will allow them to be creative.

Once all the letters are complete, the students will use their symbols to write their sentences on another piece of paper. They will then get the opportunity to share their symbol-message to the class by standing up and reading their sentence to the class. (You could also do this by having the small groups exchange messages so it is not too overwhelming.)

The teacher will ask: If we wrote down our symbol sentences and gave them to a family member, do you think he/she will be able to understand it? Why or why not? The teacher will then explain how we created our own language using symbols. These symbols are important to us, but may not be important to other people because they cannot understand the language. Remember how the book we read had two languages? It helped two different types of people understand the same book by using two languages.

Closure

Once the activity is complete, the teacher will ask the following:

1. Why is Buri and the Marrow a special book? (Sample answers: It helps two different types of readers; is written in two languages; it teaches about different culture; etc.)
2. What languages are presented in the story? (English and Tamil)
3. Where is Tamil spoken? (India and also around the world)
4. What was so special about our symbol sentences? (Sample answers: We can understand them; we thought about symbols ourselves; no one else can understand them, etc.)

The teacher will remind students that language and symbols are important to everyone. Not everyone uses the same language or symbols, which makes each one of us very important and unique.

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Assessment

1. Students will get an understanding of the importance of language and symbols are in different cultures.
2. Students will answer questions throughout the book.
3. Students will create symbols to create their "own" language. In a group, students will share class made symbols to represent a sentence they wrote.

Materials/Equipment

Large World map-large enough for students to walk on

Buri and the Marrow by Henriette Barkow

Paper/pencils

chalk/chalkboard

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Lesson #3/Culminating Activity

Title: Tamil and. English

Grade Level: Kindergarten (activities may be adapted to suit other grades)

Duration: 20-30 minutes

Concepts: language differences and background, symbols

Skills: listening, speaking, labeling, writing

Vocabulary: Tamil

Learning Objectives

1. Students will listen to words spoken in Tamil to get a better understanding of different languages.
2. Students will label objects in the classroom.

Anticipatory Set

We have been talking about India. Can anyone tell me what language we mentioned? Very good! We talked about the Tamil language. We're going to use the language you made up yesterday to label objects you see in the classroom today! Remember when we looked at the map of India and not everyone spoke the Tamil language? Our language we made up is special to us because no one outside of the classroom can understand what it means. It's a special part of our classroom culture.

Procedures

To give students a better sense of the Tamil language, the teacher will go to the following website to let the students hear how words are spoken in that language.

<http://ccat.sas.upenn.edu/plc/tamilweb/lessons/lesson1a.html>

The teacher will play some of the words and have children try to say them for fun. The teacher may be able to have children practice the words, such as shirt, door, and table, and then choose a student to go over to the object and say it in Tamil.

After a few simple words, the students will get the opportunity to label objects in the classroom, using the symbols they created from lesson two. (The teacher should make copies of their language for each student.) *The teacher could also have Tamil language cards written to label the room to reinforce the different symbols used in Tamil but to show how language is used in similar ways.

Each student will get an index card to label. Assuming the classroom already has objects labeled in English, the students will write the name of an object using their made up language and place the card under the English label.

After all the students label their items, the teacher will go around and ask each child to explain what they labeled.

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Closure

Have a discussion with the class about language and how/why language is used.

Discuss India; the culture, the language and similarities and differences. What if everyone looked alike; if everyone dressed the same, looked the same and talked the same? How do you think people would act differently than they do today?

Discuss how in different countries people speak many different languages.

Assessment of Students

1. Students will listen to words spoken in Tamil to get a better understanding of different languages.
2. Students will be assessed on how well they are listening by repeating Tamil words back to the teacher.
3. Students will label two items in the classroom. Students will be assessed by labeling two items in their classroom on index cards.

Materials/Equipment

Website: <http://ccat.sas.upenn.edu/plc/tamilweb/lessons/lesson1a.html>

Index cards

Pencils