The Drift Curve

Student handout · about 30 minutes

Name: Class: Date:

1. THE TEST SENTENCE

Original:

Find these in the sentence and label them: **R** = register (words that make it polite or formal), **G** = gender (words that tell you if someone is male or female), **A** = an abstract idea, **C** = a concrete noun (something you could photograph).

2. PREDICT: WHAT GETS LOST FIRST?

Number them from 1 (lost first) to 4 (lasts longest).

REGISTER	GENDER	ABSTRACT IDEA	CONCRETE NOUNS

I think _____ will be lost first because

3. TRACK THE DRIFT

Each time, write what came back. Then mark each column **K** = kept, **Ch** = changed, or **L** = lost.

CHAIN	WHAT CAME BACK	REGISTER	GENDER	ABSTRACT	CONCRETE
3 languages					
5 languages					
10 languages					

4. EXPLAIN IT

1. What got lost first? Did you predict it?

2. Why do concrete nouns hold up so well?

3. If "he" or "she" changed, which language in the chain made the translator guess?

4. How does the language you're learning show politeness? How would a machine know which form to use?