

University of Northern Colorado

Scholarship & Creative Works @ Digital UNC

2020 Undergraduate Presentations

Research Day 2020

4-2020

The Benefits of Introducing Linguistics to High School Students

Janel Beedle

Follow this and additional works at: https://digscholarship.unco.edu/ug_pres_2020

What is Linguistics?

Every single person utilizes linguistics without recognizing it. This is due to the fact that language learners subconsciously adapt and adhere to language rules at a young age. In general linguistics studies human language and its various meanings, context, and forms. Some aspects that are specifically analyzed include: phonetics, morphology, and syntax.



Why is it important to teach linguistics in High Schools?

By educating young students on linguistics, these students can use that knowledge to understand and value the diversity of language that occurs in secondary schools. As well, being able to fully grasp concepts of linguistics will further student's potential in schools. There are several courses being taught linguistics. For example, most students are required to learn new languages at school—Spanish, French, German. Most students struggle with adapting to learn these languages because they are not taught the underlying rules of the language. Furthermore, high school students need to be able to write concisely and accurately throughout elementary and middle school but are rarely able to do so in high schools. Most teachers assume that these concepts are common knowledge, however a lot of students continue to struggle with them.

Linguistics in High Schools

What Does a High School Linguistics Class Look Like?

Suzanne Loosen is the first high school teacher to create an elective course focused entirely on the discipline of linguistics. She is a teacher at the Milwaukee School of Languages and her semester long course is offered to tenth-twelfth grade students. Her course has 6 units which are: introduction to linguistics, phonetics, morphology, language acquisition, sociolinguistics, and the history of English.

Each unit is designed to engage students so that they become immersed in the class material. For example, their introduction unit about the IPA (International Phonetic Alphabet) intrigued the students by becoming a secret code to write each other. Loosen created engaging projects about language that were scientific, but fun, such as studying old languages and determining whether they will be alive in 100 years. In class, students even had themed days surrounding different dialects.

THE INTERNATIONAL PHONETIC ALPHABET (revised in 2005)

Category	Symbol	Symbol	Symbol	Symbol	Symbol	Symbol	Symbol	Symbol	Symbol
Plosive	p	b	t	d	c	ɟ	k	q	g
Nasal	m	n	ɲ	ɳ	ɳ̺	ŋ	ɲ̺	ɴ	ɴ̺
Continuant	l	ʎ	ʎ̺	ʎ̸̺	ʎ̸̺̺	ʎ̸̺̺̺	ʎ̸̺̺̺̺	ʎ̸̺̺̺̺̺	ʎ̸̺̺̺̺̺̺
Approximant	ɹ	ɻ	ɹ̺	ɻ̺	ɹ̺̺	ɻ̺̺	ɹ̺̺̺	ɻ̺̺̺	ɹ̺̺̺̺
Liquoid	l	ʎ	ʎ̺	ʎ̸̺	ʎ̸̺̺	ʎ̸̺̺̺	ʎ̸̺̺̺̺	ʎ̸̺̺̺̺̺	ʎ̸̺̺̺̺̺̺
Approximant	ɹ	ɻ	ɹ̺	ɻ̺	ɹ̺̺	ɻ̺̺	ɹ̺̺̺	ɻ̺̺̺	ɹ̺̺̺̺
Liquoid	l	ʎ	ʎ̺	ʎ̸̺	ʎ̸̺̺	ʎ̸̺̺̺	ʎ̸̺̺̺̺	ʎ̸̺̺̺̺̺	ʎ̸̺̺̺̺̺̺



Recognizing Diversity Within the School Setting

After doing different activities with the students, Loosen was able to showcase the diversity of language within the community. This is important when regarding inclusivity in the high school. One activity that allowed students to appreciate each other's language diversity focused on having them communicate without using language at all. Students who spoke different languages—Spanish, Chinese, Mandarin, and more—had to share a meal together. This taught students new ways of communicating to one another without shaming one another for being different.

Linguistics Creates Conversation and Furthers Education

Another success of having linguistics as an elective in high school, is that it truly inspires students to be engaged in the classroom. Loosen saw higher rates of participation through the student's personal stories of language as well as students being open to asking questions. Outside of the classroom students were engaging others would report back to Loosen on what their parents or friends thought of language use in commercials and advertisements. Even more exciting, students would discuss linguistics in classes relevant to the study such as: psychology, Spanish, and history.

What is Linguistics?

Every single person utilizes linguistics without recognizing it. This is due to the fact that language learners subconsciously adapt and adhere to language rules at a young age. In general linguistics studies human language and its various meanings, context, and forms. Some aspects that are specifically analyzed include: phonetics, morphology, and syntax.





Why is it important to teach linguistics in High Schools?

By educating young students on linguistics, these students can use that knowledge to understand and value the diversity of language that occurs in secondary schools. As well, being able to fully grasp concepts of linguistics will further student's potential in schools. There are several courses high school students take would be enhanced by being taught linguistics. For example, most students are required to learn new languages at school— Spanish, French, German. Most students struggle with adapting to learn these languages because they are not taught the underlying rules of the language. Furthermore, high school students need to be able to write concisely and accurately. Syntax and semantics are taught to students throughout elementary and middle school but are rarely focused on in high schools. Most teachers assume that these concepts are common knowledge, however a lot of students continue to have issues with them.

Linguistics in High Schools

What Does a High School Linguistics Class Look Like?

Suzanne Loosen is the first high school teacher to create an elective course focused entirely on the discipline of linguistics. She is a teacher at the Milwaukee School of Languages and her semester long course is offered to tenth-twelfth grade students. Her course has 6 units which are: introduction to linguistics, phonetics, morphology, language acquisition, sociolinguistics, and the history of English.

Each unit is designed to engage students so that they become immersed in the class material. For example, their introduction unit about the IPA (International Phonetic Alphabet) intrigued the students by becoming a secret code to write each other. Loosen created engaging projects about language that were scientific, but fun, such as studying old languages and determining whether they will be alive in 100 years. In class, students even had themed days surrounding different dialects.

THE INTERNATIONAL PHONETIC ALPHABET (revised to 2005)

	CONSONANTS (PULMONIC)										
	Bilabial	Labiodental	Dental	Alveolar	Postalveolar	Retrolaryngeal	Palatal	Velar	Uvular	Pharyngeal	Glottal
Plosive	p b		t d		t̪ d̪	c ɟ	k ɡ	q ɢ		ʔ	
Nasal	m	ɱ	n	ɲ	ɳ		ɲ	ɴ		ɴ̠	
Tail			ɾ							ʀ	
Tap or Flap			ɾ								
Fricative	ɸ β	f v	θ ð	s z	ʃ ʒ	ç ʝ	x ɣ	χ ʁ	ħ ʕ	h ɦ	
Lateral fricative				ɬ ɮ							
Approximant			ɹ		ɻ	ɻ	ɹ̠				
Lateral approximant			l		ɭ	ɭ	ʎ				

*Some symbols appear in pairs, the one to the right represents a voiced consonant. Shaded areas denote articulations judged impossible.



What Does a High School Linguistics Class Look Like?

Suzanne Loosen is the first high school teacher to create an elective course focused entirely on the discipline of linguistics. She is a teacher at the Milwaukee School of Languages and her semester long course is offered to tenth-twelfth grade students. Her course has 6 units which are: introduction to linguistics, phonetics, morphology, language acquisition, sociolinguistics, and the history of English.

Each unit is designed to engage students so that they become immersed in the class material. For example, their introduction unit about the IPA (International Phonetic Alphabet) intrigued the students by becoming a secret code to write each other. Loosen created engaging projects about language that were scientific, but fun, such as studying old languages and determining whether they will be alive in 100 years. In class, students even had themed days surrounding different dialects.

Recognizing Diversity Within the School Setting

After doing different activities with the students, Loosen was able to showcase the diversity of language within the community. This is important when regarding inclusivity in the high school. One activity that allowed students to appreciate each other's language diversity focused on having them communicate without using language at all. Students who spoke different languages— Spanish, Chinese, Mandarin, and more—had to share a meal together. This taught students new ways of communicating to one another without shaming one another for being different.

Linguistics Creates Conversation and Furthers Education

Another success of having linguistics as an elective in high school, is that it truly inspires students to be engaged in the classroom. Loosen saw higher rates of participation through the student's personal stories of language as well as students being open to asking questions. Outside of the classroom students were engaging others in the study of linguistics. Frequently they would report back to Loosen on what their parents or friends thought of language use in commercials and advertisements. Even more exciting, students would discuss linguistics in classes relevant to the study such as: psychology, Spanish, and history.