Babel

Description: a simulation in which participants have to create a language and then try learning one

Aim: to experience a few of the many frustrations and challenges created by language barriers

Audience: teen-agers or adults, any number of people, minimum 8

Time: 35 minutes

Equipment: scrap paper and pencils

Scriptures to Study: Genesis 11:1–8

Wycliffe BIBLE TRANSLATORS

www.wycliffe.org
1-800-WYCLIFFE
1-800-992-5433

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Leader's Instructions:

1. Hand out pencils and paper to each member of the audience. Divide the group into small teams of 4–6 each.
2. Read out the Audience's Instructions Part 1.
3. After 10 minutes, ask the participants to pair up with someone from another group and read out Audience's Instructions Part 2.
4. After 10 minutes, allow the pairs time to find out from each other how much they actually understood.
5. Invite 2 pairs to demonstrate their languages in front of everyone.
6. Use the Talk Back section to debrief after the simulation is over.

Audience's Instructions:

Part 1:

Each of your groups must create your own brand new language. This language must be significantly different from English and include both actions and words. The language only needs to include:

- a greeting
- a description of some object, or person (i.e. a tall woman)
- an evaluative statement about an object or person (i.e. delicious chocolate cake)
- a farewell

Each of your groups has 10 minutes to invent your language, write it down and practice the phrases and actions. Ready? Go!

Part 2:

Pair up with someone from a different group. Each of you must now teach your language to the other person in their pair, without using any language known to both of you, including English or Pig Latin! At the end of 10 minutes, every one of you should know two sets of words and actions. Ready? Go!

Discussion and Application:

1. Focus on what happened during the simulation:

- How successful were you in communicating your phrases?
- What methods did you try in learning and teaching?

2. Focus on how the participants felt:
- How did it feel to be a teacher?
- How did it feel to be a learner?

3. Focus on what we can learn through this simulation:
- What did you learn about yourself as a teacher or learner?
- How important is good communication?
- How does this simulation apply to Christian workers overseas?

Comments and Personal Application:

Over 6,000 distinct languages are spoken in the world today. Wycliffe Bible Translators and others work hard to break through language barriers with the Good News of Jesus Christ, because we believe all people deserve God's Word in a language they can understand.

Wycliffe provides college classes on how to learn an unwritten language, analyze it, and begin to translate. (Don't you wish YOU'D had some of those techniques for what we just did?)

How does God want you to be involved in getting His Word to people who still wait? Could you pray? Could you give? Could you go? Let's stop now and pray. Thank God for your Bible in a language you can read. Then ask Him what He wants you to do in order to help get the Bible to people who don't yet have theirs. (Quiet prayer time.)

Optional Extras: A leader can write the list of phrases participants are to create to avoid repeating them time and again. Use a blackboard, erasable white board or large poster paper.

Combine this activity with any of the following available from Wycliffe Bible Translators, 1-800-WYCLIFFE or 1-800-992-5433:

- "Did You Know?" (workpage with International Phonetic Alphabet)
- "It's Not Impossible" (another *Bright Ideas!* activity)
- Bibleless Peoples Prayer Project (pray until they have a Bible)
- Seed Company Project (buy a verse in a Bible translation project)
- Your own lesson on the Tower of Babel!

Suggested Reading: Enjoy *In Search of the Source* and *Poking Holes in the Darkness* available through Wycliffe Bible Translators.

Notes: