Animals of the World

THEME: CULTURAL CONTEXTS (ANIMALS; ENVIRONMENT)

LANGUAGE: ANY

STANDARD(S):

COMMUNICATION	CULTURES	CONNECTIONS
1.2 1.3	2.2	3.1

Time Frame:

Two 50-minute class sessions

Materials Needed:

- A (large) world map, clearly showing the continents

- Pictures of animals in the world

- Reference books, etc. for gathering information on the animals (one reading in French on *le rhinocéros* is provided)

- Large index cards for making the description cards

- A box for placing the description cards

Description of Task:

Context:

This activity could be done prior to a visit to the zoo (preferably one that corresponds to the language days scheduled at the zoo). In an immersion setting, it may coincide with science lessons on animals and their habitats. This activity is intended to function like a game during which various teams earn points based on their answers.

Preparation for the game—the writing task:

Pre-writing:

The teacher reviews present tense and formation of simple sentences (e.g., subject, verb, object). Gender and number agreement are also reviewed, if applicable.

Level:
Novice-High

Purpose:
To describe and understand characteristics of animals

Communicative Function(s):
Referential: Describing something; understanding descriptions

Language Structure(s):
Present tense; simple sentence construction; gender/number agreement

Cultural Aspects:
Animals in the natural environment

Modalities:
Writing

Reading

Listening

Speaking

Writing activity:

In pairs, students are assigned the name of an animal and are asked to create a description card providing five "clues" about the animal. The pairs may need to do some research about the animal using reference books, the Internet, etc. (One reading in French titled "*Le rhinocéros*" is provided to show the types of resources students will need to consult to create the description cards.) The description card contains five categories (presented in the target language). The necessary vocabulary for the categories should be taught using the target language, the world map, pictures, etc. The class should create a description card together so that the construction of simple sentences using accurate present tense formation and gender/number agreement is modeled before pairs are assigned to write descriptions. A description card created for the elephant may look like the following:

1. Continent and habitat: It lives on the plain in Africa (or India).

2. Food: It's a herbivore.

3. Color(s):   It's gray.

4. Most noticeable characteristic: It has a trunk.

5. Special ability (what makes it unique from other animals?):
       It lives within strong, highly protective, matriarchal communities.

It is important for the teacher to assign a variety of animals covering many continents, types of habitats, etc. Students should be instructed to create complete sentences on the description cards. The description cards are collected by the teacher and assessed before the game takes place on the next day.

The game:

Students will be placed into at least five teams. Each team needs to assign various roles to the team members: a "card-reader," an "answer-giver," a "point-keeper" and a "facilitator," whose job it is to call on teams that are ready to make a guess. All the description cards that students prepared are placed in a box. A "card-reader" is selected from one team and a "facilitator" from another team. The "card-reader" will pick a card from the box and read all the clues on the card one at a time, pausing between clues. The rest of the class works cooperatively in their teams to try to guess the name of the animal with as few clues as possible. The "facilitator" watches the teams to look for the first hand that is raised and to call on the "answer-giver" for that team.

The "answer-givers" representing the teams can make a guess at any time by raising their hands and being called on by the "facilitator." If they can give the correct answer after the first clue, they will receive five points. They will get four points for giving the correct answer after the second clue, three points after the third clue, two points after the fourth clue, and finally one point after the fifth clue. However, if they guess incorrectly, they must subtract points from their total (one point if they guess incorrectly after only one clue, two points after two clues, etc.). The "point-keeper" is responsible for keeping track of all the points the team earns.

For the next round, the "card-reader" from the team that correctly identified the animal in the previous round will pick up a card and read the clues. A "facilitator" from another team is selected. The game continues until all cards are read.

Assessment:

The description cards can be evaluated on the basis of points: one point for each category for accuracy of content, accuracy of sentence formation (including correct use of present tense), and accuracy of gender and number agreement. The total number of points possible is 15. The teacher can assess students' performance informally as the game takes place.

Extensions:

Suggestions for adapting the task for various levels:

For advanced levels: More categories can be added. Animals (or other topics) sharing many characteristics can be described to make the game more challenging. As a team makes a guess, they can also be responsible for providing the information in the categories that were not read.

Other extensions:

- Students can study endangered species of a particular country (e.g., Senegal) and create "protest posters" that provide brief descriptions of the animals and indicate the reason why they are endangered. The posters can be displayed in the school or at the zoo.

• Students can write a fixed-form poem (Shrum & Glisan, 1994, pp. 183-184). An example follows:

> l'éléphant
> robuste, patient
> abatte les arbres
> j'adore les trompes
> le tronc

Cultural extensions:

• Students can focus on the animals of other countries where the target language is spoken and study them in more detail. Animals with cultural significance may be incorporated (such as animals that appear in popular target culture folktales or the twelve animals of the zodiac in Chinese and Japanese).

• Topics having more cultural significance may be chosen (e.g., holidays or celebrations; political parties; countries where the target language is spoken; historical events, etc.).

References and Resources:

Shrum, J., & Glisan, E.(1994). *Teacher's handbook: Contextualized language instruction.* Boston: Heinle & Heinle.

Le rhinocéros text is from:

Schier, M. (1967). *Animaus des tropiques*. Paris: Odège-Press.

Senegalese children's publication for more information on animals in French:

Gune yi, le journal des enfants.
BP 15
115 Dakar, Senegal

Reflections:

Le rhinocéros

Rhinocéros de Sumatra; espèce en voie de disparition. Le plus petit de la famille des rhinocéros. Il pèse à peine une tonne. On trouve également, en Asie, le rhinocéros Indien et le rhinocéros de Java.

Le rhinocéros est, après l'éléphant, l'animal le plus lourd. Il pèse de 2 à 3 tonnes et peut faire dérailler un train. Sa peau est si dure qu'une balle de fusil ne la transperce pas.

Il y a deux sortes de rhinocéros: ceux d'Afrique qui ont deux cornes, et ceux d'Asie qui, pour la plupart, n'en possèdent qu'une. Ils habitent de préférence les régions marécageuses et se nourrissent de végétaux.

Généralement, le rhinocéros passe l'après-midi à dormir dans quelque coin ombragé. A la tombée de la nuit, il se dirige vers le fleuve ou le marais. Il marche lentement, à pas pesants; puis, par lubie, il peut charger droit devant lui sans bien voir, et sans savoir pourquoi.

Il peut atteindre des vitesses telles, que ses pattes semblent quitter le sol.

Cet animal lourd a la vue faible, mais l'odorat et l'ouïe très développés. Il peut charger un ennemi réel, comme un chasseur, mais il peut tout aussi bien s'en prendre à un arbre.

Il peut brouter pendant des heures puis, soudain, sans raison, s'attaquer à un zèbre ou à une girafe.

Pour le mettre en colère, il suffit parfois d'être sur le chemin qui conduit à son point d'eau habituel.

Elle est impressionnante cette énorme masse aux tout petits yeux noirs! Mais Gunther, l'oiseau appelé pique-bœuf, n'a pas peur de lui. Le rhinocéros est assez tranquille...

Gunther se pose sur son dos.

Sur le coup, le rhinocéros s'agite un peu. Vite, Gunther le débarrasse des petits moustiques qui le harcèlent. Le rhinocéros s'en va au petit trot, mais Gunther ne s'envole pas.

Tête de rhinocéros bicorne ou noir. Espèce qui vit en Afrique. Il mesure 4 mètres de long pour 1,70 m de hauteur.

— Bon! dit le rhinocéros; si tu veux rester avec moi, il faut que tu me donnes quelque chose en échange.

L'oiseau réfléchit un petit moment:

— Je suis d'accord! dit-il. Je te préviendrai si un ennemi arrive.

L'après-midi se passe, et le soir le rhinocéros va boire.

L'oiseau est toujours là.

La nuit tombe, le jour revient, et plusieurs jours s'écoulent.

Le rhinocéros s'inquiète:

— Tu ne bouges pas?...

— Mais pourquoi veux-tu donc que je bouge? demande le pique-bœuf. Il ne se passe rien. Attends!... Il faut me faire confiance.

Le rhinocéros, ne sachant quoi dire, n'a plus qu'à patienter et à s'occuper comme tous les jours.

Mais, avec cet oiseau sur son dos, comment faire?... Ce n'est pas facile!

Tout à coup, au milieu des milles bruits de la brousse, un léger craquement.

Gunther s'envole, le rhinocéros détale, un coup de feu claque!

— Manqué! s'exclame le chasseur, dépité.

Pendant ce temps, à quelques kilomètres de là, le rhinocéros s'arrête pour reprendre son souffle.

Avant qu'il puisse s'en apercevoir, Gunther est de nouveau sur son dos.

Cette fois, sans un mot, l'accord est conclu: c'est à la vie, à la mort; ils ne se quitteront plus!