



SERVICE LEARNING AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT THROUGH HIGHER EDUCATION

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BRIDGING LANGUAGES AND BUILDING COMMUNITY IDENTITY THROUGH SERVICE-LEARNING TRANSLATION IN SPANISH

ABSTRACT:

This presentation explores how translation-centered service-learning in Spanish for Specific Purposes courses fosters community engagement, empathy, and professional identity among university students. Through partnerships with Houston-based NGOs, including the Young Center for Immigrant Children, Memorial Assistance Ministries, and Mission JADE, students provide legal, medical, and educational translations that address linguistic inequities. We discuss the program's pedagogical framework, affective dimension, and strategies for integrating reflection, technology, and cultural awareness to build bridges between language, service, and self.

THEMATIC FOCUS:

Shifting Foundations: Modern fundamental changes in how communities form, change, and represent themselves.

Convergence and Intersections: How increasing or decreasing hyperconnectivity can impact community engagement.

BIO(S):

María Laura Zubiata received her Ph.D. in U.S. Latino Literature from the University of Houston. Her research and teaching interests focus on Latino communities, literature, education, labor and health. She is the coordinator of the Spanish for the Global Professions minor. Dr. Zubiata coordinates an internship program for pre-medical students in partnership with community health clinics in the Houston area.

Paola Arboleda-Ríos, Ph.D., is Director of Graduate Studies and Instructional Associate Professor in the Department of Hispanic Studies at the University of Houston. Her teaching and research focus on community-based translation, Spanish for Specific Purposes, and service-learning pedagogy. She has developed partnerships with organizations such as the Young Center for Immigrant Children, Mission JADE, and Memorial Assistance Ministries, integrating real-world translation projects into her courses. Dr. Arboleda-Ríos's work highlights translation as a tool for civic engagement, identity formation, and social justice, empowering students to recognize multilingualism as both professional capital and a form of community care.