

Breaking Down Language Barriers: Impacts on Education

Course Information

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This course is targeted towards freshmen with a Liberal Studies major. As a teacher it is important to connect with all students no matter their culture. Unfortunately, language often comes between the learner and the teacher, making effective education difficult. This course is a great opportunity for Liberal Studies majors to understand why a language barrier impacts learners and how to combat this issue.

Course Description

This course is designed for students to understand the impracticalities of learning for students with a language barrier as well as the ineffectiveness of many English Language Learner programs. The first half of the course outlines the variety of different issues associated with Hispanic students in the United States, and how these issues relate to their education. The second half of the course discusses the implementation of English Language Learner programs and their effectiveness. Students will research, analyze, and discuss the varying issues associated with students experiencing language barriers in school.

Course Schedule

Unit 1: Impacts of Effective Education on Hispanic Speakers

BIG Question: <i>In what ways do Hispanic-speaking students experience unequal education? Have you noticed or experienced this throughout your education?</i>
Argument of the Unit: <i>Hispanic students' educations are spared compared to those of English speakers; a lack of effective resources and help from home create an educational gap caused by language.</i>
Key Words: <i>Bilingualism, indigenous, education gap, language attainment, monolingual</i>
Link to Reading: <i>School Inequality and Language Barriers</i>
Annotation of Reading: <i>In "Schooling Inequality and Language Barriers" published by Susan Parker, Rubalcava, and Graciela Teruel, a students' ability to succeed educationally is analyzed according to their primary speaking language. It is argued that students who speak Spanish and have a low socioeconomic status are more likely to receive a worse education compared to those of native English speakers in the United States. This article uses the native language of the students' parents to demonstrate the severity of the lack of resources at home and in the classroom. Throughout the article, there is an extensive amount of research conducted in the late 1990's that highlights the effects of education due to native language, parents' language, age, and socioeconomic status. Additionally, the concept of bilingual education is introduced, demonstrating how to open the barrier between public schools and students who speak other languages. This article contains an impressive amount of</i>

research on the Spanish language barrier, the impacts, and some resolutions for students. The article proves to be a great introductory source to this course, emphasizing the issue and the need for change in the United States education system.

Unit 2: Negative Effects of Poverty on Education for Hispanic Learners

BIG Question: *How does one's socioeconomic status determine the effectiveness and outcomes of their education?*

Argument of the Unit: *In addition to a student's heritage, their socioeconomic status plays a major role in the completion of a high school education, affecting their lives beyond school.*

Key Words: *Bilingualism, educational attainment, language proficiencies, biliterate, residential context*

Link to Reading: [Barriers to High-School Completion Among Immigrant and Later-Generation Latinos in the USA](#)

Annotation of Reading: In the article, "Barriers to High-School Completion Among Immigrant and Later-Generations in the USA", Amy Lutz focuses her research on Hispanic students in the high school level and beyond. Lutz highlights the unfortunate effects of poor socioeconomic status on the completion of high school as well as the necessity of bilingual education for native Spanish speakers in English schools. Lutz incorporates data on dropouts and lack of enrollment of Hispanic students nationwide, demonstrating the reality of unequal education for these students in the country. An interesting point is also discussed: the impacts of generations and heritage (Mexico, Cuba, etc) on educational success. This article shares similar points to the article used in unit one; however, it focuses more on family background and how it impacts student success in higher levels of education. The research provided fits well with this course, showing how language truly can dictate success in school. Much of the research highlights the need for improved schooling for immigrant and native-Hispanic speakers in the United States.

Unit 3: Background, Impacts, and Resources for Hispanic Learners in the US

BIG Question: *What are the impacts of students who experience bilingual education? Are current bilingual programs adequate for Hispanic students?*

Argument of the Unit: *While bilingualism is necessary for Hispanic student success in school and beyond, there is no direct curriculum for teachers, making the resources and knowledge for effective programs inadequate.*

Key Words: *Bilingual education, linguistic rights, multilingualism, cultural awareness, Anglo-American*

Link to Reading: [Hispanic Education At the Crossroads](#)

Annotation of Reading: In the video, “Hispanic Education at the Crossroads”, MG Perin evaluates the quality of schools nationwide for Hispanic students. With interviews from students, teachers, and education board members, the video makes it clear that Hispanic students are not getting the resources or attention that they need for higher education and beyond. According to the video, it is not solely the responsibility of the schools to implement better programs, rather the parents, the child, and the community must come together to create more effective education. With a concentration on schools in Miami, Florida and New York, the video features an excess of information on bilingual education. According to Miami school board members, bilingualism is necessary for students to succeed in their school system; however, there is no national curriculum on how to teach bilingualism to Hispanic or English students. In Florida and New York, bilingual programs are implemented in order to give students confidence in learning English while still speaking their native language in some classes. The variety of viewpoints in this video make this resource a great addition to this course. Hearing student, teacher, and education leaders’ opinions on English education give insight into the positive and negative aspects of English language learner programs. Additionally, having a video source allows visual representation of what some of these programs look like and who is involved in them.

Unit 4: Introduction to English Language Learners

BIG Question: *In what ways does bilingualism hurt and help students? Is this the most effective approach to assimilating Hispanic students?*

Argument of the Unit: *While bilingual programs aim to help Hispanic students entering English programs, their limited resources often lead to academic setbacks and little achievement in the school system.*

Key Words: *developmental bilingualism, transitional bilingualism, scaffolding, self-contained, ESL/ELL*

Link to Reading: [*Addressing the Language Barrier: English Language Learners, Bilingual Education, and Learning Support*](#)

Annotation of Reading: In “Addressing the Language Barrier: English Language Learners, Bilingual Education, and Learning Supports”, Katheryn Munguia discusses the differences between English language learners and bilingual students. While English language learners often face the most daunting educational curriculum, they are given the least qualifying teachers, the worst resources, and are alienated from students who speak English. According to data, case studies, and laws incorporated throughout the article, the current conditions for these students leave little room for achievement; it is almost as if these students were set up for failure. This article explains how bilingualism is not the same as English language learners, rather bilingual programs are used to help students develop English. With the right bilingual programs, students should be proficient in reading, writing, speaking, and listening to English within four to seven years. This article discusses how bilingualism appears to be a good thing in theory. However, it gives a counter-argument, suggesting necessary change in school systems to help English language learners. Giving a thorough description of English language learners and bilingualism, this article serves as a great resource for our discussion of Hispanic learners in this course.

Unit 5: The Reality Behind English Language Learner Programs

BIG Question: *Are there practical and universal ways to implement successful English language programs in all levels of education throughout the United States? What would this look like?*

Argument of the Unit: *While a negative stigma surrounds ELL programs throughout the United States, they are methods and strategies to follow to ensure Hispanic student success.*

Key Words: *Lau vs. Nichols, LEP/LM students, top-down strategy, whole-school approach, bilingual/sheltered methods*

Link to Reading: [Promoting the Success of Latino Language-Minority Students: An Exploratory Study of Six High Schools](#)

Annotation of Reading: In the article, “Promoting the Success of Latino Language-Minority Students: An Exploratory Study of Six High Schools” Tamara Lucas, Rosemary Henze, and Ruben Donato discuss the successes of six secondary schools educating Hispanic students. Within the introduction, it is argued that English language programs are necessary for Hispanic students, but they are not implemented properly after the elementary level. Programs in secondary school and beyond are important for students to receive a degree and obtain jobs following graduation. Collecting qualitative and quantitative data from five high schools in California and one in Arizona, researchers found several key features within each program that ensured success for students. Among these features, some include: value on students’ language/culture, minority staff in teaching positions, variety of courses offered for English language learners, and parents and whole-school involvement. Overall, this experiment was designed to help failing programs in order for Hispanic learners to prosper in English Schools. This article offers a different viewpoint on Hispanic learners than many of the other resources in the course and acts as a counter-argument to the negative stigma associated with ELL programs in the United States. The data provided demonstrates that some programs are beneficial for students, but it highlights that many need intense improvements to match the success of these six high schools.

Unit 6: Graphics and Inside Look into English Language Learner Programs Nationwide

BIG Question: *How are English language programs implemented across the country? Why are some states creating better programs than others?*

Argument of the Unit: *A compilation of state standards, lack of funding, poor parental involvement, and teacher shortages leads to the ultimate and unfortunate failure for students who often need the most help to succeed; representations of statewide programs prove the failure of these programs.*

Key Words: *ESL/ELL, transitional bilingual, dual-language, dual-immersion, gifted*

Link to Reading: [English Language Learners: How Your State Is Doing](#)

Annotation of Reading: In Claudio Sanchez’s article, “English Language Learners: How Your State is Doing”, the horrors of ELL programs are exposed according to each state. The article begins by displaying multiple graphics pertaining to statistics on English language learners. Surprisingly, many of these students were born in the United States, demonstrating the potential lack of parental involvement and the failure to learn English in lower levels of education. The article discusses the three types of programs offered, all of which have poor practices and standards that are rarely followed. Sanchez proves that these programs are lacking by the shocking graduation rates of English language learners. On average, in all but one state ELL students are less likely to graduate than English students. In many cases, ELL students are more than 50% likely to drop out than English students. In addition to poor programs, Sanchez discusses how teacher shortages and lack of teacher qualification plays a major role in the failures of ELL students. This article provides clear visual representations of the negative aspects

of these programs for struggling Hispanic students. Acting as a great resource for this course, the data represented displays the necessity to create better programs with more qualified teachers.

Unit 7: *Teacher's Role in ELL Education*

BIG Question: *In what ways do teachers affect English language learners? What are some realistic solutions to provide Hispanic students with the best education possible?*

Argument of the Unit: *While many teachers prove to be unqualified and given little resources to provide Hispanic students with an effective education, there are strategies and programs to lead to student success.*

Key Words: *No Child Left Behind (NCLB), linguistic, inservice educators, professional development, multicultural education*

Link to Reading: [*Teachers' Perceptions of ELL Education: Potential Solutions to Overcome the Greatest Challenges*](#)

Annotation of Reading: In Ellen Batt's article, "Teachers' Perceptions of ELL Education: Potential Solutions to Overcome the Greatest Challenges", challenges and solutions for English language programs in Idaho were researched. Survey responses and interview questions were used in order to gather data about the issues associated with ELL programs and how these could be fixed to create student success. The participants in this study were teachers working with a large group of Hispanic students who genuinely wanted to see a positive change in the program. The teacher's responses concluded that the major issues associated with the failure of their programs were lack of qualifications and understanding of the culture of their students. Their solutions included intense professional development (training, ELL teaching methods, new curriculum, etc.) as well as restructuring of teachers and new teachers. Batt concludes the article by expressing the necessity for these changes to be made; ELL students deserve a fair education with effective resources. This article provides an alternative viewpoint to the English language learner programs than many of the other resources in this course. Instead of seeing the issues from the outside looking in, this article provides insiders' voices as teachers. Acting as an interesting viewpoint, this article provides a rich addition and conclusion to this course by discussing not only the issues associated with Hispanic learners, but some feasible solutions that can be put into effect.