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Building Inclusive Linguistics Classrooms:
Empowerment, Engagement in Cross-Disciplinary Training & Cultural Self-examination

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Creating More Just and Inclusive Learning Experiences
Linguistic Society of America
LANGUAGE UNDER A MICROSCOPE
Race, Ethnic Identity…
Education/Literacy…
Culture/Experience/Age
Gender
Religion/belief system
Status, class, socio-economic status

Language
• Language can be the door to Justice and Inclusion.

• Linguistic expertise does **NOT** translate into inclusive learning

• It does not mean being culturally sensitive, or an inclusion expert
INCLUSION IN THE CLASSROOM

• We all come with diverse
  • experiences,
  • world views,
  • attitudes,
  • Values,
  • Expectations

• Diversity & Inclusion mean different things to different people
WHAT IS AN INCLUSIVE CLASSROOM?
BOTTOM-UP APPROACH (AUGUST 2020)

• Name, pronouns, nickname
• What drew you to this class? (targeted instruction)
• How will you attend class?
• What is your vision of an excellent University class?
• Plans after graduation?
• What does an inclusive class mean to you?
WHAT DOES AN INCLUSIVE CLASS MEAN TO YOU? (PITT LING STUDENTS, AUGUST 2020)

• “Fully adapting to online students even if the class operates in person; acknowledging the black lives matter movement and how minority students are treated at a PWI would allow for minority students to trust that professor; offering support for the students who are online acknowledging we’re in an economic downturn which means students who may not have worked before are juggling being a full time student AND a worker”
• “Everyone is open minded and all perspectives are welcome for discussion”

• “Respect in classroom discussion, valuing diverse thought”

• “A space where one can be uplifted, no matter what.”

• “Inclusivity means a class that is fair, honest, and fostered by a professor that is accessible.”

• “By understanding that because I am a remote student, I may not be available for synchronous lectures”

• “A class where all students are treated equally and feel safe expressing opinions and asking questions.”
“Beyond the cookie cutter definition of inclusivity, I think it’s really important that some peoples voices are uplifted more than others. For example, I think there should be an effort to allow for a shy person to speak rather than listening to the person who always speaks share their thoughts. While everyone's thoughts and opinions are important, I think this class will touch on a lot of topics like race, sex, gender, ethnicity etc and I think it's important that we maybe set guidelines on how we talk about those subjects beforehand, so that if an issue comes up, we can have a way to address it.”

“I don’t want to feel constantly under attack”
BASIC COMPONENTS IN MY SYLLABUS

• Goals and objectives, Expectations, Value
• Format, policies, and guidelines
• Skills:
  • critically read articles and explain their importance to others;
  • advocate, in front of an audience, for your perspective;
  • question & learn from a speaker, rather than just listening to a lecture;
  • learn about cultural and linguistic diversity, and collaboration
• Applications, personalizing the course
CLASS CLIMATE: IMPORTANT STATEMENTS

• Statement on Scholarly Discourse
  • (from a California State University course: Race, Racism and Critical Thinking)
  • Open minds open to evidence that may conflict with our opinions
  • Treat each other’s opinions and comments with courtesy
  • Avoid personal attacks
  • Develop a culture of civil argumentation

• Content Warning and Class Climate Statement
  • Emotional response to some topics
  • Creating a space that is both intellectually rigorous and respectful
COVID-19 AND FLEXIBILITY

- COVID-19 pandemic -> inequities embedded in our society
  - race-and ethnicity-based discrimination, institutionalized racism
  - Safety measures reinforce these
- COVID-19 forces flexibility
  - Adapt to new and unpredictable conditions
  - But creating new connections in virtual space is hard
    - create space for conversations to discover deeper connections.
    - create a safe, healthy, and inclusive environment for everyone.
HYFLEX PURPOSEFUL ENGAGEMENTS
BUILDING RESILIENCE

• Many of our students are working from home.
• We can’t put our relationships with students on hold
• How do we
  • Bring people who want to work in-person
  • Connect with those who are remote
    • Who want to hold on to their newfound freedom and flexibility?
    • And those who can’t possibly meet in person for medical reasons…
CREATING SPACE FOR DEEPER CONNECTIONS

Purposeful Cultural Engagements
ICEBERG CULTURE MODEL
Le Petit Prince
• “It is only with the heart that one can see rightly; what is essential is invisible to the eye…it is the time you have wasted for your rose that makes your rose so important…” P. 70-1

• “To me, you are still nothing more than a little boy who is just like a hundred thousand other little boys….To you, I am nothing more than a fox like a hundred thousand other foxes. But if you tame me, then we shall need each other. …If you tame me, it will be as if the sun came to shine on my life…” P. 66-68

• “The stars are beautiful, because of a flower that cannot be seen…What makes the desert beautiful,” said the little prince, ‘is that somewhere it hides a well…”…”Yes,” I said to the prince. “The house, the stars, the desert - what gives them their beauty is something that is invisible!” …P. 75-76

(Saint-Exupéry, 1943)
GATHERING SPACES

- Gatherings under pepper tree
- Village community well
- l-marwaH
CONNECTION SPACES: THE WATER COOLER

- Water cooler socialization:
  - Relaxed environment
  - Personal connections
  - Critical to new idea generation

(Nijssen, E.J. and van der Borgh, M., 2017)
WHAT IS IN YOUR CULTURE BOX?

• A collection of items
  • Identity
  • Culture
  • Heritage
  • History
  • Personality
GETTING TO KNOW YOUR STUDENTS

• Each person will share their items: Physical or narrative

• Discussion ideas
  • How was the experience? How did you choose items to share?
  • Also what did you learn from hearing about others’ items?
PRIOR EXPERIENCES

• Used technique with success (Soudi, 2016; Soudi & South-Paul, 2017)
  • Invited participants to share
  • Encouraged empathy for others
  • Improved the understanding of diversity
  • Helped participants think critically about their culture
  • Their essential items are not left behind

• Other groups within Pitt: Medical School, Law school
• Other educational institutions: Vanderbilt University, Penfield High School
QUALITATIVE ASSESSMENTS/FEEDBACK

• I was surprised to discover the deep meaning of objects, narratives I took for granted
• I will not look at objects in my house the same way I did before.
• I did not know that C. was Lebanese and Syrian – that made me very happy to learn. I often feel cultural isolation in Pittsburgh re: religious, ethnic, and racial identity and it was surprising to me that I never knew that about her.
• I really identified with Eduardo’s concept of mealtime being family time and how that related to his sense of family identity. In my household, that also represented a major construct of our identity
• the exercise not only helped us all identify as a team and similar, but also, created an atmosphere of vulnerability, acceptance, and peer-attachment early on in the class
Another trainee expands on the disclosure opportunities that this exercise afforded them.

“Racial and ethnic background is something that can define people, but as a white person of privilege, I could not find an item that fully encapsulated that. It's a challenging exercise, because as a white male of privilege, that privilege often goes unnoticed. Being married to an Asian immigrant has in fact opened my eyes significantly to the challenges and beauty of immigrant culture, but has also exposed me to differences in class, language and eastern culture that have completely shifted how I view certain things.”
• The tehillim (book of psalms) shows the value of faith and prayer in our family. I take it anytime I go work overseas and generally keep a copy with me to read while waiting for the bus or other times I need more strength.
THE ART OF REFLECTION

Personalized learning
Reflection allows for instruction that is matched to learning needs and the specific interests of different learners (individualized and differentiated).

It allows students to be aware of their progress, personalize their learning, and help drive the curriculum.

Reflection requires a flexible syllabus.
EXPLORING THEMES OF CULTURE IN A MEDICAL SCHOOL CULTURAL COMPETENCE COURSE

(Soudi et al. 2020) looked at 70 reflection essays collected over 12 years:

• Think of a cross-cultural issue/encounter with a student, patient, colleague
• Describe it
• What did you learn from it
• How would you teach it to others
• Themes: language, nationality, age, race, ethnicity, gender, socioeconomics, institutional culture, generalizations about people, discrimination, communication, person-centered care
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Experiential Learning Opportunities
LINGUISTIC INTERNSHIP

Career Paths
College students are moving away from liberal arts degrees and toward fields with better post-college job prospects.

Degrees by field of study, change from 2004–05 school year

Source: National Center for Education Statistics

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL
LINGUISTIC INTERNSHIP JOURNEY (2013-PRESENT)
OVERVIEW AND RATIONALE

• Academic employment is hard to come by
• Humanities face an uphill battle in employment
• Businesses may not fully understand the scope & applicability of linguistic methods
• Graduates may not be prepared to work with their own tools
• Increase visibility of linguistics in our community
• Timing & opportunity in Pittsburgh
• Linguistics part of the solution
HUMANITIES IN HEALTH & LINGUISTIC INTERNESHIP

Linguistic Internship
- 12 rotations
- N = 114
- Outcome, Job placements
- 70% secured jobs

Humanities in Health
- Interdisciplinary research
- Networking opportunities
- 4 national conferences
- Sponsors
- N = 740
- Collection, Volume…
HUMANITIES AT WORK TEAM (PITT SEED GRANT)

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Audrey Murrell, Ph.D.
Judy Chang, MD, MPH
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CONFERENCES

- Department of Family Medicine
- Magee Women’s Hospital
  - Outstanding Educational Collaboration Award
- English Language Institute (ELI)
  - Outstanding Partner Award
- M*Modal/ 3M, Semantic Compaction Systems
- Voci Technologies
  - Outstanding Industry Partner Award
- UPMC Health Plan: Outstanding Community Partner Award
FINAL MESSAGE:

• David Brooks (NYT Columnist):

  Students Learn From People They Love: Putting relationship quality at the center of education

  “…a key job of a school is to give students new things to love — an exciting field of study, new friends. It reminded us that what teachers really teach is themselves — their contagious passion for their subjects and students. It reminded us that children learn from people they love, and that love in this context means willing the good of another, and offering active care for the whole person”
REFERENCES


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