



How to Say Thanks in Many Languages

Topic

How to Say Thanks in Many Languages: A Companion Lesson to *Not This Turkey*

Grade Level

Kindergarten -3rd Grade

Goals for Lesson/Activity

Students will be able to:

- Recognize the word *thanks* in historic languages associated with the Jewish community
- Say *thank you* in the languages of the countries with the largest Jewish populations
- Explain the concept of *hachnasat orchim*—welcoming strangers

Materials Needed

- Copy of the book, *Not this Turkey*
- “Thanks and Welcome in Many Languages” (separate download)
- Black or Whiteboard and writing implements
- Globe or map of the world (optional)
- Your regular “snack” or, if one is not usually provided, a simple snack over which students can say a blessing (be careful to check on possible food allergies before choosing a snack).

Background or Teachers

Etymology of the word “*hodu*”

In this lesson, two meanings of the Hebrew word *hodu* are highlighted. The first is the word for turkey. It is a short form of the phrase *tarnigol hodu*. *Tarnigol* in Hebrew means rooster. “*Hodu*” in this case refers to India as seen in the first chapter of the book of Esther, where it says that King Ahashuerus reigned from Hodu to Kush, or India to Ethiopia. Many languages feature a reference to India in their words for turkey, including the Yiddish word, *Indik*, featured in *Not This Turkey*. The name comes from the association of the bird with North America, where it is indigenous. As is well known, the first Europeans who reached North America mistakenly thought they were in India, hence the name. (Interestingly, the North American name for the bird also comes from the mistaken thought that the turkey was a guinea fowl, which ended up in Europe by way of Turkey).

It is simply coincidence that the word for turkey and one of the conjugations of the word for thanks, *l'hodot*, are homonyms. You might be familiar with a more common form, *todah*, or *modeh (modeh ani)* found in prayer.

Origins of Languages associated with Jewish Culture

Throughout the centuries, the Jewish people, living in many different countries, often learned (and sometimes prayed and studied in) the language of the land.

Aramaic

One of the early languages to hold a place in Jewish culture is Aramaic, a Semitic language like Hebrew. Scholars believe that Aramaic had replaced Hebrew as a dominant language by the 6th century BCE. The biblical books Daniel and Ezra, as well as the Talmud, are written in Aramaic.



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Ladino

Ladino traces its roots to Spain before 1492 and uses the grammar and vocabulary of 15th century Spanish. Historically, Ladino was spoken in countries including Israel, Egypt, Greece, France, Italy, Bulgaria, Romania, Bosnia, Serbia, Turkey and North Africa. Ladino was once written in Hebrew, in Rashi script, but is now written using the Latin alphabet.

Yiddish

Yiddish is the language of Ashkenazi Jews, historically those living in or hailing from Central or Eastern Europe. The word Yiddish means Jewish. The grammar and vocabulary are Germanic. Yiddish also contains words from Hebrew and Aramaic, among other languages. Yiddish is written using the Hebrew alphabet. Before World War II, nearly two thirds of the world's Jewish population spoke Yiddish; they lived in places such as Ukraine, Romania, Poland, Hungary, Lithuania, and Belarus.

Prepare in Advance

Read *Not this Turkey*.

Read the “Thank You in Many Languages” guide. Practice pronouncing each word. One resource for pronunciation is www.forvo.com.

Description of Activities

1. *Not This Turkey*

Gather the students in the reading area, if your classroom has one, or in the library, or comfortably on the floor. Read the book aloud.

If you choose, and time permits, ask students to react to the book by posing a few questions. Suggestions include:

- What was your favorite part of the book?
- The Silberklang family celebrated Thanksgiving with aunts and uncles and cousins. Who celebrates with you?
- The Silberklangs ate their favorite side dishes from their German-Jewish heritage. What is your favorite Jewish food? What is your favorite Thanksgiving food?

2. *What's Another Word for Turkey?*

Ask students if they remember what the family named the turkey. (Indik)

Tell them that the Hebrew word for turkey is “*hodu*.” The whole name for a turkey in Hebrew is *tarnigol hodu* or Indian rooster—turkeys are native to North America, which early explorers thought was India—the word for turkey in many languages, including Yiddish, references India. Practice saying the word either in a round, one after the other, or having students repeat after you.

Ask the students if they know how to say thank you in Hebrew. The most likely answer will be *todah* or *todah rabbah* (thank you very much).

Let students know that there are many prayers in Judaism that use similar sounding words that all mean thank you. They all come from the same root word. Among these we find:

- *Modeh Ani*
- *Tov L'hodot*
- *Hodu L'adonai*



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Optional: You might choose to play musical clips of these prayers or prayer fragments, all of which can be found on YouTube.

3. How Do You Say, “Thank You” in....?

Now that students know how to say turkey in two languages, and that the word for turkey and the word for thanks are connected, students will learn how to say thank you in languages historically spoken by the Jewish people.

Remind people that the Silberklangs spoke a foreign language. Ask any of the students if they remember what the language is called. Let them know that, just like eating familiar foods, it's likely that they also gave thanks in Yiddish.

Teach the children to say thank you in Yiddish (on the Thanks and Welcome in Foreign Languages sheet).

Remind them that they already likely know how to say thank you in Hebrew. Practice this.

Let them know that in the past, there were other “Jewish” languages as well, Aramaic and Ladino. Practice the names of these languages as well as how to say thanks in these languages.

4. How do Jewish People Say Thank You?

Remind the students that the Silberklangs came to America from a different country (Germany). Ask if they remember what this country was called. Show them a map or a globe and ask for guesses as to where most Jewish people live today. The list is as follows: Israel, US, France, Canada, UK, Russia, Argentina, Germany, Australia, and Brazil.

If you have time, learn how to say thanks in some of the languages spoken in these countries.

5. You're welcome.

In the book, the Silberklangs invite a bunch of people to their apartment for Thanksgiving. Ask students if they remember who they invited. When their guests came into their home, they probably welcomed them in Yiddish.

Using the Thanks and Welcome in Many Languages resource, teach students to welcome people into their homes using a host of foreign languages. Ask students what it feels like when someone welcomes you into their home. Ask them to imagine how it must feel if you don't understand anything that people are saying and then all of a sudden someone speaks their language. Optional: Role play this idea using gibberish.

6. Snack

Remind students that though Thanksgiving is a special time, we give thanks for food all of the time. Lead students in the appropriate blessing and eat.



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Differentiation Options

Knowing that students learn in a variety of ways and modalities, the following options are provided to adjust the above lesson to meet the unique needs of your learners.

For learners needing more assistance:

- You might consider teaching “thanks” and “welcome” in one or two languages instead of eight.
- If auditory processing is difficult, you might have students draw pictures of people giving thanks and welcoming guests.

For learners who desire opportunities for extension:

- Ask them to create Thanksgiving—or other holiday—cards in Yiddish and Russian (or another language depending on your locale) for local senior citizen groups.
- With an adult’s help, have them research an area with a small Jewish population and learn to say thanks and welcome in the local language.