

# INTRODUCTION TO THE GLOBAL MOSAIC OF LANGUAGE AND RELIGION

This introduction is designed for you to gain an appreciation that language and religion are essential elements of culture. Answer the following questions to the best of your ability on a separate sheet of paper. Every answer *must* be paraphrased into your own words. You may not plagiarize or work with another individual to answer these questions. The Honor Code must be written out and signed before you turn this in.

## **ACTIVITY 1: 100 Eskimo Words for Snow: Fact or Myth?**

There are an estimated 5,000 to 6,000 languages spoken throughout the world today. One of the great beliefs in the many languages of the world is that, "Eskimos have more than a hundred words for snow." However, is this statement true? If so, what are they? Can we really believe *everything* we hear?

Go to [The Great Inuit Vocabulary Hoax](http://www.mendosa.com/snow.html) at <http://www.mendosa.com/snow.html>

- 1) Discuss the problem with saying there is an Eskimo language.
- 2) Are there 100 words for snow in this particular language? Explain.

## **ACTIVITY 2: What's in a Name? Geographic Place Names**

In China, Mandarin Chinese place names are often determined by their geographic location. (Most words are listed in the pinyin spellings, not the older Wade-Giles system)

Go to [Chinese Place Names](http://wwwz.sjsu.edu/faculty/watkins/chinalan.htm) at [wwwz.sjsu.edu/faculty/watkins/chinalan.htm](http://wwwz.sjsu.edu/faculty/watkins/chinalan.htm)

- 3) Translate the following Chinese place names into English:

<b>Cities</b>	Shanghai	Sichuan
<b>Provinces</b>	Hunan	Shanxi
<b>Rivers</b>	Chang Jiang	Huang He
<b>Other</b>	Changbai Shan	Zhonghua

## **ACTIVITY 3: Britspeak: Same Language, Different Dialects**

Sometimes misunderstandings occur because words have multiple meanings, and meanings can change over time due to the dynamic nature of language. English has an extensive vocabulary, and words used in Great Britain may have alternate meanings than in other English-speaking countries.

Go to the [Britspeak Page](http://englishclub.8m.com/usuk1.htm) at <http://englishclub.8m.com/usuk1.htm>

Translate the following British sentences into American English by changing the underlined words (note that you can scroll to the bottom of the page to select

different lists of words):

4) The homely lad went up the lift and into his lounge to have some bubble and squeak, aubergine, and biscuits for afters.

5) The berk was over the moon when the crumpet said she'd go with him to his flat until he realized she had a bun in the oven.

#### **ACTIVITY 4: E Pluribus Unum? Living in a Multilingual Society**

The United States, with just over 300 million people, is a multilingual nation with an increasing number of international languages spoken within its borders.

There are literally millions of people in the United States who wish to keep the nation unified through a common language.

Go to [US English, Inc.](http://www.us-english.org/inc/) and read the introduction at <http://www.us-english.org/inc/>

Go to the page entitled, "**ResourceRoom.**" Answer the 10 questions and check your score.

6) Which answer was most surprising to you? Is this the first time you were aware of this organization?

7) Do you agree with the goals of US English, Inc.? Explain.

8) Review the information from the each section – Myths, Fact Sheet, and USA Population and Language Proficiency Data (choose GA for your state).

#### **ACTIVITY 5: The Great Esperanto Experiment**

Esperanto is a language that was developed in 1887 by Ludwik Zamenhof with the specific intent of creating an international second language. In 1905, Zamenhof published his *Fundamento de Esperanto*, which lays down the basic principles of the language's structure and formation. Esperanto is probably the most successful of the artificial international languages. The number of Esperanto speakers is estimated at more than 2 million. The Universala Esperanto-Asocio (founded in 1908) has members in 83 countries, and there are 50 national Esperanto associations that use Esperanto. More than 30,000 books have been published in Esperanto. (*Britannica*)

Go to the <http://www.travlang.com/languages/> Page at <http://www.travlang.com/languages/>

Select English for the language you speak, and Esperanto for the language you want to learn. Select Basic Words and translate the following into Esperanto:

8) What is your name?, How are you?; Now select Shopping/Dining and translate the following into Esperanto: Do you accept credit cards?, Cheers!

9) Now, experiment and have some fun on your own. Do you ever envision a future with one universal language? Why or why not?

#### **ACTIVITY 6: The Great Pop vs. Soda Controversy**

Since the earliest research into the English Language as spoken in North America was begun by Noah Webster in the early 18th century, the regional



variations in dialect have always been the most challenging and difficult to explain field. Since the development of carbonated beverage in 1886, one of *linguistic geography's* most important (?) and least investigated phenomena has been the sharp regional divisions in the use of the terms "pop" and "soda."

**Go to [Pop vs. Soda](#); read the Abstract and the Introduction.**

Click on the [Map of the U.S.](#) Analyze the map.

7) Click on Georgia to see the county data. What county do you live in and what is the statistical breakdown?

8) Go back to the map of the U.S. and discuss any trends you find. Do you notice any *linguistic islands*?

OPTIONAL: Identify another word that has several other slang words associated with it. Hypothesize where in the U.S. the slang words are used.