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Education for NYC Bilinguals [Linguistics]

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ELN 101: Introduction to Bilingualism

Assignment Title: Education for NYC Bilinguals

Assignment Description

The assignment *Education for NYC Bilinguals* is a final, high-stakes written research paper in ELN101: *Introduction to Bilingualism*, a course contributing one deposit into the Global Learning Core Competency and Written Communication Ability. The assignment calls for the consideration and application of social, political, educational, and psycholinguistic concepts into the discussion of global and local multilingualism. By completing this assignment, students gain a deeper understanding of linguistic and cultural diversity in the US society and learn to position issues in bilingualism against a global backdrop. The assignment asks students to approach the challenges of education for multilingual New Yorkers from the multiple perspectives of students, parents, educators, and administrators facing a real-life issue that resonates around the globe. The assignment requires that students engage with issues of diversity, power, privilege, and ethical action. It assumes the students' emerging understanding of global cities, of which New York City, a place in which they reside, is a prime example.

ELN101: *Introduction to Bilingualism* is a course housed in the Linguistics Program in the Department of Education and Language Acquisition. It is a writing-intensive, urban study, ePortfolio course offered in two modalities – face-to-face and hybrid. The course also fulfills LaGuardia's urban study graduation requirement. ELN 101 is depositing for Liberal Arts: Social Science & Humanities and four options in Liberal Arts at the midpoint for the Global Learning Core Competency and Written Communication Ability. Students in the course have typically taken the ENG 101-102 sequence and many liberal arts majors are concurrently enrolled in ENG 103: *The Research Paper* course. The ENG sequence of courses provides an introduction to the skill of writing with power and clarity – the ability to combine vocabulary with grammatical proficiency, fluency, and cogent organization. The ELN 101 course, also attracting diverse cohorts of students from outside the Liberal Arts majors, including Business, Computer Science,

and Natural Science majors, continues this task of teaching writing in the liberal arts tradition, emphasizing, in turn, the writing conventions of social sciences.

The assignment *Education for NYC Bilinguals* takes several weeks to complete as it incorporates a data analysis research experience for community college students. Students are introduced to the quantitative description provided by the Department of Education (DOE)'s Demographic Report and are asked to describe the information as well as infer the information captured by numbers to support their proposal addressed to the DOE. To complete the assignment, in addition to analyzing quantitative data, students review the bilingual education literature to advocate for bilingual learners in the NYC public school system. The assignment is worth 15% of the final grade. In its earlier and the revised versions, the assignment has been implemented in ELN 101 for a number of years. For the majority of students taking the course, this is the most challenging assignment in the course. It requires an analysis and synthesis of a number of elements, on top of deep integration of the many concepts to which the course introduces the students. Acknowledging the difficulty with completing the project, the students, nonetheless, admit that it gives them invaluable knowledge of the NYC public school system, which they, as taxpayers, support, and which they, as current and prospective parents, intend to utilize. Typically, students share their experiences of advising family members on educational opportunities they have learned about through completing this research project. Last but not least, this particular project awakens both social awareness and activism on the part of the students.

The assignment in its final version has benefitted from the feedback of LaGuardia colleagues coordinating and participating in the Learning Matters Mini-Grant 2018-2019.

Assignment

Education for NYC Bilinguals

According to the 2016-17 Department of Education (DOE) report, over 42% of New York City students communicated in a language other than English at home. Unfortunately, by the end of elementary school most of these functionally bilingual students do not possess balanced biliteracy. Also, their bilingualism is subtractive, or leading to the loss of the home language.

Unless an effort is made to enhance the opportunities of urban students to achieve language proficiency, literacy, and cultural competence in both the home language and English, the advantages of bilingualism that you learned about in class will never materialize for this large group of New Yorkers. Your research paper will explain what should be done to make sure that these bilinguals have equitable access to language learning opportunities.

In writing this research paper, imagine that you are an advocate for bilingual learners writing to NYC lawmakers and school administrators who do not know much about this topic and who, for example, are not aware of the research on bilingualism coming from the Canadian context.

Stages:

1. Situate New York City as a global city.

Explain why there is a continuous influx of new immigrants into the city. Note global reasons for migration in 21st century. Consider immigrant children. What challenges do they face?

2. Analyze the DOE report to identify the diverse populations and their languages in the NYC public schools.

Provide a brief synthesis of the numerical information in the report. What are the top five languages other than English? What is the current DOE offering for all multilinguals? What is the current DOE offering for ELLs?

3. State the problem that the NYC public schools face.

Explain the ethical consequences of not addressing the need for equitable instruction in both the home language and English for 42% of students in NYC public schools. What are the implications? Share your own experience with NYC public schools.

4. Briefly review the models of bilingual education available to NYC educators.

You should provide: (1) a definition of bilingual education explaining how it differs from language education and (2) the explanation of the three orientations towards *other languages* (language as *a problem*, as *a right*, and as *a resource*).

5. Propose a type of bilingual education to be adopted in NYC public schools.

Select a program that you think is the most appropriate for the NYC context, considering the DOE report. Describe the program in detail: How much time is spent on each language? What is the balance among the languages? Who are the students? How are they selected? Be as descriptive as you can. Justify your choice by showcasing what you know about the program's effectiveness and second language acquisition in general from your class notes.

6. Conclude this paper with a summary of your recommendation to the Department of Education.

Explain how the model you propose will match the need to enhance the opportunities of urban students to achieve multilingual proficiency, literacy, and cultural competence required for success in the modern global marketplace.

You should have at least 4 references in your paper (check ELN 101 eP list). This paper should be 4-5 pages long.

Your role and audience:

Effective writers are able to place themselves into their reader's mind and anticipate possible questions. Give your readers necessary context or background information throughout the paper to help him/her follow your discussion.

Grading system:

The research paper will be evaluated according to the following criteria: (1) Accurate understanding of the concepts and fulfillment of the assignment; (2) Analysis and development; (3) Organization and coherence; (4) Awareness of audience and use of appropriate tone; and (5) Overall clarity of language.