Let’s Say it Another Way!

Main Purpose  To develop vocabulary, narrative skills, and literate discourse

Children learn about the symbolic and arbitrary nature of language and print. They learn that objects, people, and events can be represented through the use of different symbolic systems. They learn about the conventions of language and print and their role in the communications of a specific group or culture.

Materials  Paper, crayons, objects conveying information about different cultures

Description of the Activity  During circle time, introduce children to different ways of saying and writing common words (e.g., hello, good-bye, thank you, yes, no) in a variety of languages. If children in the class speak a language other than English, have them translate the words into their language for the class. Make labels in different languages for objects in the classroom, and draw children’s attention to them during daily activities. Display boxes of products containing print in more than one language, such as products with English and Spanish print or Canadian products with English and French print. The purpose of this activity is not for children to learn specific words in other languages but to become aware that oral and written languages are specific to social groups and cultures. Encourage discussion about other countries, cultures, and traditions.

This activity develops the following behaviors and concepts that are related to early literacy:

Print/Book Awareness

Print: book conventions, awareness of graphic symbols

Metalinguistic Awareness

Perception and memory for sounds: words, phrases

Oral Language

Vocabulary and syntax: words and sentences
Narrative skills: narrations of real events
Literate discourse: decontextualization, interpretive/analytic discourse

ADULT–CHILD INTERACTIVE BEHAVIORS

High Demand/Low Support

Children participate actively in discussions about other countries, cultures, and traditions and say words they know in other languages.
languages. They will seek definitions of words, use cognitive and metalinguistic words, and make interpretations and judgments.

**Open-ended questioning**

Ask general questions.

“What’s it like to live in Mexico?”

“What do people like to eat there?”

“What is the weather like?”

“What kinds of plants grow there?”

Encourage children to make interpretations and use cognitive and metalinguistic words.

“What do you think neko means?”

“What did you notice about the signs in Chinatown?”

**Cognitive structuring**

Explain that different words and signs are used in different languages to represent the same object.

**Task regulation**

Provide visual and other contextual cues (e.g., pictures, objects, maps) to help children identify the meaning of words in other languages.

**Instructing**

Ask direct questions.

“How do you say, ‘hello’ in Korean?”

“How do we say, ‘gato’ in English?”

Use peers as models. Provide models, and repeat request.

“The Koreans say, ‘agno’ for ‘hello.’ How do you say, ‘hello’ in Korean?”

**Medium Demand/Medium Support**

Children relate personal experiences and knowledge about countries and cultural traditions. They will describe explicit causal and temporal sequences among events and generalize experiences to other settings.

**Open-ended questioning**

Encourage children to talk about their personal experiences with other countries and cultures.

“What did you see when you visited your grandma in Puerto Rico?”

“How does your mother make tamales?”

“How do you say, ‘good night’ in Mandarin?”
**Cognitive**
- **Helping children sequence events.**
  - “First, you light the candles. Then what?”

**Task**
- **Have children talk about a relevant book read in class or at home.**
- **Have children talk about objects they have brought to school from home.**

**Instructing**
- Model by talking about your own culture and personal experiences.
  - “Here’s a story my grandfather told me about when he lived in China.”
- Ask children direct questions.
  - “How do you say, ‘hello’ in Hawaiian?”
  - “What is Ramadan?”

**Low Demand/High Support**
- Children will label and comment on objects, pictures, and events.

**Open-ended questioning**
- Ask general questions.
  - “What’s happening in this picture?”
  - “What do you use this for?”

**Task regulation**
- Have children talk about objects that are familiar and present in the immediate environment.

**Instructing**
- Ask direct questions.
  - “What’s this?”
- Ask children to label or describe an object or a picture following a peer model.
- Provide a model, and elicit a response.
  - “This is a dog. Ma is the Thai word for dog. What’s this?”

**Ideas and Adaptations**
- **Comments**
  - This activity can be integrated into a reading of folktales or a Velcro board story. Have children create books themselves. Teach children songs in different languages. Make audiotapes of people speaking in
different languages and accents. Visit ethnic stores that sell food, literature, and other objects from diverse cultures.

**More Ideas**

Use storybooks in other languages, including languages that use different writing systems (e.g., Greek, Russian, Arabic, Chinese). Create books that describe and contain words from the cultures of the children in the class.

**Home Link**

Encourage children to bring from home books and songs in other languages and articles or souvenirs from other countries or cultures.
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