

EDUC 8545A: Language Teaching for Social Justice

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Theme: Social Class

Lesson Plan: Wealth Disparity in the U.S.

Contextual Information

School/Institution: An adult school or community college in the U.S.

Grade/Level: Intermediate Low

Language: English

Course: Intermediate English for adult speakers of other languages, with an emphasis on enhancing students' digital literacy. This lesson is designed for an in-person course, but could easily be adapted to a virtual context. Students are likely from immigrant/refugee backgrounds and speak Spanish as a first language.

Additionally, students will have already discussed their job/career interests and will know some of the relevant vocabulary regarding social class. They will be familiar with the Poll Everywhere tool, and with the general structure of the lesson and worksheet (e.g. work alone first, then with a partner; "agree/disagree," etc.). They will also be familiar with the vocabulary journal homework assignment. Immediately before this lesson, students browsed through the infographic for homework (assuming they have a device and Internet connection).

Rationale Statement

The following lesson is aimed toward developing students' critical thinking and English language skills through the lens of the social justice issue of social class. Specifically, it highlights public perception of the wealthy, the widening gap between the rich and the poor, the intersectionality of race/class/gender, and ethical issues regarding extreme wealth. I envision this lesson as a supplement to the often-generalized and uncritical textbook material in a unit about careers/professions.

I chose this topic because I recently learned that social class is one of the least discussed social justice issues, particularly when it comes to language education. Furthermore, my own privileged identity as a White, middle-class American has largely allowed me to ignore class issues, and I wanted to challenge myself to explore these in a critical way with students in the language classroom. I hope that doing so will empower learners to critique the notion of the U.S. as a class-free society, to define for themselves the meaning of "success," and to promote social change in their local communities.

Objectives¹

Content Objectives	Language Objectives
Students will gain understanding of the relative wealth of average Americans and the super-rich	- Students will be able to express their opinions and cite evidence/examples (e.g., “I agree/disagree because...”) - Students will expand vocabulary on the topic of wealth disparity by at least 3 new words - Students will be able to use new vocabulary in conversations regarding wealth disparity to express their opinion - Students will know how to say and write large numbers (e.g., “185 billion”) - Students will be able to read and scan an infographic for information
Digital Literacy Objectives	
Students will be able to use an infographic to find relevant and specific information and to find evidence to support their claims	
Social Justice Objectives	
- Students will be able to discuss and critique class structure in the U.S. through the lens of the wealth gap - Students will recognize the intersectionality of race, class, and gender issues - Students will be able to identify local community issues and potential solutions - Students will make informed decisions about when and how to take action against injustice in their everyday lives	

Materials

- Smartphone, tablet, laptop, or computer (Ideally, the school has a computer lab or laptops for students to use in class)
- Smart projector or display screen in classroom

¹ You don’t have to have both content and SJ objectives. Your content objectives can be – though not necessarily – SJ objectives. We draw from content-based instruction and critical pedagogy when we talk about SJLT.

- Poll Everywhere questions [link](#) (See Appendix A)
- Wealth Shown to Scale Infographic [link](#)

Procedures

Pre-Activities: Welcome & Intro to Agenda	Time Frame	Objective(s)) Targeted
Greet students. They answer Poll Everywhere question as everyone settles (See Appendix A) • Display word cloud on screen as answers come in	0-5 min	Welcome and awareness-raising
Follow-up: What do you notice about these people? • Pair and share. While students discuss, look up images of these people to display. • Facilitate group discussion. Use probe questions about intersectionality (race/gender/social class) Transition and introduce topic (“We will talk about the wealth gap. We will look at the example of one of these wealthy white males...”) • Brainstorm a list of relevant “old” vocab, introduce new vocab. They may put words they are unclear about in the vocab journal.	5-20 min	Schema activation; intersectionality of class/race/gender issues
During activities: Explore Infographic	Time Frame	Objective(s)) Targeted
Worksheet (Appendix B) • Students explore and answer questions on their own first (about 10 minutes). • Pair and share answers with a partner.	20-50 min (BREAK 5 min)	How to read/use an infographic, reading/following directions/finding evidence, saying and writing large numbers
Group Discussion and Debrief • Review agree/disagree statements (students read aloud). Clarify meanings if needed. • What does wealth mean to you (being rich, happy, generous, etc.)?	55-75 min	State opinions and back them with evidence, critical reading

• Can you think of any examples of the intersectionality of race and class? What about gender and class? • How did this activity make you feel?		and thinking, strengthen vocabulary re: wealth disparity
Post Activities: Homework	Time Frame	Objective(s)) Targeted
Introduce Community Connections Assignment • Group brainstorm of current issues in the local community (e.g., vaccine access, cost of living, workers' rights/wages, etc.) • Students select one of these issues and answer the following creative writing prompt: Imagine you are an executive board member of a local NGO. Someone very wealthy wants to donate some money to a good cause. How would you use the money to solve an issue in your community? Include three examples/actions in your answer. (This question primes students for exploring the rest of the infographic in the next lesson)	75-90 min	Students will identify local community issues and potential solutions; students will make informed decisions about taking action against injustice in everyday lives
Vocabulary journal entry • 3 new words they learned, or want to learn more about. (Journal entries follow this format: word, pronunciation, meaning, collocations, use in a sentence)	Write words throughout class; look up definitions for hw	Strengthen vocabulary related to topic

Formative Assessment Strategy

I will take note of students' comments during group discussions to gauge their understanding and engagement with the topic. During pair and share I will roam the classroom and check students' answers on the worksheet, and provide direction and assistance when needed.

Differentiation

Students may choose their partners, where they sit, which community issue they would like to discuss for homework, which actions they suggest the NGO "board" should take, and which vocabulary words they are most interested in learning

more about. If needed, they may also discuss their answers with a partner in their first language.

Reflection

Please discuss this lesson's strengths, weaknesses, and affordances for student learning and potential threats/pitfalls.

I think this lesson's strengths are the digital resources and digital literacy components. Digital literacy is becoming increasingly important and I wanted to incorporate those objectives with social justice objectives to make the lesson as engaging as possible. The infographic was the perfect medium for allowing learners to explore a new kind of digital tool while centering the topics of social class and wealth disparity. I like how the Poll Everywhere questions and the infographic capture learners' attention and provide clear, simple visualizations of discussion topics.

This strength is also a potential weakness in that not all students may be able to use and explore these digital tools outside of class. I acknowledge that it is impractical to teach students how to use something that they don't encounter or need very often. However, I think that digital literacy skills will only become more important as time goes on, not less, especially with the recent boom of distance learning. I want my students to be equipped for their future, which is very likely to involve the use of digital tools.

If you get a chance to teach this lesson plan, reflect on the strengths and weaknesses of your lesson. How did it go? What would you do differently?

I did not, but I am hoping I have the opportunity at some point next semester during practicum!

Any thoughts to add after the workshop feedback session?

The session was extremely helpful. My peers helped me to see that I needed to be as specific and intentional as possible. For example, my objectives were a little vague and I had trouble tying them to specific parts of the lesson. After the feedback, I narrowed my focus and made sure that every activity made sense in light of my objectives. None of the activities, not even the little transitions between them, are "pointless"-- they all have a thought behind them. Also, I really appreciate everyone's input on the Community Connections assignment. I was having trouble making a creative writing prompt that was relevant to students' lives. I wanted them to be able to use their imaginations, but also think of practical ways to make a difference in their local communities. Thanks to everyone's help, I am really pleased with the final result.

Appendix A

**Who comes to mind when you think of a person
who is very rich?**



1 Go to **PollEv.com**

1 Text **KIRAA342** to **37607**

2 Enter **KIRAA342**

2 Text in your message

Total Results: 0

Powered by  **Poll Everywhere**

Appendix B

Name _____

Date _____

Explore the infographic and answer the following questions. Work alone for about 10 minutes, then discuss with a partner for about 20 minutes.

1. What amount of money is represented by one pixel? _____
2. What is the median household income in the United States? _____
3. What is Jeff Bezos's wealth? _____
4. Scroll until you see a blue square that is equivalent to \$1.7 million. What does this amount represent?

5. Scroll until you see a large green rectangle. What does this amount represent?

6. Why do you think people underestimate the wealth of the super-rich?

7. What fact surprised you the most in this infographic?

State whether you agree or disagree with the following statements. Discuss your reasoning with a partner.

1. Rich people often oppose policies aimed at reducing inequality.

2. No single human needs or deserves this much wealth.

3. The United States is a class-free society.
