

Breaking Down the Language Barrier: Using Pop Culture from Across the Globe to Teach Microeconomics

Wayne Geerling (Monash University) and Jadrian Wooten (Penn State University)

Thursday 2 September, 09:00-10:00 BST

Introduction

Economic educators have started to realize the importance of taking a proactive role in creating a more inclusive and diverse classroom. While researchers debate the cause of the lack of diversity in the profession, a number of explanations have been proposed for the profession's "leaky pipeline." One proposed recommendation to improve diversity focuses on educators taking a deliberate approach to diversifying their lecture material (Al-Bahrani 2020; Bayer et al. 2020a; Bayer et al. 2020b). This opportunity seems promising given that more than half of all instructors say they currently don't reference diversity and inclusion in their introductory classroom (Asarta, Chambers, and Harvey 2020). If educators were already extensively addressing diversity, calls for new material would be unwarranted.

Al-Bahrani (2020), however, specifically calls for the development of resources for educators teaching introductory courses. These resources should help educators increase diversity, inclusion, and a sense of belonging among many first-year students. While only about 2% of students go on to major in economics (Siegfried 2020), targeting diverse resources to first-year students should increase the probability that a student will take additional courses, which may then lead to more students considering graduate school and joining the economics profession.

While there have been calls to improve representation in textbooks (Stevenson and Zlotnik 2018), those changes require significantly more resources from authors, publishers, and educators alike. In time, those shortcomings will likely be corrected, but there are marginal changes that educators can adopt today to improve diversity in their teaching material. Stowe (2010) suggests that the economics field may be able to attract different personality profiles simply by changing the instructional method.

Wooten et al. (2020) have shown how Korean music (K-pop) can be integrated into an English-language classroom. We expand on that work by compiling a set of 12 teaching guides using material from 12 different countries that demonstrate economic concepts commonly taught in a principles of microeconomics course. Similar to the work of Hobbs and Wooten (2020), each teaching guide includes clip information along with multiple assessment questions that instructors can assign as part of an in-class discussion or integrated through a course management system to be used with discussion boards.

Teaching Guides

The clips used in this paper cover a wide range of media, including anime, commercials, film scenes, music videos, and general videos from YouTube. All of the scenes selected were chosen to complement the curriculum of a principles of microeconomics course. The teaching guides are mapped to a principles of microeconomics textbook and arranged in the same order as the textbook. While not all topics covered in a principles of microeconomics

Developments in Economics Education Conference 2021

text have an accompanying teaching guide below, we cover many of the major chapters. To emphasise the truly global nature of the project, we decided to use media that are recorded in 11 different languages, one for each lesson plan.

We should emphasise that we are not expecting educators to use every single guide in a one semester course. Each of the teaching guides are brief enough, so that they could be added to a course and only require 10 to 15 minutes of class time. These teaching guides are an opportunity for educators to make a marginal change to their course. Interested instructors need not restructure their entire course around these guides, but rather make incremental adjustments to their existing pedagogical approach. The progression towards using more foreign-language clips in the classroom should be a gradual decision based on marginal analysis.

Conclusion

Providing more diverse content that is inclusive is vital if the economics profession wishes to broaden student interest in the subject. Given that 25 per cent of university students in America report that English is not their first language, the use of culturally and linguistically-inclusive media, which has been shown to increase student engagement, is paramount. We provide 11 lesson plans designed to minimize the transaction costs for economic educators wishing to implement this novel approach. It is our hope that, with time, broadly diverse and inclusive media will be ubiquitous when students are introduced to economics.

References

- Al-Bahrani, A. (2020). Classroom Management and Student Interaction Interventions: Fostering Diversity, Inclusion, and Belonging in Undergraduate Economics. *SSRN Working Paper #3644803* <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3644803>
- Asarta, C., Chambers, R., and Harter, C. (2020). Teaching methods in undergraduate introductory economics courses: Results from a sixth national quinquennial survey. *The American Economist*, 66(1): 18-28.
- Bayer, A., Bhanot, S., Bronchetti, E., and O'Connell, S. (2020a). Diagnosing the learning environment for diverse students in introductory economics: An analysis of relevance, belonging, and growth mindsets. *AEA Papers and Proceedings*, 110: 294–298.
- Bayer, A., Bruich, G., Chetty, R., and Housiaux, A. (2020b). Expanding and diversifying the pool of undergraduates who study economics: Insights from a new introductory course at Harvard. *The Journal of Economic Education*, 51(3-4): 364-379.
- Hobbs, K. and Wooten, J. (2020). Teaching principles of microeconomics with the economics media library, *Applied Economics Teaching Resources*, in press.
- Siegfried, J. (2020). Trends in undergraduate economics degrees, 2001–2019. *The Journal of Economic Education*, 51(3-4): 359-363.
- Stevenson, B., and Zlotnik, H. (2018). Representations of men and women in introductory economics textbooks. *AEA Papers and Proceedings*, 108: 180-185.

Developments in Economics Education Conference 2021

Stowe, K. (2010). A Quick Argument for Active Learning: The Effectiveness of One-minute Papers. *Journal for Economic Educators*, 10(1): 33-39.

Wooten, J., Geerling, W., and Calma, A. (2021). Diversifying the use of pop culture in the classroom: Using K-pop to teach principles of economics. *International Review of Economics Education*, 38: 100220.