Language in Human Life: A GE Course Targeting English Language Learners

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Language in Human Life: A Cross-Cultural, English Learner-Friendly GE Course

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Language in Human Life: Three Primary Goals

1. Introduces the “disciplinary lens” of linguistics to the larger campus
2. Supports English language learners (listed as a “cross-cultural” course)
3. Draws on the knowledge and experiences of monolingual and multilingual English users in order to deepen understanding of linguistic issues
Secondary Goal

- Recruit new students in the Linguistics emphasis (and, in the future, new Linguistics minors)
Course Texts


• YouTube, excerpts from The Linguists, and other videos

• International Dialects of English Archive
Emphasis on Reflection: Examining Our Own Beliefs

- Pre-/Post-course questionnaire of language beliefs
- Peer feedback, discussion
- Cross-linguistic investigations of socioling. norms
- Dialect mini-surveys (e.g., Harvard Dialect Survey--
  http://www4.uwm.edu/FLL/linguistics/dialect/maps.html)
- Language Observation Journal
- Attend conference on multilingualism
Some of the course learning outcomes

• Compare your beliefs about language to the positions that linguists usually take.

• Demonstrate an understanding that members of different cultures and/or communities see, interpret, and experience the world differently, have different language structures to express such differences—adaptation of a U. L. O.

• Articulate several social factors in how and why languages vary.

• Explain to non-linguists what linguistics is.
ELL-Friendly Strategies

- Most critical strategy: Draw on multilingual student knowledge and experiences for course content
  - Treats English learners’ knowledge as a resource
  - Breaks down the “deficit” model of language proficiency
  - Creates a community of cross-linguistic inquiry
Other ELL-Friendly Strategies

• Model how to listen well and communicate clearly
• Use multiple forms of delivery and assessment
• Support reading (pre-reading, highlighting, etc.)
• Offer multiple opportunities for revision
• Vary the participant structures
During our Round Robin discussion

- Setting up the course as “cross-cultural”
- Conference on Culture, Identity, and Language
- Course assignments and questionnaire
- Cross-cultural courses at other institutions:
  - World Englishes
  - Developmental Writing (Identity and Literacy)
  - Multicultural Rhetorics
- Any textbook or assignment suggestions?
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THANK YOU