Lesson Plans for NYC Department of Education's Hidden Voices Curriculum:
MULTILINGUAL EDUCATION

Each lesson can be taught on its own or as part of the unit.

5.9 - English as an Asset

The Asian American Education Project

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Grade Levels	7-10
Lesson Overview	"English-Only" sentiments grew to become more prevalent and popular around the 1900s as the United States entered various international conflicts and wars. Speaking English was a marker of loyalty and patriotism. Then, as the United States became more globally connected, especially to Asia, the ability to speak Asian languages was viewed as a benefit. In this two-day lesson, students will learn about how bilingualism and multilingualism, and the teaching of some Asian languages in schools, became seen as an asset. On Day 1, students will analyze a text using a causation tool to examine the shift away from English-Only policies. On Day 2, students will evaluate different perspectives on bilingualism and assess whether the shift toward viewing bilingualism as an asset is a period of progress or decline.
Focus Question	What were the conditions and causes that led to the teaching of Asian foreign languages in U.S. public schools?
Lesson Objectives	Students will examine the conditions and causes that led to the viewing of bilingualism as an asset.

The Selective Celebration of Bilingualism Essay

Background:

"English-Only" sentiments grew to become more prevalent and popular around the 1900s as the United States entered various international conflicts and wars. Speaking English was viewed as a marker of loyalty and patriotism. This left very little room for other languages to be seen or considered in a positive light.

Then, as the United States became more globally connected, especially to Asia, speaking Asian languages (in addition to other foreign languages) was viewed as a benefit.

Essay:

Globalization and technological connectivity helped shift bilingualism from being seen as primarily a **deficit** to being an **asset**. As more people interacted with others in different parts of the world, knowing more than one language was encouraged and seen as a positive, even competitive, trait. Yet, even this acceptance and valuing of bilingualism is **conditional**, as English-Only attitudes still persist.

In the 21st century, families and schools began actively investing in the teaching of foreign languages, other than English. In some ways, knowing how to speak more than one language became a status symbol, especially among the upper classes. Being able to speak English in addition to another language gave people a societal edge. Bilingualism was considered a desirable skill for college admissions. In addition, it became a marketable job skill.

This recent shift in viewing bilingualism as an asset is a significant change from past attitudes. Instead of looking down upon and banning the use of languages other than English, being able to speak certain foreign languages became an advantage over people who only spoke English.

When teaching foreign languages to native English speakers, the most common in U.S. public schools are Spanish, French and German. In the past, learning an Asian language was seen as foreign and disloyal due to anti-Asian sentiments. However, after World War II, schools began to invest in and offer language programs for English-speakers such as Mandarin Chinese and Japanese. (Today, Asian languages such as Tagalog and Vietnamese are also taught depending on the needs of the population.) These Asian languages were offered because of the surge of interest in them due to their respective nation's growing importance in the economic sector and global politics.

For example, Japanese language instruction in the United States increased after World War II. This was a time when Japan experienced an **economic boom** and became the second largest economy in the world. In order to stay competitive, the United States increased funding to teach Japanese.

In another example, Mandarin language instruction in the United States increased when China experienced an economic boom in what is known as the "opening of China." (In China, this period is referred to as "reform and opening-up.") Starting in the late 1970s, China opened up its economy to foreign businesses seeking to invest there.

In the case of Japanese and Mandarin, the teaching of these languages in the United States was driven by **profit**. The emphasis on technological advances and global connectivity since the end of the 20th century helped turn these previously-dismissed languages into important assets.

In this light, many white Americans saw learning an Asian language as a critical and strategic decision. For Asian Americans, learning an Asian language was generally more about cultural **preservation** and language **retention**. Even before U.S. public schools offered Asian languages, Asian American families joined together to create heritage language programs for their children. They taught classes after school or over the weekend. (Many of these programs are commonly taught on Saturday mornings.) These heritage language programs leased spaces in churches and school buildings. These programs were self-funded and were not financially supported by the government.

While studying a foreign language is considered an enrichment for English-fluent students, English Language Learners who already speak a "foreign" language and are learning English as a second language are considered to be deficient. Their foreign language ability is seen as something that needs to be overcome instead of as a positive trait. This view is not an accident, but rather a product of bilingual education's history in the United States.

As English-Only sentiments rose in the 1900s, states began mandating English as the sole language of instruction, banning foreign language instruction which extended even to private schools in some cases. By 1923, thirty-four states – 70% of the states in the United States – had banned foreign language instruction to some degree. That same year, the landmark case *Meyer v. Nebraska* (1923) was decided by the Supreme Court. The case involved a German teacher, Robert Meyer (1878-?), who had been arrested and fined for teaching in German at a **parochial** school. At the time, Nebraska had outlawed instruction in any language other than English for students before the 9th grade in any school in the state. The Supreme Court ruled that Nebraska's law prohibiting non-English instruction was unconstitutional as it violated the liberty that's protected by the **Due Process** Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment.

While the *Meyer v. Nebraska* (1923) ruling removed bans on instruction in languages other than English, this didn't exactly result in a strong cultural or political shift toward accepting bilingual education or bilingualism. Often, the focus of bilingual programs is to ensure English **proficiency** while not focusing on the retention of heritage languages.

Meanwhile, foreign language programs and biliteracy have increasingly been encouraged for native English speakers as bilingualism or multilingualism is seen as a positive trait that will open up greater social and economic opportunities for students in their future. This suggests then that learning a foreign language is only seen as an asset for English-proficient students, and that U.S. foreign language instruction still values and prioritizes English above all other languages.

While learning a new language is treated as an asset for students who speak English as their first language, knowing a different language has not been equally celebrated for English Language Learners. As schools invest in foreign language courses for English-speakers to take as graduation requirements or as electives, the needs of English Language Learners are still often overlooked.

Additionally, it's important to consider which languages are considered assets and which are not. In the last few decades, languages from East Asia have been considered beneficial for career advancement. Yet, despite many information technology jobs being based in South Asia, South Asian languages aren't taught. Many of the languages that are now considered trendy assets are actually the very languages that English Language Learners already know, including Mandarin, Japanese, Arabic, and Spanish.

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Vocabulary:[1]

- **Asset:** something that is useful or of value
- **Conditional**: made or granted on certain terms
- **Deficit**: a lack or impairment in ability
- **Due Process:** citizens have the right to be treated fairly and that all legal matters need to be resolved according to established rules
- **Economic Boom:** a period of rapid economic growth and prosperity
- **Globalization:** the development of an increasingly integrated global economy marked by free trade, free flow of capital, and usage of cheaper foreign labor markets
- **Parochial:** of or relating to a church or church community
- **Preservation:** the action of saving something
- **Proficiency**: being skilled or competent
- **Profit:** a financial gain
- **Retention**: the action of keeping something

[1] Definition adapted from Merriam-Webster

DAY ONE

Activity 1: **Valuing Languages and Cultures**

A. Tell students that some Asian American immigrants were forced to change their names to sound less foreign and more American.

B. Play the audio/video clip of Kevin Wong's oral history discussing his name: https://www.tenement.org/lesson_plans/respond-to-an-oral-history/. Direct students to just listen the first time.

C. Play the clip a second time.

D. Have students complete a Quickwrite given this prompt: How did Kevin's story make you feel?

Strategy: Quickwrite

A Quickwrite is an instructional practice that allows students an opportunity to quickly respond to a question or prompt. It is often timed for 3-10 minutes. It provides teachers an assessment of what students know or think at that moment in time. It provides students an opportunity to freely write down their first thoughts. It can be used at any time in a lesson.

For more on Quickwrites, see: https://www.literacyworldwide.org/get-resources/literacy-glossary

E. Allow students an opportunity to share what they wrote in their Quickwrites.

F. Facilitate a discussion by asking these questions:

1. Kevin said it wasn't uncommon for students to be asked what they want their English name to be. How does that make you feel? Do you think this is fair? Why or why not?
2. What message is the teacher sending by saying that it would be easier for students with non-English names to pick an English name to be called instead?
3. How does this clip connect to the themes of assimilation versus cultural loss? (Note that these themes were explicitly discussed in the lesson "**English for Assimilation**.")
4. Why are names important? What meaning might they hold?
5. How would you feel if someone mispronounced your name or asked you to come up with a nickname/different name for yourself because they had trouble saying your name?

G. NOTE TO TEACHER: Be sure to affirm the anger, grief, etc. that students may say they would feel in the various scenarios posed above. Those are real and normal emotions to feel, and students should not feel bad, embarrassed, etc. about those feelings.

H. Share the following statement: "Correctly pronouncing the non-English names of people, places, and things is important. It is connected to the valuing of people's humanity and identity. It is also connected to the valuing of languages and cultures other than English in our society. English-Only and xenophobic sentiments lead to a culture in which other languages are treated as deficient or unvalued."

I. Ask students: What needs to happen to see languages other than English as an asset?

Activity 2: The Selective Celebration of Bilingualism

A. Distribute the worksheet entitled "Support, Extend, Challenge Tool."

B. Have students complete Step One.

1. Tell them the title of the text they will be reading is "The Selective Celebration of Bilingualism."
2. Read the headnote out loud: "'English-Only' sentiments grew to become more prevalent and popular around the 1900s as the United States entered various international conflicts and wars. Speaking English was viewed as a marker of loyalty and patriotism. This left very little room for other languages to be seen or considered in a positive light. Then, as the United States became more globally connected, especially to Asia, speaking Asian languages (in addition to other foreign languages) was viewed as a benefit."
3. Tell students to use this information and answer the question in Step One: Considering the topic and what you have previously learned, what do you predict will come up in the text?

C. Have students read the essay entitled, "The Selective Celebration of Bilingualism."

D. NOTE TO TEACHER: If pressed for time, have students read the text as homework the night before. Encourage students to annotate or take notes.

E. Have students work in small groups to complete Steps 2-5 of the worksheet:

1. Step Two: How do the ideas and information you've just read connect to or support ideas you already thought about or know?
2. Step Three: How has your thinking been extended in some way, taking it in new or further or deeper directions?
3. Step Four: What challenges or questions have come up in your mind about this topic now that you've been presented with these new ideas and information?

4. Step Five: Why did you make the supports, extensions, and challenges that you did? Share with a partner or small group and record others' responses.

Strategy: Support, Extend, Challenge Tool

Guiding or prompting students as they read is an effective way of helping them access complex texts. This Support, Extend, Challenge tool helps students make connections to their readings. Students learn to support their ideas with new evidence, to consider how new learning extends their understanding, and to consider how new learning challenges their previous thinking.

For more on the Support, Extend, Challenge Tool, see: https://www.weteachnyc.org/resources/resource/grade-10-historical-thinking-tools-and-analysis-strategies/ (pp. 64-65)

F. Allow students the opportunity to share their responses. Monitor for misunderstandings and provide clarification as needed.

G. NOTE TO TEACHER: The text mentions globalization and technological advancements as key factors for the historical development of viewing bilingualism and more specifically, the teaching of Asian languages, as an asset. If students want to learn more about Asian American contributions in the tech industry, consider teaching The Asian American Education Project lesson entitled, "Views from the Top and Bottom of Success in the Silicon Valley": https://asianamericanedu.org/silicon-valley-wealth-inequality.html

Activity 3: Examining the Shift to Bilingualism

A. Distribute the worksheet entitled, "Causation Tool."

B. Share the following statement: "Picture history as an iceberg. Historians must go beyond the tip of the iceberg. Or, be at risk for seeing history as simplistic, disconnected, and inevitable. Rather, we should take a deep dive to explore the whole of the iceberg." (Source)

C. Have students work in small groups to complete the worksheet and then review the responses (see Answer Key):

1. What claims is the author making about the teaching of Asian foreign languages in the United States?
2. What are the obvious immediate causes of the shift toward teaching Asian foreign languages in the United States?
3. What are the less obvious and more long-term causes? What accounts for the shifts from English-Only to bilingualism? What are the tensions between the two?
4. What historical forces are at play? How are these shifts connected to other historical events?

Strategy: Causation Tool

Studying historical changes and events requires us to examine immediate and long-term causes, the relationship of a historical moment to connected events, a consideration of larger societal forces, and deep historical contingencies – which is the notion that historical events are dependent on each other and always have multiple causes.

For more on the Causation Tool, see:
https://www.weteachnyc.org/resources/resource/grade-10-historical-thinking-tools-and-analysis-strategies/ (p. 55)

D. Facilitate a discussion by asking the following questions:
1. What did you learn from this text?
2. Do you agree or disagree with the claims being made in the text?
1. According to the text, for whom is bilingualism seen as an asset?
2. According to the text, for whom is bilingualism seen as a deficit?

DAY TWO

Activity 1: **Pros and Cons of Bilingualism/Multilingualism**

A. Ask students: Are any of you bilingual or multilingual? If not, would you like to be? Why or why not? If so, which languages? How and why did you learn these languages?

B. Create and display a T-chart for all to see.
1. On the right column, have students list the advantages or benefits of being bilingual or multilingual.
2. On the left column, have students list the disadvantages of being bilingual or multilingual.

Strategy: T-Charts

T-Charts are simple graphic organizers. They look like the letter "T." They are used to compare and contrast ideas in a visual representation. They can be used in any discipline and for any topic.

For more on T-Charts, see:
https://www.readwritethink.org/classroom-resources/printouts/chart

Activity 2: **Examining Historical Patterns of Bilingualism**

A. Have students summarize the "The Selective Celebration of Bilingualism" text by referring to their responses to the "Support, Extend, Challenge Tool" worksheet.

B. Distribute the worksheet entitled, "Examining Historical Patterns."

C. Have students work in pairs or small groups to complete the worksheet.

D. Facilitate a discussion about student responses (see Answer Key):
1. Step One: Continuities and Changes
   a. What has stayed the same? Why does it continue or endure?
   b. What has changed? What prompted the changes?

c. Who benefits from the changes? How? Who is challenged by the changes? How?
d. Who benefits from the continuities? How? Who is marginalized as things remain the same? How?

2. Step Two: Progress and Decline
   a. What is the historical moment?
   b. What years are involved?
   c. What major historical themes are at play?
   d. What examples illustrate progress and for whom?
   e. What examples illustrate decline and for whom?

E. Allow students the opportunity to debate the last question: Is the shift toward viewing bilingualism as an asset a period of progress or decline? Why do you think so?

F. NOTE TO TEACHER: If needed, define continuities (the aspects of historical events that have remained the same), change (the aspects of historical events that have not remained the same), progress (movement toward an improved or more developed state), and decline (movement toward a lesser or weakened state).

Strategy: Continuity and Change Tool

Continuity refers to the aspects of historical events that have remained the same. Change refers to the aspects of historical events that have not remained the same. Historians understand history as a mix and series of complex events where we can identify patterns of both continuity and change. Historical significance of historical developments can be viewed in relation to larger patterns of continuity and change. This strategy allows its users to connect individual events to a broader historical period's narrative.

For more on the Continuity and Change Tool, see: https://www.weteachnyc.org/resources/resource/grade-10-historical-thinking-tools-and-analysis-strategies/ (p. 27-28)

Strategy: Progress and Decline Tool

Throughout history, civilizations have undergone periods of progress and periods of decline. These notions of progress and decline could be different based on perspectives of who is in power and who is not.

For more on the Progress and Decline Tool, see: https://www.weteachnyc.org/resources/resource/grade-10-historical-thinking-tools-and-analysis-strategies/ (p. 27-28)

Activity 3: Interviews on the Value of Bilingualism

A. Have students interview each other about their views on the value of bilingualism. (Remind students that they read interview transcripts in the previous lesson, "**English as Survival**.")
   1. Have students consider their interview subjects and to write a profile of them.
   2. Have students generate questions.
   3. Have students conduct the interviews and write out the responses.

B. Have students present their data in a visual.

C. Facilitate a Gallery Walk by hanging their visuals around the room.
   1. Have students walk around the room and view the visuals.
   2. Give students post-it notes to add comments and questions on each visual.

Strategy: Gallery Walk

Gallery Walks are an active learning strategy. During a gallery walk, students explore multiple texts or images that are placed around the room. Students are able to share their work with peers, examine multiple content, and/or respond to multiple content. Because this strategy requires students to physically move around the room, it can be especially engaging to kinesthetic learners.

For more on Gallery Walks, see: https://www.facinghistory.org/resource-library/gallery-walk-0

D. Have students find a partner and share at least three new things they learned from the Gallery Walk.

Activity 4: Concluding the Unit

A. Facilitate a discussion by asking the following questions:
   1. Why are some languages valued and some languages not? How and why do these values change over time?
   2. How are languages valued in society?
   3. What historical forces keep English-Only policies intact? In what ways is the English language prioritized over other languages despite not being an official language?
   4. How did Asian American communities work to preserve their language and culture?
   5. How did foreign language instruction differ for native-English speakers versus immigrants who are non-English speakers?

B. **If you are teaching this lesson as part of the Multilingual Education unit:** Summarize this set of lessons by sharing this statement: "This lesson focused on the shift from English-Only policies to viewing bilingualism as an asset which is evidenced by the increase of U.S. public schools offering Asian language instruction in Mandarin and Japanese, mainly for non-Asian Americans who want to remain relevant in a globally connected world. Even with such a shift, anti-immigrant sentiments still prevail as English is still prioritized over other languages. The next lesson will address how attitudes about bilingual education are connected to issues of immigration and educational access."

Further Information

The Asian American Education Project lesson entitled, "Views from the Top and Bottom of Success in the Silicon Valley": https://asianamericanedu.org/silicon-valley-wealth-inequality.html

