

# India

Driving our culturally responsive teaching practices is the belief that we must take time to learn about our English Language Learning students and their families' invaluable personal, cultural, social, and world experiences. We can draw from these strength based understandings to create instructional opportunities that are meaningful, purposeful, and appealing to our students.

The country of India houses one of the world's oldest cultures and has been subjected to a plethora of language influences. There is no official language in India, though Hindi is the official language of the government and English is considered a subsidiary official language. The Constitution of India officially recognizes 23 official languages.

- The primary languages spoken are: Hindi 41%, Bengali 8.1%, and Telugu 7.2%,
- English is used primarily in business, and for economic and political purposes.
- Language is regional and dialects play a role in the variety of languages spoken throughout India.



Family values are highly respected throughout India and are fundamental in daily life. The structure of the family is patriarchal.

- Families often live with three or four generations in the same household.
- Elders may be addressed as 'Sir' or 'Ma'am'.
- An older female may be referred to as 'Auntie', even if unrelated, and younger males may be referred to as 'little brother'.
- Men will often shake hands with other men when meeting or leaving but will not usually attempt to shake hands with women.
- Some Indian women may shake hands with a western woman.

Non-verbal communication carries specific meaning in Indian culture.

- Some gestures can be easily misinterpreted – a western hand wave from side to side can mean 'no' or 'go-away' in India.
- Use your right hand to touch, accept or give something.
- Pointing, with either one or two fingers, is considered rude and used for inferiors only.
- When a head is jerked back, or moved in a figure of eight, this usually means 'yes'.

**Please note:** Each of the families attending your school are unique. While it is so important to educate ourselves about cultures other than our own, it is equally important to avoid grouping students into a single category or make assumptions about a student based on what you know to be true of his or her culture. Learning the history and background of students is just one piece of understanding your students. If you would like to learn more about the culture present in India please connect with your families at your school and take a look at the attached websites.

[Commisceo-global.com](http://Commisceo-global.com) - India Guide

[livescience.com](http://livescience.com) - Indian Culture