

# HOW MANY LANGUAGES DO YOU SPEAK?

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**Suggested Grade Levels: 2-5**

**Suggested Curriculum Areas: Language Arts and Social Studies**

**Goals:** To allow children the opportunity to explore the Tamil language.

**Objectives:**

Students will listen to parts of a story read in English, Hindi, and Tamil.

Students will match Tamil word cards with their English equivalent.

Students will practice saying basic Tamil words.

**Background information for teachers:**

The Tamil language is over 2000 years old. It is one of the oldest languages still spoken today. Tamil is one of the Dravidian languages in India. Most states in South India have their own language and script. People from Tamilnadu speak "Tamil", people from Karnataka speak "Kannada", people from Kerala speak "Malayalam", and people from Andhra Pradesh speak "Telugu". This lesson is a very basic introduction to the Tamil and Hindi languages.

All Free written by Mamata Pandya is a folktale written from the state of Gujarat in India. The following words are used in the story. I have also included why they are important in India.

**Market:** Each morning, in India, many people go to the market to buy fruits, vegetables, and meats. They usually buy only what is needed for the day, as many people don't have refrigerators in the villages. At large markets, both vendors and people buy food. The vendors usually go very early in the morning, around 4:00 a.m., in order to get to their local markets to sell their products. Sometimes at larger wholesale markets people are required to buy a certain amount of food. This is referenced in the story when the main character wants to pay only one rupee rather than two.

**Banyan Tree:** The Banyan Tree grows in India. It grows to about seventy feet, producing oval leaves, fig-type fruits, and roots that grow into the ground from the branches. It is the national tree of India. A picture is included on the CD.

**Rupee:** A rupee is the unit of money in India. This is similar to the dollar as the American unit of currency. In 2003, \$1 US was equal to 45 rupees. You can check <http://www.fishsellers.com/general/currency.html> for current conversion rates.

Paise: 100 paise equal 1 rupee.

## **Lesson Outline**

### **Background for students:**

See the sheet *How Many Languages Are There in India?*

### **Introduction:**

Show the children a map of India. Discuss how the country is divided into states similar to the United States but explain that in India almost each state has its own language. And in many states the alphabet is different.

### **Activities:**

#### ***Day One:***

1. Have the children read the background information in groups of two or three and discuss it as a whole class. Possible discussion questions: How many languages does the average 10 year old speak in the United States? How would they feel if they drove to another state and did not know how to communicate with the people that live there? How do you think people would learn to communicate with each other? Explain to the children in India people often communicate with each other through a commonly learned language. The most common languages are English and Hindi.
2. Begin by showing the children pages of the same story written in Tamil, English, and Hindi. Share portions of the C.D. of native speakers reading the stories. Allow the children to enjoy the beauty of each of the languages.
3. Explain that tomorrow they will have the chance to learn some Tamil words.

#### ***Day 2:***

1. Hand out the black line masters for the Tamil/English game of concentration.
2. Practice reading the Tamil words with the children. Below the Tamil script, in parenthesis is the pronunciation of the word using our alphabet. See that some words have several ways of saying them in Tamil. Some even sound like the English words.
3. Allow the children to cut out the cards.
4. With a partner, they should turn the cards over and try to make matches of a Tamil word with its English equivalent. After making a match, the children should read the English and Tamil words and then keep the pair of cards. The completion of the game occurs when all cards are matched.

5. This game can be kept in the student's desk and played during free time.

**Amount of time:** Two 30-45 minute lessons

**Materials list:**

Map of India divided into States

Background information for Student sheet

Samples of All Free written in English, Hindi, and Tamil from CD

Audio recordings of stories

Copies of Concentration Card Game on lightweight tag or construction paper

**Resources:**

All Free by Mamata Pandya can be purchased from the Tulika Publishers at [www.tulikabooks.com](http://www.tulikabooks.com) . Click on Under the Banyan to find All Free and other multi-lingual books.

Additional readings for teachers: Tamil-English Dictionary & Phrasebook (Hippocrene Dictionary & Phrasebooks) by Clement J. Victor

Additional resources for students: Eyewitness India by Manini Chatterjee and Anita Roy

**Additional Information:**

Right now in India, parents view English as the most valuable language for their children's upward mobility. They often send their children to English Speaking Schools. As a result, the Tamil language is changing. It is becoming less pure. With more and more people speaking English, English words are often being substituted for Tamil words even when both parties are speaking Tamil. For example, words like train, station, shop, bus, telephone, and thanks are often used rather than their Tamil equivalent. This is beginning to concern some groups such as the Tamileelam Educational Organization Members. They fear the purity of this ancient language is in danger. The Center for Tamil Growth is encouraging Tamils to name their children with pure Tamil names, to name the roads and business enterprises in pure Tamil names and is discouraging the use of foreign words, mainly English, while conversing or writing in Tamil.

**Extension Activities:**

1. Look at the similarities of Indian languages and those of Native American languages. How have they evolved over time? What percentages of Native Americans know their native language? Do students in your classroom know the language of their ancestors?
2. Other questions to consider: Is it important to know more than one language? Why do you think English is the Lingua Franca of the world? How would the United States be different if the rest of the world chose to learn another language like Tamil or Hindi instead of English?

**Other Grade levels:** 6-12**Other discipline areas:** Foreign language, World Studies**Connections to Standards:** Social Studies: B.4.4, E.4.11, 4.12