**Looking at Language**

**Age group:** Grades 3-5, Grades 6-8

**Topic:** Language and thought

**Objective -** In this lesson, students will consider their relationship with language, exploring the languages they do and do not use in their daily communication. Would the world be better with one, universal language? What do we gain from having so many different languages?

**Challenge #1 - Guess the language!**

Show students one word at a time (all mean “hello” in different languages) and have them write down their guesses as to which language each is in. **BEFORE showing them the answers**, ask them the questions below the answer key.

1. Hello
2. Hola
3. Bonjour
4. Nin Hao
5. Salve
6. Konnichiwa
7. Guten Tag
8. Asalaam Alaikum
9. Shalom
10. God dag
11. Anyoung haseyo
12. Zdravstvuyte

Answer Key:

1. English
2. Spanish
3. French
4. Chinese
5. Italian
6. Japanese
7. German
8. Arabic
9. Hebrew
10. Swedish
11. Korean
12. Russian

**Questions to ask**

Ask students to write down their answers to questions 1,2, and 3 before sharing with the group

1. *What languages do you speak?*
2. *What is one language that you want to learn?*
3. *Why do you want to learn this language in particular?*

* *Is it because of the way it sounds? The people that traditionally speak it?*

***Show students the answer key to Challenge #1***

***Then ask them to share:***

* *How did you do?*
  + *Was this activity tough? Why?*
* *Were there any languages that you expected to see but didn’t?*
* *Why do you think there are so many languages?*
* *Do you think it would be better if everyone in the world spoke the same language?*
  + *What would we lose if we all spoke the same language?*
    - *Encourage students to think about what kind of people might be left out (deaf and blind communities), what cultures might be lost*

**Challenge #2 - Word share**

Ask students to think of their favorite word

*Set a timer for 5 minutes*

Using google translate, students will research how to say their word in 3 other languages

*Have students share out their words and the different languages they chose*

**Questions to ask**

* *Are your translations similar to the word that you chose?*
  + *Which word do you like best? How did you decide?*
* *Is language beautiful? Is language a form of art?*
* *What does it mean to translate something?*
  + *Can we ever have a perfect translation for anything?*

***Wrap-up question:***

* *Do you think we are programmed to use language to communicate? Can you think of any circumstance where a group of humans wouldn’t communicate with language?*

Challenge #3 - Language learning journal!

Spend the week learning another language of your choice! Keep a journal and respond to the following prompts

Step #1:

Using Duolingo, choose a language to start learning (for at least a week!)

**Write it down:**

* Why did you choose this language to learn? Think back to what we discussed in class

Step #2:

Complete one or two activities a day

**Write it down:**

* Are there any words spelled similarly in their English translation?
* Are there any that are totally different?
* If you find a word that you like better than the English word, write down the word and why you like it better

Step #3:

At the end of the week, write a reflection in response to the following question.

*Was it easy to learn this language? Why or why not?*

*What parts of this language are similar to English?*

*Think about -*

* *Sentence structure*
* *Pronunciation*
* *Punctuation*