

## Week 1 Day 1: What is a language? What is a dialect?

### RATIONALE

In this lesson students will understand the terms we will use in this unit: Language and Dialect. Dialect is the term most often confused with 'improper' or 'incorrect' language, while 'language' is understood to be the 'correct' way of talking. Students are taught that a 'language' consists of many dialects, and that everyone speaks a dialect.

### OBJECTIVE

Students will identify and give examples of important terms: Language, Dialect.

### STANDARDS ADDRESSED

**CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.5.3** Use knowledge of language and its conventions when writing, speaking, reading, or listening.

**CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.5.3a** Expand, combine, and reduce sentences for meaning, reader/listener interest, and style.

**CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.5.3b** Compare and contrast the varieties of English (e.g., *dialects, registers*) used in stories, dramas, or poems.

### Materials for Instructor

1. Short audio clips of 3 speakers
2. Transparency or overhead copy of 2 column chart

### Materials in Student Workbook

1. 2 column graphic organizer
2. chart of 5 different languages
3. chart of 4 different English dialects

### PROCEDURE:

#### Warm Up (1-5 minutes)

1. Review unit goals: learn about how people speak differently, and what kind of language we need to use at school

#### Task 1: What 'languages' have we heard of? (5-10 minutes)

##### *Discussion:*

1. We're going to be talking about languages and dialects for the next few weeks. First we want to be able to identify one language from another. Can anyone give me examples of languages? (list on board or chart paper) (e.g., Japanese, English, Russian, etc.)

2. How can we tell one language from another? Usually by listening we can tell if someone is speaking our language or not, because we can understand them. Usually when we don't understand what a person is saying that means they are speaking a different language.

*Activity: What language is it?*

1. Whole group: Listen to short clips of 3 voices, decide if speaking English or Spanish (Speaker 1: male, English-speaker, from US; Speaker 2: female, Spanish-speaker, not from US; Speaker 3: male, English-speaker, from US)
2. Compare answers with elbow partner, whole group

### **Task 2: What is a 'Language'? (10-15 minutes)**

*Discussion:*

1. Review 3 speakers. The two men were both speaking 'English', but it was clearly two different kinds of English. The lady was clearly speaking Spanish.
2. How do we know the two men were speaking English, and not some other language? Because we understood what they said.

*Activity: Identify languages*

1. (Pairs in Workbooks): Classify excerpts as English, Spanish, Vietnamese, Arabic, or Portuguese.
2. Compare our answers with whole group
3. Discussion: How did you know which was which? How can we tell they are different 'languages'?
4. Decide on a definition for 'Language' and give example in 2 column chart.

*Big Idea*

It's pretty easy to categorize languages, like English and Spanish. But what about speakers like the two men, who spoke the same language but spoke it very differently?

### **Task 3: What is a 'Dialect'? (10-15 minutes)**

*Discussion*

1. Let's listen to the two men again. Do we understand what they're saying? (Ask students to listen for words they understand). How do we know they are not speaking two different languages? (Because we understand what they're saying).

- Usually, the difference between one language and another is ‘intelligibility’, or if one speaker can understand another. But that line can be very fuzzy, and can depend on if you’ve been exposed to that dialect or not. Someone who’s never been to Hawaii may not understand the second man as well as someone who grew up in Hawaii.

*Activity*

The waves at the beach were heaps good. (the waves were really good)
I didn't go nowhere.
He is always working.
He neva like dat. (He didn't want that. (or) He never wanted that. (or) He didn't like that)
It's a sair fecht. (It's a real struggle/It's hard going)

- Let’s look at a chart of sentences. Work in pairs to decide if the sentence is English or not. (Answer: All. 1 = Australian English; 2 = American English; 3 = American English; 3 = Hawaiian English; 4 = Scottish English)
- Compare answers with whole group
- Are of all these ‘English’? How do we know?
- What is each sentence saying? Do we understand all of it? Which ones do we understand completely, and which ones do we not understand?

- These are all dialects of English, which means different kinds of English that together make up the English language.
- Decide on a definition for ‘Dialect’ and give examples in 2 column chart.

*Big Idea*

It’s easier to understand Dialects we are familiar with. If we were familiar with the other Dialects (like if we lived in that area or had friends who spoke that way), we would get to understand the other Dialects too.

*Closure/Re-state Big Ideas (1-5 minutes)*

What’s the difference between a Language and a Dialect? (In general, languages are so different you can’t understand one unless you’re a speaker of. In general, dialects are similar enough that even if you don’t speak it, you can understand much of it.)

**INFORMAL ASSESSMENT**

- Language identification
- 2 column chart definitions and examples

**EXTENSION ACTIVITIES**

- Ask students to find more examples of ‘dialect’ in books in classroom. Wherever students find language, they find dialect.