Languages for All: Reclaim Your Joy!

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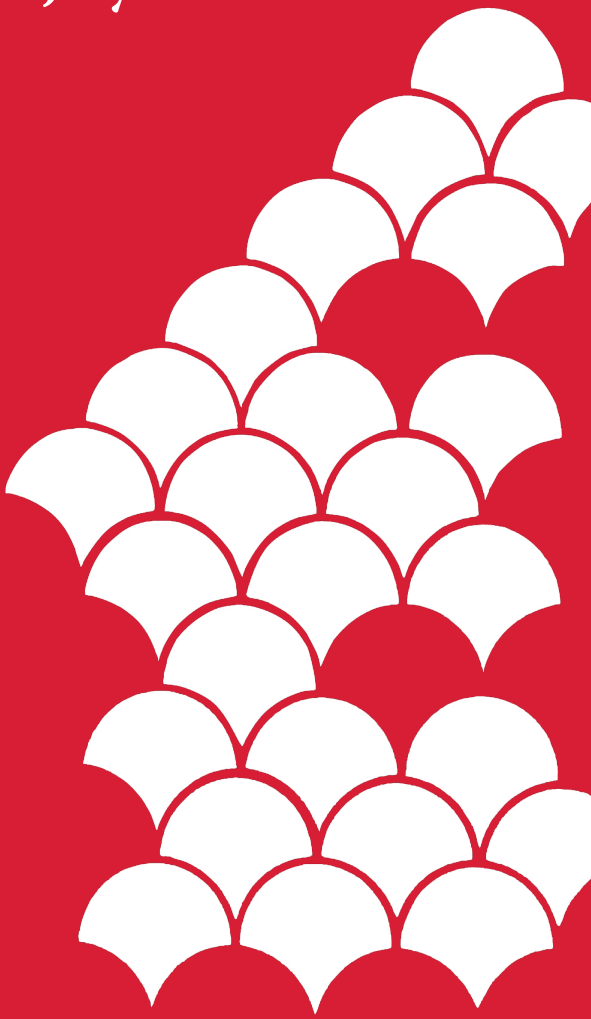

2024 Report of
The Central States Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Languages

Languages for All:
Reclaim the Joy!

The Central States Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Languages Report 2024

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Preface

Languages for All: Reclaim Your Joy !

The 2024 Central States Conference was held in Minneapolis, MN on March 14–16. The Central States Board was thrilled to welcome and support educators from across our region for professional learning and networking.

This year's theme, Reclaim Your Joy!, reflects the choice we make every day as educators to bring the joy of acquiring a language to our students. Even though the last several years have been fraught with challenges, we are finding ways to bring back the joy into our professional lives through collaborating with our colleagues at conferences as well as engaging with our students and families. Researcher and author, Brené Brown, notes that joy "comes to us in moments - often ordinary moments." Educators were able to find joy in the ordinary moments of networking at the conference, attending the Friendly Luncheon, honoring the winners of awards, grants and scholarships, and participating in workshops and sessions.

The 2024 keynote speech was given by Ryan Smith of Reno, NV in which he proclaimed,

> Reclaiming the Joy is not something we can do on our own. This work begins in the classrooms and involves all stakeholders in the process. After the past few very challenging years in education, we must go back and revisit the 'why' and the purpose of what we do. Not only must we value ourselves and see that the work we do is absolutely essential, but we must value the experiences of others as well. Reclaiming the joy begins with building strong and positive relationships!

Thirteen workshops were offered this year, in addition to the Central States Leadership Academy and the Central States Extension Workshop. We were excited to bring back the Language Immersion Workshops, sponsored by Xperitas, where language educators were able to participate in full-day immersive excursions in the Minneapolis-St. Paul area.

More than 170 sessions were offered focusing on joy, proficiency, social justice, classroom activities, teaching strategies, curriculum development, assessment, intercultural competence, advocacy, and technology. Presenters came from over 25 states across the country to share their expertise and knowledge. Additionally, attendees were able to find joy in the Health and Wellness sessions that were offered in order to find the balance between learning and self-care.

The Central States Conference Report 2024, Reclaim Your Joy! is a call to language educators to take back what they love the most in educating students on the language, culture and heritage of the languages they teach. Thank you to the authors for their work in supporting our students, their peers, and this endeavor.

Marci Harris
2024 Program Chair

Languages for All: Reclaim Your Joy!

Cassandra Glynn
Concordia College

Allison Spenader
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Languages enrich our lives, serve as bridges between peoples, and foster new opportunities and perspectives. The 2024 Central States Report entitled "Languages for All: Reclaim Your Joy!" explores the vibrant landscape of language education through an exciting array of articles that highlight cultivation of joie de vivre in the classroom and the transformative power of language learning. From expanding implementation of the Seal of Biliteracy to infusing social justice and brain-based learning, these contributions offer valuable insights into how language education can meet the real-world needs of today's learners.

This year's CS Report delves into the pedagogical strategies that foster joy and engagement in language learning. One such article explores the cultivation of joie de vivre in French language classrooms, spanning elementary, secondary, and post-secondary levels. Practicing teachers share how they infuse lessons with cultural richness and experiential learning, igniting a passion for language and culture.

The CS Report is also pleased to present multiple perspectives on the current implementation of Seal of Biliteracy across diverse linguistic contexts. These articles shed light on challenges and successes related to Seal of Biliteracy implementation across the United States. From community-based heritage language schools to mainstream educational settings, these articles underscore the significance of recognizing and celebrating linguistic diversity and encouraging student attainment of higher proficiency levels.

Building upon this theme of effective teaching practices, another article explores the potential of a professional development model for teachers that focuses on designing instruction using brain-based strategies. By harnessing insights from neuroscience, educators can design engaging instruction to maximize engagement, comprehension and proficiency development.

In an examination of the importance of equity, diversity, and inclusion in the Japanese language classroom, one article provides thoughtful recommendations for the infusion of criticality through the use of translanguaging.. Through an examination of teacher motivational behaviors in both remote and in-person settings, another article underscores the critical role educators play in creating inclusive learning environments where all students feel valued and empowered to succeed.

Moreover, the richness of language diversity is evident throughout our volume, with articles showcasing a myriad of languages including Chinese, Tamil, German, Czech, Slovak, French, Russian, Arabic, and Japanese. This rich linguistic diversity serves as a testament to the global mosaic of languages and cultures that enrich our communities.

A common thread emerges in this year's CS Report: languages have the power to spark joy and connection. Whether through the recognition of linguistic vchievements, the cultivation of cultural appreciation, or the promotion of inclu-

sive learning environments, each article underscores the profound impact that languages have on individuals and society as a whole.

The 2024 CS Report "Languages for All: Reclaim Your Joy!" serves as a testament to the boundless possibilities that language learning affords. Let us embrace the richness of linguistic diversity and harness the joy that languages bring to our lives. Through collaboration and innovation, we can ensure that languages become accessible to all, empowering individuals to connect, communicate, and thrive in an increasingly interconnected world.

With joy for our profession —

Cassandra Glynn and Allison Spenader
Co-Editors

1 A Nationwide Survey of Implementation of the Seal of Biliteracy

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The Challenge

The Seal of Biliteracy (SoBL) allows high school students to receive a credential for language proficiency. Although widely adapted in the U.S., there remain challenges to equitable implementation. What do teachers and administrators see as challenges to implementing the SoBL? How can such challenges be addressed to improve equity?

Abstract

Because the Seal of Biliteracy (SoBL) is a new language initiative, meant to credential bilingualism in US high schoolers, an emerging body of literature has examined stakeholder perceptions and choices relating to implementation of the policy. Research has focused on choices state legislatures have made in enacting policy (e.g., Davin and Heineke, 2017), issues of equity and access for ELs (Heineke et al., 2018; Subtirelu et al., 2019), potential for positive washback in the language classroom (Davin et al., 2018), and the experiences and beliefs of local administrators, teachers, parents, and students (Burnet, 2017; Castro Santana, 2014; Davin et al., 2018; DeLeon, 2014). Heineke and Davin (2020) also compiled a volume of case studies of SoBL implementation, focusing on individual states and districts across the US. However, there have been no efforts to document stakeholder choices on a national scale. To improve understanding of how the policy is implemented across states and districts in the US and whether its intended effects have been realized, this paper presents results from a nationwide survey (N=778) of teachers and administrators, regarding promotion, access, benefits, and drawbacks of the SoBL. It identifies major trends in implementational choices

nationwide, focusing on the range and perceived effectiveness of different outreach strategies, the content of professional development around the SoBL, the impact on language teaching and assessment practices, and educators' concerns about access and impact of the initiative. The paper concludes with recommendations for short- and long-term improvement for policymakers.

Introduction

The Seal of Biliteracy (SoBL) initiative, an effort to provide a credential for students with proficiency in more than one language, has received increased research attention since it was first adopted as state legislation in California in 2011. Currently implemented in 49 states and the District of Columbia, the SoBL was initially praised for its ability to generate interest in K-12 language learning, provide incentives for schools and governments to allocate resources for language instruction, and to credential bilingualism in students whose language abilities are often undervalued (i.e., ELs and heritage speakers). To investigate the influence of this initiative, several exploratory studies (Burnet, 2017; Castro Santana, 2014; DeLeon, 2014) examined the implementation of the SoBL in schools within Washington state and California. Several years after the SoBL's initial adoption, Davin and Heineke (2017) documented the range of assessment decisions states across the U.S. made to document proficiency for the SoBL and provided an overview of the different possibilities states had adopted.

These initial studies paved the way for more critical analyses of the SoBL's impact, as researchers explored issues of equity and access for heritage language learners (HLLs) and English language learners (ELs); researchers also discussed whether the SOBL was inadvertently reproducing the structural disadvantages of students marginalized along lines of language, race, and social class, while overtly promoting "bilingualism for all" (Heineke et al., 2018; Heineke et al.,, 2019; Subtirelu et al., 2019). Borowczyk (2020) and Davin et al. (2019) have also examined the influence of the SOBL on institutions adjacent to the mainstream K-12 school system, namely community-based heritage languages schools. Such schools are important to the SOBL; these spaces often serve learners of less commonly taught languages (LCTLs) without access to education in their heritage language (HL) through mainstream schools. Most recently, Heineke and Davin (2020) compiled a volume of case studies of SoBL implementation, incorporating teacher, administrator, and student perspectives on implementational choices in different states.

The present study builds on prior work while adding a nationwide lens to an issue that has been mostly a local one. The authors present findings from a nationwide survey of SoBL implementation (N=778) to understand how local practices either reflect or diverge from national trends in providing implementation options. The paper illuminates national trends on SoBL planning and implementation including: 1) promotion/dissemination of information about the SoBL, 2) professional development for educators involved with the SoBL;3) implementational choices in specific districts, and 4) concerns and proposed improvements. Each is discussed below.

Review of Literature

Promotion

DeLeon (2014) documented a range of school and district strategies to promote participation, including personal encouragement from teachers and school counselors, sending a personal letter to eligible students in English and Spanish, and including a description of the initiative in the high school directory and on the district website. Davin et al. (2018) documented similar strategies for disseminating information across three focal schools; 34% of teachers indicated that a need for greater dissemination of information about the award to students was needed, and 44% indicated that greater dissemination to parents was needed. Most pressingly, teachers noted that more outreach was needed before high school and in beginner-level high school language classes. Additionally, Davin et. al (2018) assert that parental outreach is needed, especially when students could earn the SoBL for a heritage language spoken at home in a language not offered at the school. The current survey therefore aims to understand the most common types of dissemination, the languages in which information is disseminated, and the perceived effectiveness of this outreach.

Professional Development

While limited research exists on the types of professional development opportunities that teachers and administrators receive in connection with the SoBL, Heineke et al. (2019) explored pedagogical supports for teachers in Washington state, noting that "At the state level, administrators specializing in world language education partner with WAFTL educators to offer webinars, workshops, and conference presentations to support local educators in understanding and administering the Seal" (p. 3). These professional development opportunities draw on recommendations from ACTFL on proficiency- and performance-based teaching methods to improve students' likelihood of attaining the appropriate proficiency level required for the SoBL by graduation. According to Davin et al. (2018), some teachers in Illinois also reported attending workshops by ACTFL experts for multiple years preceding SOBL implementation, as their schools attempted to shift to a proficiency-based approach to language teaching and noted that these opportunities then directly helped them guide students towards attaining the SoBL. In these examples, professional development related to SoBL implementation is inextricable from professional development in proficiency-based teaching methods more broadly, though this might not be the case for other states in the US. Furthermore, these studies do not provide insight into the types of professional development targeted towards stakeholders other than K-12 school administrators and teachers who may be involved with SoBL implementation, such as guidance counselors, community-based project/portfolio raters, and school aides. Therefore, this study aims to understand who delivers and participates in professional development about the SoBL and the content of such professional development.

Implementation

Most SoBL implementation concerns deal with equity and access. Heineke et al. (2018), Heineke et al. (2019) and Subtirelu et al. (2019) concluded that local

policies and practices around the SoBL tend to inadvertently advantage English dominant students because: 1) specific states ask ELs to provide more sources of evidence to demonstrate their English proficiency than English-dominant students, 2) the level of English proficiency required is generally higher than that of the other language, and 3) the standardized tests required to demonstrate proficiency for the SoBL are mainly designed for students studying in world language classes, potentially disadvantaging heritage speakers. Davin and Heineke (2017) point out that the lack of accredited assessments in less commonly taught languages creates additional challenges for HLLs seeking to earn the SoBL.

The cost of common language assessments may be prohibitive for students whose districts do not cover the cost of these exams. In states where students may demonstrate proficiency via a language project or portfolio (partly to solve the issue of exam access), there are rarely enough qualified raters available to evaluate these portfolios. Because the SoBL policy passed in nearly all state legislatures without additional funding allocated to implement the policy, individual school districts are usually responsible for funding the effort. Jansa and Brezicha (2017) illustrate one issue at the state level; in Georgia, there is only one person in charge of coordinating the Seal, and the resulting workload may be unsustainable. The current study examines such resource allocation.

Proposed Improvements

With concerns regarding equity, accessibility, and funding, Jansa and Brezicha (2017) have suggested possible solutions for policymakers and stakeholders when planning for implementation by suggesting that states make the dissemination of information on the availability and content of the SoBL mandatory in all districts and schools. Furthermore, they advise that "This should include the translation of necessary information into various languages in adherence to Title I of ESSA" (p. 43) to ensure that families of ELs and HLLs can access information on the SoBL. To support positive classroom washback, Davin and Heineke (2017) suggest tying SoBL attainment to proficiency, rather than seat time. Many other proposals directly focus on issues of equity for ELs and HLLs. Davin and Heineke (2017) and Subtirelu et al. (2019) argue for simplifying the requirements to certify proficiency in English, since ELs often face more stringent expectations for demonstrating their proficiency in English than English-dominant students do for their second language. Davin and Heineke (2017) note that "it is not clear why ELs who pass standardized tests of English proficiency (e.g., ACCESS) must also provide further evidence of English proficiency, or why students who pass end-of-year ELA course assessments must also maintain a minimum GPA" (p. 497). They advise that the evidence of English proficiency that states require for all students should be sufficient to satisfy the SoBL requirements in English for ELs as well. In a similar vein, Davin and Heineke (2017) recommend that all states provide alternative means for certifying proficiency, beyond standardized exams, such as portfolios and projects, to avoid disadvantageing speakers of less commonly taught languages for which tests are less available. The most politically difficult, but practical recommendation of SoBL, advocates for greater funding at the state level to hire more staff to administer and monitor the program and cover the cost of tests (Sub-

tirelu et al., 2019) to ensure that students from poorly funded districts and low-income families are included. These systemic, high-level changes are recommended by language and education scholars, and this study hopes to identify teachers' and administrators' direct concerns and ideas for improvement.

Methods

Participants

All study participants were teachers and administrators involved in implementing the SoBL at the state, district, or school level and were recruited via a two-step process as described in detail in the procedures section. The first step elicited responses by sending emails to faculty and staff at districts and schools in all U.S. states, districts, and territories that offered the SOBL when the survey was released. In the second step, researchers circulated the survey through online networks and listservs that include language coordinators and instructors, and K-12 support staff (i.e., guidance counselors, school aids). Participants were asked to respond if they considered themselves "educators involved in implementing the SoBL," and given a link to the official SoBL website to assess their familiarity. First, participants rated their levels of awareness about the SoBL, understanding of the process to attain the SoBL, and involvement in implementing the SoBL. Of the 853 participants, 75 were excluded from the remainder of the study, because they indicated that they were "not at all" aware of the SoBL \and/or did "not at all" understand the process for students attaining it. Table 1 shows the breakdown of respondents' familiarity with the SoBL.

Table 1
Participants' level of familiarity and involvement with the SoBL

	Not at all	Not very	Some-what	Very
How **aware** were you of the SoBL award prior to taking this survey? (N=846)	50 (5.9%)	22 (2.6%)	141 (16.7%)	633 (74.8%)
How well do you **understand** the process for students attaining the SoBL? (N=845)	44 (5.2%)	78 (9.2%)	227 (26.9%)	496 (58.7%)
How **involved** are you with implementing the SoBL in your school/district/state (N=844)	120 (14.2%)	118 (14.0%)	202 (23.9%)	404 (47.9%)

Therefore, 778 participants were included in the data analysis phase of the study. Next, participants were asked to select the state in which they worked and describe their role within their school district or department of education. Table 2 shows participants from each state.

Alabama	1	0.1%	North Carolina	2	0.3%
Arkansas	16	2.1%	North Dakota	2	0.3%
Arizona	21	2.7%	Nebraska	1	0.1%
California	32	4.1%	New Hampshire	1	0.1%
Colorado	12	1.5%	New Jersey	30	3.9%
Connecticut	25	3.2%	New Mexico	11	1.4%
District of Columbia	12	1.5%	Nevada	1	0.1%
Delaware	7	0.9%	New York	79	10.2%
Florida	19	2.4%	Ohio	25	3.2%
Georgia	11	1.4%	Oklahoma	1	0.1%
Hawaii	7	0.9%	Oregon	36	4.6%
Iowa	29	3.7%	Pennsylvania	2	0.3%
Idaho	1	0.1%	Rhode Island	38	4.9%
Illinois	28	3.6%	South Carolina	13	1.7%
Indiana	7	0.9%	Tennessee	11	1.4%
Kansas	44	5.7%	Texas	6	0.8%
Kentucky	1	0.1%	Utah	5	0.6%
Louisiana	23	3.0%	Virginia	22	2.8%
Massachusetts	33	4.2%	Vermont	15	1.9%
Maryland	39	5.0%	Washington	5	0.6%
Maine	29	3.7%	Wisconsin	9	1.2%
Michigan	6	0.8%	Wyoming	2	0.3%
Minnesota	11	1.4%	Unknown	1	0.1%
Missouri	29	3.7%			
Mississippi	16	2.1%	**Total**	**788**	
Montana	1	0.1%			

The largest proportion of respondents were from New York (10.2%), Maryland (5%), and Rhode Island2 (4.9%). Table 3 describes participants' professional roles.

Teachers comprised 66.3% of the total respondents, with world language (WL) teachers represent2ing 56.3%. English as a New/Second language (ESL) teachers comprised 7.1% of participants, and English Language Arts (ELA) teachers only 3%. Administrators at the state, district, and school levels, as well as school counselors and other school or community organization leaders together comprised 28.9%. Only 4.8% of respondents indicated that they fulfilled other professional roles, including school-to-career coordinator, instructional coach, and bilingual specialist.

Table 3
Participants' Roles (N=778)

Category	*Role*	N	%
Teachers	*World Language Teachers*	438	56.3%
	English as a New/Second Language Teacher	55	7.1%
	English Language Arts Teacher	23	3.0%
	Total	516	66.3%
Administrators	*State Administrator*	9	1.2%
	District Administrator	91	11.7%
	School Administrator	56	7.2%
	School Counselor	64	8.2%
	School or Community Organization Leader	5	0.6%
	Total	225	28.9%
Other		37	4.8%

Instruments

The current study used an online survey (SurveyMonkey) and was divided into six different sections: 1) educators' backgrounds (state where they work, role within their district, familiarity with the SoBL); 2) resources and/or professional development opportunities that helped them implement the SoBL; 3) methods of promotion and information dissemination about the SoBL to students and parents; 4) perceived benefits of the SoBL; 5) requirements and procedures for earning the SoBL, including perceived barriers; and (6) feedback about the SoBL for a total of 50 questions.

Procedures

The study included three major stages: 1) survey design; 2) survey dissemination; and 3) data analysis. First, the researchers developed questions addressing how the SoBL was being promoted, implemented, and critiqued nationally. The survey was then reviewed by ten project advisors with expertise in survey design, K-12 education, or the SoBL policy, and revised based on their suggestions. The survey was administered in two rounds. The first round was a targeted approach; recipients were selected based on their role in specific school districts. The sampling procedure was as follows: for the District of Columbia and each of the 39 states that had implemented the SoBL at the time or were in the process of piloting it at the time of data collection, researchers attempted to locate, via the State Department of Education, a list of schools or school districts. If not available, re-

searchers referred to a database of all public high schools in a state. From these lists, 20-25 high schools that represented low-, middle-, and high-income districts and a representative sample of racial/ethnic backgrounds for the state were selected. Once the specific schools were selected, researchers compiled publicly available contact information for the World Language teachers, English as a Second/New Language Teachers, English Language Arts teachers, Guidance Counselors, and World Language/ESL Coordinators in those schools, aiming for at least 10 contacts per school, with a total of 200-250 educators per state. The second round of data collection involved dissemination through listservs, newsletters, social media, and language resource centers (LRCs), advertised to educators involved in implementing the SoBL. The data was then cleaned to exclude respondents who did not answer the background questions and at least one other section of the survey to eliminate responses from participants who indicated that they were "not at all" aware of the SoBL award prior to taking the survey and/or did "not at all" understand the process for students attaining the SoBL. Ultimately, 778 respondents' data was included in analysis and coding. The responses for the multiple-choice questions did not require additional coding, while several of the open-ended responses were thematically coded by a research assistant. The emergent themes were then validated and analyzed by the first author.

Results

The results will address the following aspects of SoBL implementation: 1) information dissemination; 2) professional development; 3) curricular washback; 4) implementational choices; and 5) concerns and proposed improvements.

Disseminating Information about the SoBL

This section addresses the methods that respondents identified as used in their educational contexts to disseminate SoBL information to students and parents, the languages in which this information was accessible, the grades in which students are notified about it, and the perceived effectiveness of this outreach. Table 4 shows the responses to the question: "How are students in your school/district informed that they can apply for the Seal?".

702 participants responded to this question and could select multiple options. The most common method of information dissemination selected was World Language class announcements (81.6%). The second most popular method, though much less frequent, at 38%, was ESL class announcements. School counseling was shown to play a large role in informing students about the SoBL, with 37.2% of respondents indicating that information was disseminated through counselor advising. However, discussed in a later section, despite their large role in informing students about the award, school counselors are underrepresented as the targets of professional development pertaining to the SoBL. Only 7.5% of respondents indicated that students are informed about the SoBL through announcements in English Language Arts (ELA) classes, which are often the only language and literature

Table 4
Methods of information dissemination to students
(*N*=702 (totals are more than 100% because respondents could choose multiple options)

Method	N	%
WL class announcements	573	81.6%
ESL class announcements	267	38.0%
School counselor advising	261	37.2%
Email to eligible students	208	29.6%
Hallway signs	143	20.4%
Flyers	140	19.9%
PA system	118	16.8%
Newsletters	116	16.5%
Social media	102	14.5%
ELA class announcements	53	7.5%
School assembly	49	7.0%
Curricular fairs	33	4.7%
College fairs	11	1.6%
Other	203	28.9%
Not informed	23	3.3%
Don't know	15	2.1%
Parent contact	16	1.6%
Website	10	1.5%

classes required of high school students. Emails to eligible students and hallway signs were also selected as promotional methods by over 20% of respondents, with other methods such as newsletters, social media, and school assemblies playing smaller roles. The "other" category yielded a diversity of results, many of which stated a variation of "unknown," via parents, that students are not informed or have no other additional approach.

The preferred methods of information dissemination displayed in Table 4, corresponded closely with who participants judged to be the most difficult student populations to identify through outreach, as shown in Table 5. respondents indicated that students are informed about the SoBL through announcements in English Language Arts (ELA) classes, which are often the only language and literature classes required of high school students. Emails to eligible students and hallway

signs were also selected as promotional methods by over 20% of respondents, with other methods such as newsletters, social media, and school assemblies playing smaller roles. The "other" category yielded a diversity of results, many of which stated a variation of "unknown," via parents, that students are not informed or have no other additional approach.

The preferred methods of information dissemination displayed in Table 4, corresponded closely with who participants judged to be the most difficult student populations to identify through outreach, as shown in Table 5.

Table 5
Student groups perceived to be most difficult to identify through outreach (*N*=687)

Student Group	**N**	**%**
Current English Language Learners	76	11.1%
Former English Language Learners	82	11.9%
Heritage/Home Language Speakers	120	17.5%
Students not enrolled in a world language course	256	37.3%
World Language Learners	30	4.4%
None (all students are reached effectively)	123	17.9%

Of the 687 participants who responded to this question, 37.3% indicated that students not enrolled in a WL course were the most difficult to reach, consistent with the finding that WL classes are most popular for SOBL announcements. 17.5% of participants indicated that heritage speakers were the most difficult to reach, followed by former ELs (11.9%) and current ELs (11.1%). Only 4.4% of respondents indicated that WL learners were most difficult to reach, and 17.9% indicated that all students were reached effectively.

Table 6 illustrates the methods most used to disseminate information about the SoBL to parents. Participants were once again able to select multiple options. As Table 6 shows, 41% noted that parents can access information about the SoBL through their school website, while 32% indicated that parents receive newsletters with information about the award. Since 42.6% of participants selected the "Other" option, either exclusively or in addition to the previously noted options, their descriptions corresponding to the "Other" response were further coded. Of the 291 participants who selected "Other," 76 explicitly noted that parents are not directly notified about the SoBL, while 52 were unsure about what actions their

Table 6
Methods of information dissemination to parents (*N*=683)

Method	N	%
School website	280	41.0%
Newsletters	220	32.2%
Brochures	101	14.8%
Orientation events	127	18.6%
Open houses	201	29.4%
Social media	118	17.3%
Flyers	135	19.8%
Other	291	42.6%
No notification	76	11.1%
Unsure	52	7.6%
Email	43	6.3%
Letter home	20	2.9%
By teachers directly	20	2.9%
District website	8	1.2%
Awards night	7	1.0%
Local newspaper	4	0.6%
Miscellaneous	61	8.9%

school or district takes to notify parents. Forty-three specified that parents are notified via email while 20 said that a letter is sent home to families of eligible students; 20 also commented that teachers may notify parents directly, either during parent-teacher conferences or informal conversations. Other options included engagement with community liaisons and stories in local newspapers or radio shows. Most of the remaining "Miscellaneous" responses elaborated on previous options already selected through the multiple-choice responses, or localized practices such as "outreach to community heritage language centers."

The survey also assessed the range of languages in which information about the SoBL is disseminated to students and parents. Table 7 demonstrates responses to the questions "Select the language(s) in which you distribute information about the Seal to students?" and "Select the language(s) in which you distribute information about the Seal to parents?" The options corresponded to the 15 languages spo-

ken most commonly by students in the US, in addition to English (U.S Department of Education, 2016).

Table 7
Languages in which information about the SoBL is disseminated to students and parents

	To students (*N*=700)		To parents (*N*=686)	
Language	**N**	**%**	**N**	**%**
English Only	236	33.7%	289	42.1%
Spanish	394	56.3%	297	43.3%
French	187	26.7%	78	11.4%
Chinese	94	13.4%	47	6.9%
German	70	10.0%	37	5.4%
Arabic	50	7.1%	28	4.1%
Russian	43	6.1%	22	3.2%
Portuguese	40	5.7%	26	3.8%
Japanese	27	3.9%	15	2.2%
Vietnamese	23	3.3%	14	2.0%
Korean	18	2.6%	14	2.0%
Hindi/Urdu	17	2.4%	12	1.7%
Somali	17	2.4%	11	1.6%
Tagalog	16	2.3%	10	1.5%
Haitian Creole	9	1.3%	4	0.6%
Hmong	8	1.1%	4	0.6%
Other	119	17.0%	109	15.9%

Of the 686 participants who responded to the question, 42.1% reported providing messaging only in English. The most common non-English languages for disseminating information to both students and parents are Spanish, French, and

Chinese, with only 4 participants reporting distributing information in Haitian Creole and Hmong.

Regarding the timing of information dissemination related to the SoBL,11.7% of the 622 respondents to this question reported beginning outreach in middle school and continuing every year until 12th grade. Most frequently, participants reported beginning outreach in 9th grade and continuing every year until 12th grade (30.2%). However, a few respondents (5.6%) reported beginning in 9th grade, but only continuing outreach throughout part of high school, either ending in 9th, 10th, or 11th grade.

As Table 8 shows, participants were also asked to assess the effectiveness of student and parental outreach.

Table 8
Participants' perceived effectiveness of SoBL outreach for students and parents

	For students (*N*=700)		For parents (*N*=687)	
Extremely effective	93	13.3%	36	5.2%
Very effective	193	27.6%	104	15.1%
Somewhat effective	297	42.4%	317	46.1%
Not very effective	69	9.9%	144	21.0%
Not at all effective	48	6.9%	86	12.5%

Overall, respondents judged student outreach to be more effective than parental outreach; 40.9% of participants perceived student outreach to be extremely or very effective, with 42.4% considering it to be at least somewhat effective. In contrast, only 20.3% of participants perceived parental outreach to be extremely or very effective, while 33% judged it to be either not very or not at all effective.

Professional Development

This section highlights the types of professional development (PD) and support that educators across the US receive related to implementing the SoBL. In the survey, participants responded to the question, "Have you received any professional development related to the implementation of the Seal of Biliteracy?"

Most participants (66.1%) did not receive any PD related to the SoBL; therefore, the maximum N-size for the remainder of the questions in this section will be based on the participants that responded 'Yes' to this question (N=258). The participants who reported receiving PD were then asked, "Who administered the professional development?" and were able to select multiple options. Table 9 shows their responses.

Table 9
Who administered the PD? (*N*=257)

Seal of Biliteracy representative	55	21.4%
State administrator	90	35.0%
District administrator	60	23.3%
School administrator	14	5.4%
Other	97	37.7%
Regional educational support organization	18	7.0%
State FLA	18	7.0%
FL Conference	12	4.7%
State Board of Education representative	8	3.1%
Experienced Teacher	8	3.1%
ACTFL	4	1.6%
Testing company representative	4	1.6%
Independent research	2	0.8%
EL Coordinator	2	0.8%
Regional FLA	1	0.4%
Private company	1	0.4%
Miscellaneous	19	7.4%

The most frequent response was "State administrator," followed by. A SOBL representative or a district administrator. The "other" category yielded a few additional sources of PD.

Table 10 (following page) hows responses to the question "Who was the intended audience for the PD?" and were able to select multiple responses.

World language (WL) teachers and WL coordinators were the most frequent intended audience of the PD, at 80.9% and 53.3% respectively, followed by ESL teachers at 40.5%. Less than 20% of participants selected guidance counselors, state administrators, portfolio raters, or school aides as the targets of the PD. Considering that school counseling appeared as one of the top three ways that students are informed about the SoBL, this discrepancy is important to note. Of the participants who mentioned PD, 92.2% noted that the PD they attended consisted of providing attendees with a background on the requirements for attaining the SoBL. It was also very common for the PD to provide an overview of available exams for demonstrating language proficiency (74.3%) and an explanation of proficiency guidelines (72.8%) used to inform the SoBL attainment requirements.

53.3% of participants also received an overview of best practices for implementing the SoBL. Much less frequent, at 16%, was training in how to rate student projects/portfolios. Some of the "Other" responses included training in how to advertise the award across the given school district, training in how to test during shutdowns, and information about inequities between ELs and WL learners in implementation.

Table 10
Who was the intended audience of the PD? (*N*=257)

World language teachers	208	80.9%
World language coordinators	137	53.3%
ESL teachers	104	40.5%
District administrators	79	30.7%
ESL coordinators	78	30.4%
School administrators	73	28.4%
Guidance counselors	46	17.9%
State administrators	20	7.8%
Portfolio raters	13	5.1%
School aides	7	2.7%
Other	16	6.2%

Implementational Choices

This section investigates trends in SoBL implementational choices across the US, including test and portfolio options available, the home languages, funding for tests and staff, and barriers to attainment for different student populations.

Table 11 (next page) summarizes the tests that participants reported using to assess WL proficiency for the SoBL.

The most frequently used tests to assess English proficiency were state assessments of English Language Arts, typically required of both WL learners and ELs. The second most commonly used tests were state assessments of English language development for English learners, which are specific to the EL population. The AP English test ranks third in terms of popularity, followed by the ACT and ACCESS for ELs.

Among the respondents, the top three assessments used to assess WL proficiency for the SoBL were the AP, the AAPPL, and the STAMP4s. Table 12 (p. X) illustrates tests used by participants to assess English proficiency.

Table 11
Tests used to assess WL proficiency for the SoBL (*N*=593)

Test	N	%
AP – Advanced Placement Examination	316	53.3%
AAPPL -The ACTFL Assessment of Performance toward Proficiency in Languages	275	46.4%
STAMP4S - Standard Based Measurement of Proficiency	189	31.9%
IB - International Baccalaureate	93	15.7%
ALIRA – The ACTFL Latin Interpretive Reading Assessment	59	9.9%
SAT Subject Tests	57	9.6%
OPI – The ACTFL Oral Proficiency Interview	56	9.4%
State assessment of foreign language proficiency	45	7.6%
OPIc - The ACTFL Oral Proficiency Interview by Computer	30	5.1%
SLPI: ASL – American Sign Language Proficiency Interview SAT Subject Tests	23	3.9%
None	23	3.9%
WPT/BWT – The ACTFL Writing Proficiency Test/Business Writing Test	22	3.7%
DELE (Diplomas of Spanish as a Foreign Language)	13	2.2%
RPT – The ACTFL Reading Proficiency Test	13	2.2%
LPT – The ACTFL Listening Proficiency Test	13	2.2%
Other	136	22.9%

Table 13 summarizes responses to the questions of "Who pays for the tests to assess world language proficiency for the Seal?" as well as to assess English proficiency.

Table 12
Tests used to assess English proficiency for the SoBL (*N*=578)

Test	N	%
State assessment of English Language Arts	265	45.8%
State assessment of English language development for English learners	130	22.5%
AP - Advanced Placement Examination	129	22.3%
ACT	125	21.6%
ACCESS for ELs	107	18.5%
None	66	11.4%
AAPPL -The ACTFL Assessment of Performance toward Proficiency in Languages	46	8.0%
IB - International Baccalaureate	31	5.4%
STAMP 4S English	24	4.2%
TOEFL Writing	20	3.5%
TOEFL Junior	19	3.3%
TOEFL Independent Speaking	17	2.9%
Other	152	26.3%

Table 13
Who pays for the proficiency tests?

	WL tests (*N*=599)		**English tests** (*N*=556)	
the district, in all cases	230	38.4%	302	54.3%
the district, in high need cases	60	10.0%	18	3.2%
the school, in all cases	46	7.7%	48	8.6%
the school, in high need cases	69	11.5%	39	7.0%
the student	229	38.2%	97	17.4%
Other	130	21.7%	143	25.7%

For both WL tests and English tests, it was most common for participants to report that the district pays for these exams for all students. However, in the case of WL tests, it was almost equally likely for the student to bear the cost, 38.2% of participants reporting that in their contexts, the student pays for WL exams themselves while 17.4% of respondents also noted that students pay for English tests themselves. Table 14 addresses the implementation of portfolios

Table 14
Implementation of the portfolio/project option for the SoBL

	Yes	**No**
Do students complete a portfolio/culminating project to earn the SoBL? (N=589)	140 (23.8%)	449 (76.2%)
Is the project/portfolio completed as part of coursework? (N=140)	74 (52.9%)	66 (47.1%)
Are students paired with a mentor to guide them with the project/portfolio? (N=140)	88 (62.9%)	52 (37.1%)
Are the mentors compensated for their work on the SoBL? (N=84)	15 (17.9%)	69 (82.1%)

Of 598 participants who responded to the question "Do students complete a portfolio/culminating project to earn the SoBL?," 23.8% said "Yes". Only participants who answered "Yes" were then asked about the details of this process. Of the 149 participants who answered yes, 52.9% noted that the project/portfolio was completed as part of students' coursework, meaning in 47.1% of cases, students completed the portfolio on their own time. 62.9% of respondents said that students were paired with a mentor to guide them through the project/portfolio, but only 17.9% of those who indicated that students were paired with a mentor noted that the mentors were compensated for their work on the SoBL. Table 15 describes who scores projects and portfolios.

Table 15

Who is involved in scoring the project/portfolio? (*N*=140)

Teachers	117	83.6%
Administrative staff	53	37.9%
Interpreters	26	18.6%
Community members	39	27.9%
Local university lecturers	20	14.3%
Other	29	20.7%

83.6% of respondents noted that teachers scored these projects, while 37.9% said that administrative staff were also involved as raters. The remaining responses indicate partnerships with interpreters, community members, and local university lecturers, to help score projects, often in LCTLs).

The majority of the 549 respondents (72.3%) indicated that no one is compensated specifically for their SoBL duties, while around 6% indicated that WL/EL Coordinators, proficiency raters, and language teachers are compensated for rating.

To better understand which LCTLs were represented as SoBL languages, participants were first asked if students in their school or district have earned the SoBL in languages not taught in school (i.e., home). There was an even split among the participants, 51.3% indicating that students have been able to earn the SoBL in a language not taught in school. Table 16 indicates which languages students have been able to earn the SoBL in, within the participants' districts.

Table 16
Home languages for which students have been able to earn the Seal (*N*=299)

Language	N	%
Spanish	168	56.2%
Chinese	148	49.5%
Arabic	115	38.5%
Russian	104	34.8%
French	93	31.1%
German	78	26.1%
Portuguese	73	24.4%
Japanese	69	23.1%
Hindi/Urdu	67	22.4%
Korean	66	22.1%
Vietnamese	60	20.1%
Tagalog	47	15.7%
Somali	35	11.7%
ASL	28	9.4%
Haitian Creole	25	8.4%
Hmong	16	5.4%
Other	113	37.8%

Spanish, Chinese, Arabic, Russian, French, and German were each selected by at least 25% of respondents as being languages for which students have earned the SoBL. Participants indicated that students have been able to earn the SoBL in upwards of 40 languages, via the OPI. Table 17 illustrates the ways in which students were able to demonstrate proficiency in these languages.

Table 17
Ways students are able to demonstrate proficiency in these home languages (*N*=288)

Method	N	%
Tests	263	91.3%
Project/Portfolio	78	27.1%
Foreign transcript	40	13.9%
Coursework at an outside institution (i.e. community-based heritage school, community college)	26	9.0%
Other	20	6.9%

Tests were by far the most popular method of demonstrating proficiency for the SoBL, while portfol2ios, international transcripts and transcripts from other schools were least employed.
Finally, participants i2dentified which students had the most trouble satisfying the requirements for the Seal.

Table 18
Students considered to have the most trouble satisfying requirements for the SoBL (N=555)

Student Group	N	%
Current ELs	168	30.3%
Former ELs	38	6.8%
Heritage Speakers	100	18.0%
World Language Learners	176	31.7%
Students not enrolled in a world language course	244	44.0%
None have trouble	54	9.7%

The greatest number of participants (44%) believed that students not enrolled in a world language course had the most trouble fulfilling the SoBL requirements, followed by 31.7% believing it was WL learners that had the most difficult time.

Participants were also asked, for the student group that they identified, to explain the major obstacles they believe they have in attaining the SoBL. Those who selected WL learners repeatedly noted that the language sequences offered in high school were insufficient to allow students to attain the intermediate level proficiency most often required for the SoBL, specifically speaking and listening. Those who selected current ELs explained that ELs are challenged to satisfy the

English literacy requirements or EARN a passing score on state English exams, as well as to certify proficiency in their home language through a recognized exam. Some respondents also noted that ELs may not receive or fully understand the information about SoBL requirements, and often submit incomplete applications or portfolios. One participant from California also commented that the level of English required for the SoBL in California is much higher than the level required of a WL. Respondents who selected heritage speakers frequently noted that this population may have the speaking skills to obtain the SoBL in their HL, but not literacy skills. Others explained that this population often does not receive information about the SoBL if their HL is not taught at their school. Participants who selected former ELs commented that schools do not adequately promote the SoBL to former ELs and bilingual students, especially when not enrolled in WL courses. They also echoed similar concerns to those who selected heritage speakers, about test accessibility in the home language.

When identifying the challenges of students not enrolled in a WL course, many commented that the bulk of the promotion for the SoBL happens via WL classes. Thus, students who either never enroll in these courses, or do not continue through high school when the SoBL may never receive information. Others commented that even if they do know about the SoBL, they have a difficult time completing the testing or portfolio requirements outside of coursework. Participants who selected multiple groups most often listed similar arguments to those described for the individual groups above; there is considerable overlap in the "former EL", "heritage speakers", and "not enrolled in a WL course" categories.

Concerns

Several themes emerged from participants' responses to "Describe any concerns you have about the Seal of Biliteracy." Most frequently, equity for HLLs and ELs, emerged relative to promotion and attainment opportunities. Additionally, locating and financing appropriate exams for speakers of LCTLs continues to be challenging in many districts. Finally, requirements for demonstrating proficiency in English versus a WL continue to be uneven across several states. The second most frequent concern was a lack of awareness by students, faculty, and community members. Many participants noted that it is not only students, but also the majority of school faculty and staff who are unaware of the initiative, and community members who could be engaged to rate portfolios or mentor students, are also rarely contacted. Several noted the lack of training opportunities and resources available for faculty beyond WL teachers. The third major concern was the inadequacy of funding for students to pay for exams and funding for teachers and staff to devote extra hours to SoBL implementation.

Proposed Improvements

In response to "Describe improvements you would propose to the Seal of Biliteracy," the most common response was to standardize the SoBL requirements along multiple axis: 1) making proficiency requirements for English equivalent to those of world languages; 2) equalizing the level of proficiency required across all states, even if there are multiple tiers of the SoBL available; and 3) providing con-

sistent guidelines for how to score portfolios. Participants also emphasized the need to expand outreach by 1) beginning in earlier grades; 2) providing guidance counselors with more information about the SoBL to reach students not enrolled in WL courses; 3) advertising outside of WL courses; 4) distributing information to parents in their home languages; and 5) creating a network of mentors in LCTLs, to facilitate heritage speakers and ELs toward SOBL completion. Respondents also encouraged expanded outreach to universities and employers, so students could reap tangible benefits outside of school. Several participants encouraged states to provide more preparation materials for students and faculty to delineate the steps needed for the required proficiency by the end of high school. This outreach specified a list of which tests are approved for the SoBL and how to access them. Finally, participants called for district and state level funding to be a prerequisite for implementing the SoBL, to allow for financial assistance for low-income students, and to fund full-time positions or additional hours for faculty and staff who implement the SOBL.

Discussion

This section identifies the highlights and implications for each focus of the findings and concludes with limitations of the study. It examines the implications of the limitations and affordances of current approaches to information dissemination, professional development and implementation choices and how current approaches provide and fail to provide support to different populations. The discussion also reflects on the challenges of SOBL implementation raised by the survey respondents and how these perceptions mirror previous research.

Information Dissemination

Survey results indicated important, systematic gaps in information dissemination about the SoBL within schools and districts; namely, learners currently enrolled in WL classes are more likely to have the information needed about the SOBL than former ELs and heritage learners. These findings echo Davin and Heineke (2018) and suggest that additional methods of information dissemination, such as ELA class announcements, hallway signs, newsletters, and curricular fairs, in addition to WL and ESL class announcements, could improve the initiative's reach among students. Like Davin et al's (2018) case study and Davin and Heineke (2018), parents are under-informed about the SOBL. Because individual schools often lack the resources to compile such information, providing information statewide in-home languages could extend the SOBL's reach to parents as well as community members.

The survey also confirmed concerns expressed by teachers in Davin et al. 's (2018) study, that some schools may be unwittingly limiting the number of students attaining the SoBL by informing them of its possibility too late. If students are informed before or at the beginning of high school, it is thus possible to plan a sequence of language study to allow attainment of the proficiency level required for the SoBL. Taken together, expanding outreach past WL courses, providing faculty who do not teach a WL with information about the SoBL so they can also be advocates for students, improving access to SoBL information in multiple languages

at the state level, and starting outreach to students as early as possible, has the potential to improve outreach to groups that have been under informed and ultimately increase the number of candidates for the SoBL.

Professional Development

Survey results showed that only 33.9% of respondents reported receiving PD related to the SoBL. This result supports Davin and Heineke (2018) and their claim that ESL teachers and their students are often not made a priority when promoting and implementing the SoBL, perhaps because PD is taken on by associations that specialize in WL teaching, rather than. Case studies in Washington (Heineke et al. 2019) and Illinois (Davin et al., 2018) highlight the integral role that associations such as ACTFL and its regional and state organizations play in supporting local educators in understanding and administering the SOBL through the workshops and presentations they offer. One option to extend the SOBL's reach is for states to support WL-focused organizations to expand their SoBL-related PD to ESL teachers and coordinators,

One important finding was that the guidance counselors were unlikely to be identified as the intended audience of PD, although they support students in course planning and may be given responsibility for informing students about the SOBL. Overall, survey results suggest that states will need to make it a priority to ensure that PD reaches ESL teachers and coordinators, guidance counselors, and portfolio raters at a much higher rate, and that PD involves more information sharing regarding best practices for implementation and training in how to rate student projects/portfolios.

Implementational Choices

The survey showed, as expected, that three tests (the AP – Advanced Placement Exams, the AAPPL - The ACTFL Assessment of Performance toward Proficiency in Languages, and the STAMP4S - Standard Based Measurement of Proficiency) are most commonly used to attain the SOBL. Moreover, respondents indicated inequities between expected levels of proficiency in English versus world languages. The survey also highlighted underuse of the portfolio option. This finding reflects a broader funding issue in which few staff members who play a role in implementing the SoBL are compensated for these duties. Subtirelu et al. (2019) argued that funding at the state level amounts to a moral imperative, since the status quo promotes inequitable implementation.

Survey results also suggested that there is considerable room for improvement when it comes to certifying proficiency in languages not taught at local schools. As many as 49.5% of participants indicated that students have not been able to earn the SoBL in languages not taught in schools. Of those who indicated that their students were able to do so, 91.3% noted that they certified their proficiency via tests. Other modes of certifying proficiency, such as portfolios, international transcripts, and coursework at outside institutions could be better used to help more students attain the SOBL.

Interestingly, participants selected both WLLs (31.7%) and current ELs (30.3%) as the group that faces the biggest challenges earning the SoBL. The lack of extended

sequences of language study were almost universally cited by participants who selected WLLs as the group having the most difficult time earning the SoBL. The survey demonstrates that for many respondents, the issues faced by ELs may not be as prescient or visible as for WLLs, especially since most respondents were WL teachers themselves.

Concerns and Improvements

Participants' concerns largely mirrored issues that have been identified in existing case studies, especially regarding equity and access for ELsand HLLs, promotional efforts, and funding. Many participants were aware of existing inequities among student groups and vocal about equalizing opportunities for ELs regarding proficiency requirements, access to information, support, and exams. They echoed calls for improving outreach to language minoritized students and parents, and simplifying the requirements to certify proficiency in English, espoused by Davin and Heineke (2017, 2018) and Subtirelu et al. (2019). Participants' remarks also supported perceptions of inadequate information dissemination to students and parents, especially in earlier high school grades, previously identified by Jansa and Brezicha (2017), Davin and Heineke (2018), and Davin et al. (2018). Participants also drew attention to issues rarely discussed in existing literature, such as the lack of PD opportunities for stakeholders other than WL teachers, especially guidance counselors and community-based raters, and the need to establish networks of mentors and raters in LCTLs among community members outside of schools. Calls by Borowczyk (2020) and organizations such as the National Coalition of Community-Based Heritage Language Schools to more effectively integrate community-based heritage schools and community raters into the SoBL initiative have resonated among survey participants.

Limitations

Despite the large N-size and representation from educators across 39 states and the District of Columbia, respondents from each state were unbalanced. For example, while 79 respondents were from NY and 39 from Maryland, states including Alabama, Idaho, Kentucky, Montana, Nebraska, New Hampshire, Nevada, and Oklahoma had only one respondent each. Because Oklahoma, Idaho, and Nebraska only adopted the SoBL in 2020, many schools may not have yet developed formal procedures to implement the initiative. Furthermore, there was a lack of balance between the professional roles of the respondents, with 56.3% of respondents identifying as World Language Teachers, and only 7.1% as ESL teachers, and 28.9% identifying with primarily an administrative role. This overrepresentation of WL teachers mirrors their role in promoting and implementing the SoBL.

The fairly large number of questions in the survey (50 questions) may have resulted in respondent fatigue and survey abandonment. However, efforts were made to balance the desire for comprehensive coverage of topics such as SoBL promotion, assessment options, funding, benefits, concerns, and improvements, with the need to minimize respondent fatigue, by minimizing the amount of open-ended response questions and constructing survey logic that allowed respondents to skip sections that did not pertain to their contexts.

Lastly, participants were encouraged to skip over questions that were not applicable to them rather than indicating "None" "N/A" or "I don't know" as possible responses, which could have provided more information about what types of implementational choices do not apply in certain contexts. This approach would be adjusted in future iterations of the survey.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to understand nationwide trends regarding SoBL promotion, professional development, washback, implementation, and concerns in states that had adopted the SOBL at the time. In revealing large-scale patterns in implementation, this study hopes to make visible the various possibilities for departments of education and local educators who are in the process of adopting or reforming their SoBL plan and expose the obstacles that interfere with full implementation. As stakeholders make implementation decisions in the upcoming years, it will be prudent for them to learn from existing shortcomings in the areas of promotion, PD, and assessment, to ensure that resources are leveraged to reach the greatest number of students, especially those whose language abilities have been derided and undervalued to date. Researchers will then need to continue documenting the extent to which changes in these areas promote more robust and equitable outcomes.

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2 *La joie de vivre* : Joyful Possibilities in the French Classroom

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Challenge Statement

What is "*la joie de vivre*"? Do we experience it in the classroom? And how might we teach *la joie de vivre* to our students? Sixteen Minnesota-based French educators speak to the pedagogical possibilities and the *je ne sais quoi* behind the idea of joy in a French context.

Abstract

In conversation with 16 French educators working at different schools and levels across the state of Minnesota, the author interrogates the cultural concept of *la joie de vivre* and its place (real and potential) in the French classroom for teachers and students alike. Exploring our understanding of *la joie de vivre*, its cultural specificity, where it already emerges in the classroom, and whether and how it can be taught, this article gathers the collective wisdom and creative thinking of French teachers throughout Minnesota to consider the pedagogical possibilities of joy. Readers will find diverse and concrete examples of how the subject can be taken up with students of French, including three case studies from different college campuses where faculty have incorporated *la joie de vivre* or related themes of happiness and well-being into their French curricula. Finally, an interview with Dr. Cathy Yandell, Professor at Carleton College and author of the book *The French Art of Living Well: Finding Joie de Vivre in the Everyday World*, offers additional insights into teaching and living the French *joie de vivre*.

Introduction

As editors Glynn and Spenader wrote in the Introduction to the 2023 Central States Report on Empathy, Equity, and Empowerment, "teachers and students are certainly not the same as they were prior to the pandemic. We are still overcoming a myriad of challenges that the pandemic exacerbated including burnout, loss, racial injustice, and economic insecurity, just to name a few" (p. vii). In this continuing context, where societal headwinds seem to steadily outblow any wind at our backs, the organizers of the 2024 Central States Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Languages invite educators to "Reclaim your Joy" with this year's annual theme.

Indeed, joy—that of teachers and that of students - might offer a promising antidote to the various pressures and stressors, a reason to persist, and/or a means to resist. What would it mean to reclaim your joy in the world language classroom? In English, the possessive adjective "your" makes no distinction between the second person singular and the second person plural, but I want to be clear that my interest in this theme is not as a directive for individual teachers, where an inability to reclaim [their] joy might be perceived or construed as a personal failure rather than a result of systemic issues in education and beyond. Instead, I seek to approach the question of joy through a cultural lens, with the understanding that "inherent in the notion of culture is that it applies to a group, a collective" (Demers, 2007, p. 78) and that cultures exist on societal scales, but also within each classroom.[1] A cultural frame invites us to attend to joy at the level of the macro-cultures that we study in world language education (target cultures) as well as the micro-cultures of the spaces where we work (classroom cultures). Holding these cultural contexts in view, we can bring into focus the conditions that are conducive to the emergence of joy and reclaim joy as a collective quest rather than an individual pursuit.

Reformulating the Central States theme into an open question in the first person plural - "How might we reclaim our joy?" - I became interested in exploring the place and the potential of *la joie de vivre* in the French classroom. The notion of "*la joie de vivre*," clearly marked as French despite its use within the English language, indexes a distinctly French apprehension of joy and highlights that conceptions of joy are culturally bound. While it is possible to find various definitions for "l*a joie de vivre*" in French and English dictionaries, there remains a certain *je ne sais quoi* to joy *à la française* and a relative dearth of scholarship on the subject. As Harrow and Unwin write in the Introduction to their edited volume on j*oie de vivre* in literature and culture, "It may be because of the apparent self-sufficiency of *joie de vivre* that, despite its widespread and often imprecise use as a linguistic term, the concept has rarely been singled out for study" (2009, p. 20). With relatively few resources to read my way to a greater understanding of *la joie de vivre*, I embarked upon a qualitative case study early in the fall semester of 2023 to tease out a shared understanding of the concept among teachers of French and to collaboratively explore the pedagogical possibilities for joy in the French classroom.

Although I restrict the scope of the present inquiry to the French cultural concept and idiom, educators teaching other world languages from places where

similar cultural paradigms exist (such as Italy's "*la dolce vita*" and Costa Rica's "*pura vida*," or perhaps even Japan's "*ikigai*" or Denmark's "*hygge*") may find in these pages ideas and inspiration to explore such themes in their own cultural contexts. For this study, I reached out to educators I knew to be teaching French during the 2023–2024 school year in the state of Minnesota with an invitation to discuss the place of joy in (French) society, classrooms, and curricula. I asked if they might consider with me questions like: What is *la joie de vivre*? Do we experience it in the classroom, and if so, when? And how might we teach *la joie de vivre* to our French students? (For the complete list of pre-set interview questions, see Appendix A.) Teachers who accompanied me in this line of inquiry[2] generously gave of their prep time or of their afternoon and evening hours after a full day of teaching to thoughtfully consider questions and share ideas and experiences in conversational interviews that, for the most part, took place individually and remotely, over Zoom or telephone, and lasted approximately one half hour. I sought to "approach the interview process from a point of mutual learning and equal participation" (2022, p. 2032) adopting a "pragmatic constructivist stance" (p. 2031) akin to what Buys et al. describe in their approach to semi-structured interviews with academic colleagues. Our conversations were grounded in practical applications and the lived experiences of these educators, while simultaneously engaging in the imaginative co-construction of a more intentional and robust place for *la joie de vivre* in world language education.

Participants in the case study represent districts from throughout the state of Minnesota: the Twin Cities greater metro area (Champlin, Coon Rapids, Edina, Golden Valley, St. Paul,), as well as Southern (Northfield, Rochester, St. Peter), West-Central (Alexandria, Morris, St. Cloud), and Northern Minnesota (Pine River-Backus, Bemidji). They represent French programs at every level, from preschool through undergraduate, introductory through advanced language levels, in private and public schools, in immersion and non-immersion settings. Ranging from their first through their 33rd year in the French classroom, collectively, these voices represent 265 years of French teaching experience.

I conducted the preliminary interviews over a two-week period and subsequently reviewed notes and transcripts to synthesize common themes, perform categorical aggregating, and highlight specific instances illustrating realities and possibilities for joy in the French language classroom. I share qualitative findings from these initial interviews anonymously (individual quotations have often been selected because they represent a statement or sentiment made by multiple teachers) in the opening three sections of the present article, where responses are organized according to each of the following queries : (1) How do these French teachers understand and articulate *la joie de vivre*?, (2) Where is it already occurring for them and their students?, and (3) Where do French teachers see the pedagogical possibilities of joy?.

Over the course of conducting these 15 interviews, I learned there were several educators who had already embarked on their own experiments in teaching *la joie de vivre* or themes immediately adjacent to it in their French programs. After answering the questions prepared for the initial interviews, these three educators

participated in extended conversations with me focused on their experiences teaching joy, well-being, and happiness at three different undergraduate institutions within the state of Minnesota. Later, these same educators engaged in a process of "member checking" (Baxter & Jack, 2010, p. 14) to assure the accuracy of my reporting on their case histories. Given the depth of research behind their praxis and the concrete pedagogical resources that they share, these faculty are cited with their names and institutional affiliations in the section of this article titled, "Three Case Histories: Undergraduate Explorations of Joy."

The breadth and depth of participation in this study was enhanced through "snowballing," "an informal referral process between colleagues and friends to connect interested parties to the research" (Quinney et al., 2016, p. 2). It was the process of snowballing that facilitated my 16th and final conversation with Cathy Yandell, Professor of French and Francophone Studies at Carleton College. Like the other educators I interviewed, Dr. Yandell teaches French in Minnesota, however our conversation on *la joie de vivre* focused on her recently published book, *The French Art of Living Well: Finding Joie de Vivre* in the Everyday World. I share the highlights from my interview with Dr. Yandell about her experiences teaching, studying, and writing about *la joie de vivre* in the final segment of this article, "The Art of Living Well."

How Do French Teachers Understand and Articulate "*La Joie de Vivre*"?

While the literal meaning of *la joie de vivre* is "the joy of living," there is something untranslatable about the notion; after all, the French expression exists intact in English. To flesh out what it is we are talking about when we speak of "*la joie de vivre*," I asked teachers how they would explain the concept to a non-French-speaker and to share what, if any, cultural associations they have with the term. The 15 teachers I spoke with certainly did not provide a uniform definition or universal example for *la joie de vivre*, though there were many recurring explanations and illustrations echoed across conversations. I have grouped teachers' comments into five broad themes and sought to order them according to the frequency with which they were referenced. Admittedly, there is a certain degree of cross-over among themes.

Culinary and Other Arts

Food was used to evoke and illustrate *la joie de vivre* more than any other aspect of French culture. Specific examples that came up in interviews include: an apéritif on a *terrasse*; eating outside on a nice day; café culture (not "to-go coffee culture"); a two-hour lunch or dinner; appreciation of regional specialties (wine, cheese, etc.) and appreciation of the flavor and quality of food and drink. Beyond the culinary arts, several teachers referenced other forms of art that *la joie de vivre* celebrates, including poetry, paintings, and music.

Slowing Down

Numerous educators remarked on a difference in the pace of life between France and the United States, and the importance of slowing down in order to experience *la joie de vivre* and to have "the time to be in relationship." The example of relishing lengthy meals or coffee breaks was used repeatedly to demonstrate this slower pace, but other cultural references include the figure of the *flâneur*[3], la

pause, and a mentality of "taking your moment," or, put otherwise, "If we're having a good time, why be anywhere else?" A number of teachers talked about nature as a potent setting for slowing down and experiencing *la joie de vivre*: sitting in the grass, enjoying a leisurely hike ("not rushing through it to get to the next high"), encountering something beautiful in nature and experiencing this beauty as "worth living for" and maybe even as the "best part of life."

The Place of Work

Slowing down is facilitated by a different work culture and France's 35-hour work week. The phrase "Work to live, not live to work" was used in four different interviews to articulate the contrast between the French versus U.S. American approach to work. One teacher elaborated that a critical component of *la joie de vivre* is "to keep work in its proper place in one's life and in one's imaginary." Or as another teacher put it, "Life isn't business." Other ideas I heard related to the "proper place" of work include: prioritizing time for yourself and your family; taking time off of work (enjoying extended vacations - like taking the month of August off, and actually unplugging from work, not continually checking emails while away); less of a focus on "getting ahead" and more enjoyment for where you are; and asking, "What do you like to do when you're not at work?" instead of asking, "What do you do for a living?".

Connection

While a few teachers highlighted *la joie de vivre* that an individual might experience (like the *flâneur* wandering solo through the city or the pleasure of biting into something juicy and feeling the juices run down your chin), many more emphasized *la joie de vivre* as experienced through connection with others: good company; good conversation; shared laughter; companionship; time with family (ex. seeing family every Sunday or "the art of living well with the people who are important to you"); sharing successes big and small; as well as the joy of connections forged through the French language.

Attitude

Multiple teachers made a point of saying that *la joie de vivre* is not a feeling or a specific set of practices so much as a "philosophy" or a "way of life." Other terms that were used to describe *la joie de vivre* in this vein include: appreciation for the simple things; being content with what you have; vitality and a zest for living; an embodied sense of pleasure; avoiding stress ("don't sweat the small stuff"); resilience; inner contentment; an inclination to seek pleasure, companionship and leisure; a stronger sense of the social whole; and clarity around what's important in your life.

One of my interviews for this study effectively exemplified each of the components of *la joie de vivre* outlined above. A high school French teacher, originally from France, was persuaded to participate in this project when our conversation could be scheduled in-person at a coffee shop on a Sunday morning —as a chance to experience real connection, some form of leisure alongside the research and questions —rather than scheduling a virtual meeting in the evening hours after a full day of work. As we chatted over coffee and hot chocolate, allowing our conversation to spill beyond the pre-determined set of questions so that we might learn

more about one another, my interlocutor not only spoke of *la joie de vivre*, but modeled it. All the ingredients of *la joie de vivre* were there: there was the *café* ("culinary arts"), work, yes, but coinciding with human connection ("connection" and "the place of work"), and a lengthy and leisurely conversation well-suited to an unhurried Sunday ("attitude" and "slowing down"). The way the teacher demonstrated *la joie de vivre* in their approach to our conversation affirmed an underlying premise of this project: that we as teachers of French have the potential to teach and to share in *la joie de vivre* with one another and, by extension, with our students.

Across all 15 interviews, there was consensus that *la joie de vivre* is different from what we might more simply call "joy" in an Anglo context. In several interviews, we discussed the sense that "joy" in the U.S. is framed more as an individual endeavor than as a shared societal value or practice.[4] There are cultural aspects to *la joie de vivre* that are decidedly French, however a number of teachers referenced cultural phenomena from other parts of the world that share an affinity with the French*joie de vivre*: prioritizing relationship-building over business (for example, asking sincerely how you are doing, how your family is, conversing at length before getting to "the point" of the meeting, as one teacher has consistently experienced with their French-speaking contacts from West Africa and Haiti); a different, less rushed relationship with time (such as "*l'heure africaine*" —the idea that "it happens when it's meant to happen" rather than whatever the time on the clock may read —that another teacher encountered in Cameroon); or a general attitude toward life reinforced by practices that center and celebrate food, fellowship, enjoyment, and generosity (as an educator originally from Martinique has experienced in their home culture, Spain, and Southern France).

Despite the acknowledgement of the cultural specificities behind the notion of *la joie de vivre*, none of the teachers insinuated that one must be in France to experience it! I wanted to know whether these educators, by their own assessment, experience *la joie de vivre* in their work. My next line of questioning turned to the French classroom to interrogate when and where *la joie de vivre* may already be present for teachers and their students.

Where Is *La Joie de Vivre* Already Occurring for French Teachers and Their Students?

Most of the teachers I spoke with acknowledged the threat that work can pose to *la joie de vivre* (because of its pace, its expectations, the stress that comes with it, and the fact that it can leave us little time for leisure), nevertheless, nearly everyone also affirmed that they do experience *la joie de vivre* in their work as French educators.

For some, the *joie de vivre* they experience in teaching is directly tied to their love of French. Several teachers spoke of the deep satisfaction they felt in sharing the language, culture(s), and their lived experiences in the Francophone world with students. One teacher attributed their *joie de vivre* to the relationships they have built by speaking French, and "because of speaking the language, all the people that brought joy into my life." Among those relationships, the teacher counts "all the friends I had in France," an ever-expanding community of French-speakers here in the U.S., as well as "those relationships that we build with the kids," that is, the rela-

tionships that they develop with students through and thanks to the French language. Another educator described their *joie de vivre* by recounting how an astute question from a third-grade student regarding the French Revolution led the teacher down a rabbit-hole of research, in part so that they could adequately address the student's question, but also because of their passion for the subject, their own love of learning, and the joy of getting swept up in a topic that fuels and fascinates, and then sharing these discoveries with students in a wholly re-imagined unit.

Several teachers spoke of the joy they experience in awakening their students' awareness to the broader world. "There is a world out there and I want you to see it and I'm so excited to tell you about it," said one educator, their own joy and excitement palpable as they spoke. Another echoed a similar sentiment, saying, "It is like opening windows or doors and sometimes mirrors to other worlds. The magic for me of teaching world language is the opportunity to facilitate the learning of the self […] through exposure to the diversity of the world."

Still others talked about *la joie de vivre* not tied to any particular content but derived from doing the meaningful and rewarding work of teaching. A college professor spoke from the experience of having had another career earlier in life: "I have to say that having worked over a decade in the corporate world, that I find many more moments of *joie de vivre* in teaching because I learned that this is my vocation and calling, and I am now expressing who I am meant to be in the classroom." A high school teacher spoke more broadly about what compels people to become teachers in the first place, and what keeps them in the profession: "It can be energizing, and joyful, and feel really valuable to make connections with students."

Indeed, the value of making connections was at the heart of nearly every example of *joie de vivre* that teachers cited for themselves and for their students. I saw the theme of connection emerge in three general categories in these conversations: connection with students, connection within students, and connection among students.

Connection with Students

Most of the responses referenced above could be summarized as educators experiencing connection with their students and with their subject. In addition, teachers cited instances of humor, solidarity, and sincere interest in their well-being that students displayed and/or sincere interest in the teacher's experiences abroad and in the course material as reasons they felt *la joie de vivre* in their classroom.

Connection within Students

By this, I'm referring to students connecting with the course material, building connections in their understanding, and creating connections between their native language or home culture and the language and cultures they are studying. The teachers I spoke with used slightly different terms to describe these moments of connection and comprehension (including "aha moment," (three teachers) "lightbulb moment," (two teachers) "spark," "stars in their eyes," or "the little light in their eyes" (one each)), but in every case, educators witness their students experiencing *la joie de vivre* in these moments and that reinforces the teacher's satisfaction in the classroom as well.

While the "aha moment" may be fleeting, several teachers described seeing a light in their students that endures. One educator identifies *la joie de vivre* when an activity or cultural artifact ignites in students "that spark that this is something that I can enjoy beyond this lesson, beyond this class." Another acknowledged that we don't always know in the moment whether what we say and do in class is making a difference for students, but when this teacher from rural Minnesota recently became aware that former students of theirs had traveled to 63 different countries of the world, they felt joy that they had successfully sent forth "thoughtful and informed" young people who "are making this global impact, these kids from this little town."

Two contributing factors to *la joie de vivre* that teachers referenced repeatedly were growth and agency. Bearing witness to student growth came up again and again in my conversations: "I get the pleasure of teaching kiddos for multiple years and seeing them progress," said one educator. Another spoke of the joy they experience "watching them grow not only as French speakers but as people." By braving questions, building their own vocabulary lists, or pursuing a research topic they are passionate about, students can take ownership of their learning and exhibit their commitment to their own growth. A middle-school teacher spoke of the agency borne out of "exploring passions together and letting that be their language experience. With a proficiency-based curriculum, kids get to choose their own pathways and can express themselves more fully. Building those connections to what they love holds more meaning." As another teacher put it, "[Students] get invested […] that's *la joie de vivre*. You're invested in your life; you're invested in your learning." A third teacher remarked, "Joy and engagement go hand in hand." Taking the lead in their own learning, students determine the directions they will go and the ways they will grow.

Connection among Students

Last but not least, connection among students was cited as a source of joy for teachers who observe it and for students who experience it. It begins with belonging. As a middle school teacher put it, "I think *la joie de vivre* in the context of a classroom starts with creating a sense of belonging […]. When we feel like we belong, there is naturally more joy and we want to show up." At the start of the semester or the year, students who are together in class do not necessarily know one another, but with time, teachers are "seeing students become friends." Multiple teachers went so far as to use the word "family" to describe the connections that form in their classroom, especially after working with the same students over multiple years: "this cohort of people you're taking the language with is like this little family;" "You're just hanging out and learning stuff with your little family;" "They become almost family those kids that are in my room for four years straight."

Thanks to connections with students, within students, and among students, most teachers I spoke with stated that *la joie de vivre* is a regular component of their experience teaching. They tell me that it emerges in the little things, be they routine (a daily grammar exercise, a welcoming activity to open class, a weekly reading from a comic series) or more spontaneous (a student question, an impromptu dialogue, the serendipity of a strong lesson plan that lines up perfectly with the end of the class hour). Most educators also stated their belief that their

students, too, experience *la joie de vivre* in the French classroom, but admitted that it is not every day and not every student.

One educator, however, who was born and raised outside of the United States, told me that they don't think they or their students experience *la joie de vivre*: "In the U.S., people are so stressed out." A key component of *la joie de vivre* in their estimation is "just being," and in their French courses, students "haven't really tasted that." This teacher does think there is potential for students to live and to learn *la joie de vivre*, but it "has to be more experiential […] It would demand reconceptualizing how you teach culture" and, they specify, it would be easier to accomplish outside of class.

Special activities designed with extra effort (a crêpe party, a visit to an art museum, converting the classroom into a candlelit cemetery with the graves of famous French-speakers for *la Toussaint* (All Saint's Day), or a full evening meal with traditional foods from the Antilles) were cited as particularly impactful and joyful experiences for students. These activities spill beyond the confines of the classroom and the quotidian and they stage an encounter with different ways of seeing and experiencing. Several teachers witnessed students who normally struggle to find joy in the everyday happenings of the French classroom experience *la joie de vivre* in these sorts of immersive cultural activities.

Again, nearly all the teachers I spoke with had examples at the ready of *la joie de vivre* already occurring for themselves and their students in their French courses. Next, I wanted to know if and how *la joie de vivre* can be taught, and whether these educators could imagine *la joie de vivre* not as a happy by-product of their teaching, but as a deliberate learning objective.

Where Do French Teachers See the Pedagogical Possibilities of Joy?

For most teachers I was speaking with, this was the very first time they had considered whether *la joie de vivre* could be taught, but upon reflection, they realized this was a theme they had already taken up in various and subtle ways, and that they could center as a learning goal in their French classes and in other aspects of their work with students.

One educator thought to approach *la joie de vivre* by helping students develop their ability to set boundaries. In their estimation, the greatest need is not for students to learn how to experience *la joie de vivre*, but how to protect against the forces that might encroach upon it. They explained, "In order to have *la joie de vivre*, you need to be able to have boundaries. And that's something that I think can be taught, for sure, or at least can be practiced." The teacher described how a similar effort is already occurring in the context of a student advisory group that they work with at their school, where they are having conversations with high school students around ideas of "balance and what fills you up" and seeing a need to coach students in doing less and saying no. This and other teachers thought that the language and concept of *la joie de vivre* could provide a useful framework for advising and mentoring students around managing stress and looking out for their own well-being, not only within French class, but beyond.

Other teachers imagined using *la joie de vivre* as a sort of barometer with students for assessing if their choices and their actions are in alignment with their thriving and enjoyment of life. A high school teacher I interviewed referenced a recent conversation they had with seniors who were discussing their plans for the year following graduation, and acknowledged how questions about the future can stir up a lot of stress in students who are facing big decisions and big pressures. The teacher mused, "I could guide [students] in life discussions through the lens of *joie de vivre*" and imagined the phrase as a sign or slogan they could use to communicate to their students, "This is what I want for you. I want you to experience *joie de vivre*. Don't feel like you have to do *this* or *this* or you have to make *this* amount of money. What's going to make you feel fulfilled and happy?" The teacher expects that the framework would be most effective if it were reinforced over time. They explained, "If I start them young, when they're in my ninth-grade class, and we start talking about this concept of *joie de vivre* and I keep bringing it back and pointing physically to the sign in my classroom…" This could help facilitate an internal dialogue within students and a gauge for decision-making that they could return to over time. The teacher quipped, "Maybe they'll have a big decision in their life, and they'll think, 'What would *Madame* say about *joie de vivre*?'" As a shorthand for living a life they cannot only endure but enjoy, *la joie de vivre* could help students identify and prioritize what brings them meaning and satisfaction.

Akin to the teacher who imagines creating a physical reference point to *la joie de vivre* in their classroom with a sign, another high school teacher is considering arranging part of their classroom into a *café* to create space for *la joie de vivre* through "*café et conversation*" ("coffee and conversation"). Reimagining dialogues at desks in the spirit of *la joie de vivre*, the teacher is interested in "showing [students] this is something that we do, we can just set aside everything else and enjoy a nice hot chocolate or coffee and have a conversation together in French." This teacher already plays with arrangement and ambiance to invite students into a different space and way of being in their classroom, saying, "I want [students] to feel transported when they walk into my room." Wall decorations (textiles, printed greetings, maps, and artwork), music (playing as students enter the classroom and in the background while they work), and lighting (the teacher uses lamps rather than overhead lights in their classroom) help immerse students in a place within their school where they can be, feel, and speak otherwise. This careful curation of setting demonstrates another avenue to empowering students to use the French language and to lean into *la joie de vivre*.

Several teachers I spoke with could readily envision how *la joie de vivre* could fold into their curriculum and guide their planning, be it as an "essential question for a unit" (i.e. What is *la joie de vivre*?), as a useful tool on the "teaching methodology side" (i.e. How do I build *la joie de vivre* into this lesson?), or folded into the International Baccalaureate learner profile (i.e. Might *la joie de vivre* be understood as an expression of "balanced," "open-minded," and "reflective" inquirers that I am obligated to foster through my teaching at an IB school?). But some also see *la joie de vivre* as something that might "butt up against district mandates or grading structures" with the pesky and persistent question of "how do you measure that?"

One teacher cited the early days of the pandemic as perhaps one of the best illustrations of where *la joie de vivre* was given priority in their teaching, precisely because the pressures of mandates and measurements were temporarily put on hold. They described how at "the very beginning of pandemic teaching, when we kind of threw all of our expectations for content acquisition out the window […] we were really thinking about students' mental health." In this context, where students' well-being was allowed to take priority over other learning objectives, the teacher developed assignments and activities that were pleasurable, first and foremost, and that prioritized human connection. Simple things like inviting students to take a walk, or draw a picture, or have a phone conversation with a classmate, these sorts of activities are "easy to get lost when we're focusing on content."

The constraints of curricular content or assessment models might explain in part why, for many teachers, the examples that come to mind around teaching *la joie de vivre* involve discussions and activities that fall outside of the typical confines of classroom teaching: advising sessions, international travel, field trips, assignments concocted during a global pandemic, the rich cultural offerings of a French Club, etc. What *la joie de vivre* most certainly is not is rigid measurements, stifling standards, or a checklist. We must be mindful not to lose our *joie* in trying to make it conform to a system that is not built for it.

A couple of highly experienced college professors I spoke with have been experimenting with radically different ways to assess learners in their French courses with the aims of reducing students' stress levels, increasing students' focus on their learning, and improving the chances for college students to experience joy in their studies. One professor speaks of the "co-construction" of course expectations and assessments: "Students are in charge in my classes right now," developing rubrics for their own assignments and enjoying tremendous flexibility with regard to due dates. The professor tells students in their class, "I really want to meet your best work. Don't just meet a deadline for me. It's not gratifying for you; it's not really gratifying for me to read something that I know you dashed off because you felt like you had to." Another professor is trialing an entirely portfolio-based assessment system in their introductory-level French courses for the first time this year. This means that there are no exams. Instead, students complete monthly reflections on their learning and give themselves a grade.

Such qualitative and self-reflective methods of assessment seem better suited than quantitative evaluations to learning goals involving *la joie de vivre*. Teachers I interviewed interpreted what it means to adopt *la joie de vivre* as a learning objective in one of two primary ways (and, in many cases, as both): (1) as a cultural topic of study or (2) as a desired outcome of students' classroom experiences. The latter situates *la joie de vivre* not as a cultural phenomenon that exists independent of and outside of students' lived experiences, but as an intercultural interaction shaped by students' identities and positionalities. In their work on the intercultural dimension of language teaching, Byram et al. (2002) encourage language teachers to foster the attitudes, knowledge, skills and awareness that are involved in intercultural competence, while acknowledging "the problem" of assessment. To evaluate students' intercultural competence, there is a need "to assess ability to

make the strange familiar and the familiar strange (*savoir être*)[5], to step outside [students'] taken for granted perspectives, and to act on the basis of new perspectives (*savoir s'engager*)[6]. Most difficult of all is to assess whether learners have changed their attitudes" (p. 23). Exams may evaluate knowledge of the mechanics of language or the memorization of historical figures and facts, but such assessments are poorly matched to the "affective and moral development" (ibid) that intercultural lessons elicit. For this reason, Byram et al. (2002) advocate for the portfolio approach modeled by the European Language Portfolio.

Language teachers in the United States may find a useful framework for inclusion and assessment of *la joie de vivre* in their French classrooms in the Intercultural Communication Proficiency Benchmarks and Performance Indicators jointly issued by the National Council of State Supervisors for Language (NCSSFL) and the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL). Couching *la joie de vivre* as products and practices to be investigated or as language and behaviors that shape interactions with others may help teachers better envision how to incorporate *la joie de vivre* into their teaching and assessment or justify its inclusion in their curriculum. More concrete, real-world examples of educational engagement with *la joie de vivre* will be detailed in the case histories featured in the following section, as we explore the practical applications of *la joie de vivre* within three undergraduate French programs in Minnesota.

Three Case Histories: Undergraduate Explorations of Joy

In a happy coincidence, when I reached out to several of my colleagues working at different liberal arts colleges in Minnesota, I learned that my questions about *la joie de vivre* were ones on which they had themselves been ruminating for some time and that they were already elevating in intentional and explicit ways with their students. In the pages that follow, I offer an overview of how Doctors Sean Killackey, Juliette Rogers, and Tammy Berberi have taken up the theme of *la joie de vivre* (or the related topics of happiness and well-being) at their respective campuses. Each professor's approach and activities are decidedly unique: Dr. Killackey is actively incorporating the theme of *joie de vivre* into departmental activities and offerings, Dr. Rogers has been researching and teaching about happiness and well-being in 19th-century France, Dr. Berberi has been seeking to make happiness and joy the outcomes of her teaching. Other educators might find in these case histories productive and joyful possibilities that can be adopted or adapted to their own teaching contexts.

At St. Olaf College in Northfield, Minnesota, the French department has a practice of selecting a different theme each academic year that appears in all French course syllabi, has a dedicated bulletin board in the language building, guides the selection of films included in the French film series, and influences certain materials incorporated into coursework. Last spring, Sean Killackey, who teaches at St. Olaf, proposed *la joie de vivre* as the French program theme for the 2023-2024 school year. On the heels of an especially challenging year, still feeling the aftereffects of the pandemic, Killackey's colleagues agreed: students and professors alike could use more *joie de vivre*.

Killackey raises the point that sometimes in pursuit of a sophisticated, intellectual experience or offering, academics rush past the simple joys and daily pleasures: "we're skipping the hors d'oeuvre and jumping straight into the *épinards* (spinach)…or whatever vegetable one might find is healthy, but bitter. *Endives, peut-être* (maybe endives/chicory)!" So, this year is about relishing the little things, highlighting pleasurable practices in French and Francophone cultures, and intentionally making more room for delight.

In the spirit of *la joie de vivre*, there is a playful competition this year among language sequence classes at St. Olaf to see which section can complete outside course requirements first (such requirements offer something of a "choose your own adventure" model and include participation in different categories of activities including events at the French House ("*Maison francophone*"), the French film series, lectures by professors or invited guests, conversations with more advanced speakers, etc.). A bulletin board, dedicated to this year's theme in ways both visual and interactive, shows thermometers rising on a dozen Eiffel Towers to track each class' progress and show which section is in the lead.

Also, on campus every Sunday and Tuesday evening, there is a screening of a French-language film (with English subtitles), open to the entire student body. While certain films are tied closely to course content, the annual theme determines what other films will be included in the selection. As Killackey explained, "The flavor of those films […] is wound around the theme of the year. This year we're trying to pick films that really just express joy […] They are joyful, beautiful, thought-provoking films." A recent example? The 2002 documentary *Être et Avoir* that follows children and their school teacher at a small elementary school in rural France. Killackey describes it as "a simple film that looks at childlike pleasures of daily life."

At the time of our conversation, still very early in the academic year, the focus at St. Olaf had been on creating opportunities for the theme to be visible and present for students, but Killackey was considering possibilities to make *la joie de vivre* even more explicit. Asking students, "Can you explain *la joie de vivre*?" or "Can you identify moments that a character [in a film or course reading] exuded *la joie de vivre*?" could develop and demonstrate student understanding of the content and might help students recognize and articulate where they experience *joie de vivre* themselves. Afterall, Killackey makes the point that just because these French terms exist as borrowed words in English, "you cannot assume a student knows terms like *savoir-vivre* and *bon vivant* and j*oie de vivre*." This year's theme of *la joie de vivre* at St. Olaf College hopes to rectify that.

Heading north from St. Olaf about 40 miles, we find ourselves at Macalester College in St. Paul where, in the fall semester of 2022, French Professor Juliette Rogers offered a 19th-century French seminar entitled *À la recherche du bonheur et du bien-être* ("Searching for Happiness and Well-Being"). The upper-division French course explored themes like utopias, revolution and happiness, consumer society and happiness, as well as happiness and questions of gender and equality through plays, short stories, and novels of the 19th century, as well as visual art including paintings from the Barbizon school, and impressionist and post-impressionist movements.

Rogers explains how 19th-century France offers fertile terrain for consideration of these themes in an interview published in the *MacToday* alumni magazine:

> With a lot of things happening today, we can find roots in the nineteenth century. Like now, it was also a time of great change in French thought. The French Revolution ended up a real deception and letdown. There were great ideals in 1789, but they were followed up by the Reign of Terror and then Napoleon's empire. By the 1820s, people were unhappy with what they had thought was going to be a great new world. As a result, there was this shift in nineteenth-century France toward looking for utopian societies and a better world. (Linstroth, 2023)

Though Rogers focused on "*le bonheur*" (happiness) in her course and did not specifically discuss *la joie de vivre* with students, my own research suggests that the notion of *la joie de vivre* emerged in France in this same timeframe.[7] Finch (2009), in an essay tracing the literary and lexical legacy of the term, makes the argument that it is in late 19th century France that "*la joie de vivre*" blossoms, both as a means of moving beyond the '*Mal du siècle*' of the early 19th century and of wrestling *joie* from a mystical, religious sphere to secure its place in secular French society (p. 305).

While there is a particular preoccupation with happiness and joy in 19th-century France, there are undoubtedly more instances of striving for satisfaction than achieving it. So, despite the happy theme of Rogers' seminar, not all of the texts or topics were uplifting: "Some of the things I taught, they had very tragic endings […] Not everything was blissful and happy, but it was the process of looking for happiness that was the central focus in some works." Put another way, Rogers asks, "What kinds of things can you do to look for [happiness,] even if you're not going to find it for yourself?"

A motif across multiple readings in Rogers' seminar was the pursuit of happiness on a societal level rather than an individual one. In the utopian novel *Voyage en Icarie* by Étienne Cabet, for example, a character from England by the name of William ends up on an island where the French have been conducting a utopian experiment for years. The British character indexes a culture that prioritizes individual happiness and agency and, in this way, offers a foil to the French members of the utopian society who espouse a cultural framework where, in Rogers' words, "the whole is more important than the individual." Such readings show that notions of happiness and well-being are culturally bound and can vary over time.

A consistent component of Rogers' seminar was bringing the themes of happiness and well-being into conversation with the pursuit of happiness in our contemporary moment. Typically, the first five to 10 minutes of each class period were dedicated to exploring happiness and well-being in our time. Either Rogers or one of her students would bring in content to share with the class, be it a survey ranking the happiness of people in different French-speaking parts of the world or information on various intentional communities as models of present-day experiments in utopia.

Another way that Rogers sought to bring questions of well-being to life for her students today was through the invitation to keep a gratitude journal. She encour-

aged students to take five minutes at the end of the day to note three "very minor things […] things that normally you wouldn't notice, but things that were good that day." It wasn't a requirement, and not every student participated, but Rogers shared, "Some students did it and they said at the end of the semester that it made a huge difference in their view of the world and their own life on campus." Another high-impact practice from the course involved a visit to the Minnesota Institute of Art toward the end of the semester. Rogers recounts,

> It was when we were doing the study of the impressionists[…] and we went and stood in front of some of these paintings that we'd been talking about and talked about how we felt, and two or three of the students said, 'I have never been to a museum before. This is incredible.'

In these ways, it appears that, for several students in the class at least, the opportunity to experience new things and explore new perspectives helped awaken a certain degree of happiness, wonder, or *joie de vivre*.

For Tammy Berberi, teaching French at the University of Minnesota, Morris on the western edge of the state, this sort of joyful awakening and emotional impact is a primary objective of her teaching. In Berberi's case, *la joie de vivre* is not so much a cultural phenomenon that she wishes for students to study and to understand, as a state of being (and of well-being) that she seeks to foster in her French students.

Berberi traces her interest in teaching happiness and *joie de vivre* to 2016, when she attended a summer session in Massachusetts on contemplative pedagogies with The Association for Contemplative Minds in Higher Education. There, she participated in a workshop with a scholar who developed one of the first large undergraduate classes on happiness. He challenged Berberi, saying, "I want you to design a syllabus where the only outcome you want is joy. That is the learning outcome: joy." And as Berberi tells it, this invitation guides her pedagogy and has served as the "heartful center of my journey as a teacher" ever since.

Berberi has not yet developed a full course dedicated to joy or happiness, though the idea still intrigues her. But she acknowledges, "We have to have other learning outcomes, for sure," and has therefore found ways to foster joy within existing courses alongside other content. For example, she incorporated a unit on happiness in a two-credit course called "French for Sustainability" that she taught most recently in the spring of 2022. Though the course topic and unit theme may at first seem an unlikely match, Berberi states, "I do think well-being is a part of planetary sustainability. You have to care about yourself to care about the future of the planet."

The French for Sustainability course is taught entirely in the target language for advanced students of French. Berberi describes the happiness unit in this way, "We spend about two weeks thinking about happiness. How to get it. How to measure it. We also meditate every day in my class. Or we do a lot of positive psychology, […] like 'three good things' or gratitude." She continues, "We look at the World Happiness Index. We look at this philosophy group called les Spinoza. We listen to a podcast all about happiness in our contemporary world." Of all these exercises, it is meditation that has proven to be the most impactful by Berberi's as-

sessment. In fact, she has made a practice of incorporating meditation into other courses she teaches, beginning class sessions with two or three minutes of meditation. She reports, "I have noticed that affective filter goes down in classes where we really commit to those two little minutes per class. I have noticed that students take more risks, and then they know how to swoop in and be more supportive of somebody else. I have noticed that we are actually more connected around the French language. […] I have noticed that attendance is better."

It is quite remarkable that Berberi attributes these many positive outcomes to a practice that is an exercise in letting go. Meditating with students doesn't involve curating the perfect set of resources or activities, crafting a clear and concise explanation of a concept, or designing the most creative and effective assignments, that so many of us teachers work so hard to do. Instead, it involves the teacher getting out of the way, and maybe helping students get out of their own way, too, to create the space for something beyond or other than what we might plan. And this may be precisely the sort of space where *la joie de vivre* can emerge. Berberi muses, "A good classroom climate is not quite *joie de vivre*." Rather, she invites us to consider, "Maybe *joie de vivre* is more contingent […] If you're too planful and you've scripted everything in advance, then I don't know that the serendipitous part of it can happen."

When I ask Berberi if she believes *la joie de vivre* can be taught, she replies,

> I think it can be taught. I don't think it's thematic. It's a set of feelings. You have to awaken them but then you have to point to them and name them. You say, 'that is what we're feeling together.'

And she admits, "It takes a lot of vulnerability to do that." But this was part of the challenge that Berberi was presented with back in 2016 at the workshop on contemplative pedagogies. The leader who prompted Berberi to develop a syllabus on joy told her, "I just want you to focus on how everybody feels when you're together." Even if joy isn't the sole focus or objective of Berberi's teaching, it is a central and enduring one that informs her pedagogical practices regardless of the course topic or the lesson's other learning goals.

The Art of Living Well

I was eager to interview another French professor at a liberal arts college in Minnesota, Dr. Cathy Yandell, for the unique expertise that she could bring to this case study. I learned over the course of my interviews with other French educators that Dr. Yandell published a book in May 2023 all about *la joie de vivre*, drawing upon her decades of experience studying French language and culture and the years she has spent living in France. We connected via Zoom for a discussion of her book in early October 2023.

In T*he French Art of Living Well*, Yandell approaches the question of *la joie de vivre* expansively, considering the art of living well through diverse artistic forms: the culinary arts, visual arts, architecture, fashion, music, philosophy, language, literature, and more. While a small portion of these works of art have been labeled using the language of "*la joie de vivre*" by their creator (for example, a series of

sculptures by Léon-Ernest Drivier in the Trocadero Gardens referenced in a segment of Yandell's book on "Sculpture and Sensuality"), for the most part, Yandell is the one to curate this vast collection of French arts under the title *la joie de vivre*. I asked Yandell to speak with me about the process of determining the parameters of her project, the essence of *la joie de vivre*, and what to include in her book. She shared with me "two over-arching principles" that govern her apprehension of *la joie de vivre*: the body and time.

For the body, she explains, "There's one thing to intellectualizing the idea of pleasure or joy and quite another to doing the thing. I wanted to make sure I included things like moving and tasting, hearing, smelling…" Indeed, Yandell prioritizes the embodied, sensorial experiences of joy in the early segments of her book. "Celebrating the Senses" offers rich descriptions of eating and cooking, flowers and perfume, water treatments and human touch. The subsequent segment, "Shaking It Up," considers the body in movement in French society through activities such as dance, sports, and sex.[8]

As for the temporality of *joie de vivre,* Yandell spoke with me of her longstanding interest in "thinking about how the French think about time." She explains to me that her first book, *Time and Gender in Early Modern Franc*e, posits that "women poets went about the question of temporality very differently" from their male counterparts, with Renaissance poets like Louise Labé embracing "a circular notion of time" as opposed to a preoccupation with permanence. A similarly non-linear relationship to time also shapes Yandell's understanding of the temporality of *la joie de vivre*: "it struck me that when you're thinking about pleasure, that's the kind of temporality that you're talking about. It's not from point A to point B, but it's more, 'What is in this particular moment?'" This different relationship to time is portrayed in Yandell's recent book with passages recounting elaborate dinners, lengthy discussions, and drawn-out *pauses café*.

In writing her book, Yandell tells me, "One of my questions was how do you translate some of these culturally specific things to a completely different culture that might be able to adapt them in their own ways?" A preliminary response she offers: "we're probably not going to have three-hour dinners, but we probably could spend more time talking to people at dinner." Afterall, a dinner doesn't need to last three hours for those around the table to enjoy their food, slow down, and savor connections: three key ingredients to *la joie de vivre* identified by Yandell as well as other French educators I interviewed.

I next asked Yandell about the origin of her book project and learned that *la joie de vivre* was a topic she first explored with students. She taught a course at Carleton entitled "*La Joie de vivre*," and recounts, "an editor from St. Martin's Press was visiting Carleton with his daughter […] and saw the title of that course and wrote me an email and said, 'Would you consider writing a general public book on this?'" In fact, the course that caught the editor's attention was Yandell's second on *la joie de vivre*. She taught the first iteration while abroad leading a group of students spending a spring term in France: "I was looking for a thematic for a Paris program […] and I came up with this theme as a way to integrate students into French life and have them thinking about different questions of perception."

I asked Yandell if she could share more about the exercise of translating a course that was initially envisioned and designed expressly for the sort of bodily encounter with culture that can be accessed when one is studying abroad and eating the foods, attending live performances, and staying with host families in France, to then take up the same theme back in the United States. It turns out, the exercise was even more complicated than that, because Yandell taught the 2.0 version of the course online, in the throes of the Covid pandemic. I wanted to know what survived that transposition, and Yandell replied, "in fact it wasn't a transposition. It was a completely different course." There were some obvious limitations to what students were able to do given the circumstances. Yandell would have liked to bring the body more front and center in the class that was offered stateside, but "the best we could do was a creative project on the home front." Students were given the option of making videos, presentations akin to a TED Talk, art projects, or music, as well as the choice between presenting their own conception of *la joie de vivre* or performing an in-depth study of *la joie de vivre* as presented in one of the texts the class had studied together.

Some of the texts selected for course readings were the same across both iterations of the *La Joie de vivre class*. The authors appearing in the course syllabi are also featured within the pages of Yandell's book for the way these cultural figures inform and illustrate her understanding of *la joie de vivre*: Montaigne, Ronsard, Baudelaire, for example, as well as the contemporary writers Philippe Delerm and Alexandre Jollien. Delerm is the author of *La Première gorgée de bière et autres plaisirs minuscules* (available in English under the title *The small pleasures of life: The French Art of Living a Good Life*, though a more literal—and I think more evocative – translation would be *The First Taste of Beer and other tiny pleasures*). Jollien is a writer with cerebral palsy and a philosophy degree who writes about, in Yandell's words, "how to find joy in the midst of conflict and circumstances beyond their control," a message particularly poignant for students during a pandemic where so much lay outside of their control.

Yandell references Jollien's work in *The French Art of Living Well* in a section on the figure of the underdog in French culture, writing,

> In order for humans to understand health, they must first experience sickness. But Jollien, […] following Nietzche,[9] argues that the conditions of health and sickness are not opposites, as innumerable forms of health exist that incorporate disability and a wide variety of conditions. Only through this understanding, he argues, can we arrive at a state of true health. (2023, pp 157-158)

If sickness is integral to our understanding of health, might the disagreeable aspects of life be necessary to our ability to know *la joie de vivre*?

I asked Yandell about the inclusion of a number of anecdotes on unpleasant encounters and cultural misunderstandings within her book on *la joie de vivre*. Yandell tells me, "When I first started writing it, [the book] was really just positive, positive, positive. And then I thought, there is no such thing as a pure *joie de vivre* kind of life." Yandell began to consider how certain things that we may generally

view as negative – like arguing – may be part and parcel of the French art of living well. Yandell explains, "we Americans tend, far too much, to associate ourselves and our self-worth with whether or not you agree with me," whereas in France, "if I say, 'I don't agree at all with you,' that has nothing to do with how I feel about you as a friend." The way the French argue, by Yandell's assessment, leads to a less conflict-averse society, one where there is space for robust debate that can lead to important social change. Yandell sought to take such conflict into account, to acknowledge the tensions and challenges that are a part of life everywhere and certainly present in French society and to consider, "how do you fit that into a life that is still about *la joie de vivre*?"

To lift up *la joie de vivre* in the French classroom, then, is not to negate the reality of the challenges, traumas, and failures that exist in our educational and broader societal landscape. Perhaps the hardships might even awaken in us a greater receptivity to joy. As a high school French teacher suggested to me in our interview, educators may have answered the very same questions about *joie de vivre* quite differently just a few years ago; the Covid pandemic has made many of us more aware of how much we need joy in our lives, in our work, and in our learning. Though we cannot suspend life in a perpetual state of *joie*, neither should our stress be static. How then do we develop our capacity, and that of our students, to move more nimbly between the two and to ensure that we savor *la joie de vivre* when and where we can find it?

When I asked Yandell, as I did each of my other interviewees, whether *la joie de vivre* can be taught, she tells me, "I don't know if you can 'teach' *la joie de vivre*, but you can teach techniques […] to know how to access it better than before." For Yandell, it comes back to the body and to time: "Forcing somebody to take time to notice those kinds of things that we tend to skip over and that contribute to the whole notion of *joie*." For this, Yandell recommends an activity like having students pick a sense, go outside for 15 to 30 minutes, focus on "their experience of a particular sensation," and then reflect upon that through writing or in-class discussion. Inviting students to tune into their bodies and their senses is a practice fit for undergraduate students to young preschoolers, and one that doesn't necessarily require heavy lifting in advance preparation for the teacher. Furthermore, by fostering students' own capacity to access joy, teachers share the responsibility for the emergence of *la joie de vivre* in the French classroom with their pupils.

My conversations with Yandell and with other French educators living and teaching in Minnesota reveal multiple paths to joy—activities, attitudes, agency, ambiance, and experiences from the simple or the slow to the sensational or serendipitous—that all lead toward a greater capacity for *la joie de vivre* in ourselves, our students, and our classrooms. I am thankful for the opportunity to learn with and from the talented teachers who collaborated in this study, and I extend my sincere gratitude to all who contributed their voices to the conversation: Amandine Bailey, Séverine Bates, Tammy Berberi, Ashley Dalbec, Megan DeChaine, Sophie Kerman, Sean Killackey, Maija Klees, Melanie Lindquist, Chloe Mais Hagen, Maria Mikolchak, Isabelle Navratil, Melissa Norwood, Juliette Rogers, Cliff Schwartz, and Cathy Yandell. Thank you for bringing your lived expe-

riences, measured considerations, and inventive imaginings to this case study. Equipped with the pedagogies and praxes that you have shared with us, I hope that all interested educators are empowered to name, to teach, and to (re)claim *la joie de vivre*.

Notes

1. Făt provides a succinct and useful definition of classroom culture as "an ensemble of values, beliefs, aspirations, expectations and behaviors, which prevails in a classroom, conditioning its performance" (2015, p. 116).
2. This project was formally approved for exemption from IRB review by the College of Saint Benedict and Saint John's University. All participants signed a statement of consent to participate in the study and to signal their preference to either be assigned a pseudonym and remain anonymous or to use their given name. Each participating teacher provided their express written consent to be named in the Central States Report (see closing acknowledgements).
3. Associated with 19th-century French literary culture and emblematic of leisure, modernity, and urbanism, the *flâneur* observes as he strolls through city parks, boulevards, and beyond. For a concise introduction to this figure, see France Today's 2013 post "French Word of the Week: *Le Flâneur*."
4. One of the interviewees, originally from France, insisted that *la joie de vivre* is a choice, and an important one, for in their perception, *la joie de vivre* is diminishing in French society today. They explained, "I*l y a beaucoup de morosité en ce moment. Quand on est financièrement tendu, ce positivisme disparait. Ça devient un choix individuel quand ce n'est pas une chose de la société*" (My translation : "There is a lot of gloom(iness) now. When finances are tight, that positivity disappears. It becomes an individual choice when it is not present at a societal level.") Immediately after staking this claim, the teacher laughingly remarked upon how American they sounded by espousing such a perspective!
5. "*Savoir être*" is also referred to as "intercultural attitudes," or, more specifically, "curiosity and openness, readiness to suspend disbelief about other cultures and belief about one's own" (Byram et al., 2002, p. 7).
6. "*Savoir s'engager*" is also called "critical cultural awareness," that is, "an ability to evaluate, critically and on the basis of explicit criteria, perspectives, practices and products in one's own and other cultures and countries" (ibid, p. 9).
7. In the Introduction to J*oie de vivre in French Literature and Culture: Essays in Honour of Michael Freeman*, Harrow and Unwin write, "j*oie de vivre* was not used as a substantival phrase until the nineteenth century, and the first attested use of it – by which time it had apparently become common currency – is in Flaubert's 1845 *Education sentimentale*" (2009, p. 21).
8. The section that follows, "Sparking the Mind," betrays that Yandell couldn't entirely resist the intellectualization of joy.
9. Yandell also assigned some of Nietzche's writing in the *Joie de vivre* class. She says, "I wanted to justify why I put Nietzche in there in a French lit class! And it's because he read nothing but French for the last seven years of his life—that's what the sources say. He was quite a Francophile. We read parts of his *Gai Savoir.*"

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Appendix A

Name: Date:
School: Levels/classes:
Years of teaching:

1. If someone were to ask you, as a French speaker and French teacher, what "*la joie de vivre*" is or means, what would you tell them?
2. What, if any, cultural associations do you have with "*la joie de vivre*"? Is there something distinctly French about "*la joie de vivre*" versus what we might more simply call "joy" in an Anglo context?
3. Do you personally experience *la joie de vivre* in your French classroom (or have you ever in the past)? If so, when? What does that look like? Do you have a specific example?
4. Do you believe that *la joie de vivre* can or could be a regular part of your teaching experience, or is it necessarily rare and/or fleeting?
5. Do you believe your students experience *la joie de vivre* in your class or have they ever? If so, when? What does that look like or what could that look like? Do you have a specific example?
6. We're in the business of teaching. Is it possible to teach *la joie de vivre?* (Can *la joie de vivre* be taught?) If so, might we be uniquely positioned as French teachers to do so?
7. What does/could teaching *la joie de vivre* involve? Can you imagine specific routines or activities or a unit or a cultural exchange? What might be possible here?
8. What else? Any other thoughts on this topic that you'd like to share, amendments to earlier statements you'd like to make, or questions you may have?

3 Learning that Lasts: The Power of Brain-based Strategies

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The Challenge

Neuro-education is a cross-disciplinary field combining neuroscience, psychology, cognitive science, and education focused on researching how instructional practices are influenced by the knowledge of how the brain takes in information, stores it, and recalls it. Which brain-based strategies strengthen the successful teaching and learning of world languages? How can professional development be structured to provide teachers with in-depth knowledge and understanding of brain-based strategies along with the time to apply the strategies to their world language classrooms?

Abstract

The field of neuro-education conducts research into effective teaching strategies that improve learning. Concordia Language Villages proposed and received funding from STARTALK, a federal grant program managed and funded by the National Security Agency, to conduct a three-part professional development project for teachers of critical languages to explore the impact of brain-based strategies on world language instruction and learning. The goal of the project was to increase critical language teachers' repertoire of effective brain-based teaching strategies intended to strengthen students' memory of the language they are learning and ultimately increase motivation to continue learning the language. The teacher participants completed a book study about brain-based learning, observed world language teaching and learning in action at Concordia Language Villages, and applied the strategies they learned to their classroom situations. This chapter reports on the three-stage professional development program sponsored by STARTALK for sixteen K-16 teachers of Arabic, Chinese, and Russian from across the United States. Stage One focused on an online book study: Learning that Sticks: A Brain-Based Model for K-12 Instructional Design and Delivery (Goodwin et al., 2020). Stage Two included observation and participation in a variety of activities at Concordia Language Villages followed by discussions of the strategies

observed and applications to the classroom. In Stage Three the teacher participants applied what they learned about brain-based strategies to their classrooms accompanied by weekly online discussions to share successes and challenges implementing the brain-based strategies.

Key Words: *brain-based learning, neuro-learning, critical languages, professional development*

Introduction

The field of neuro-education blends neuroscience, psychology, cognitive science, and education to improve teaching and learning. How do these insights about how the brain works apply to the teaching and learning of world languages? Six Arabic teachers, seven Chinese teachers, and three Russian teachers from across the United States, representing grades K – 16, explored this question in a three-part STARTALK project in 2023 combining online instruction with in-person observations at Concordia Language Villages and culminating with application of brain-based strategies in the teacher participants' classrooms.

STARTALK, a grant program of the National Security Agency, funds innovative programs for teachers and students in critical need languages including Arabic, Chinese, Korean, Persian, and Russian. The goals of the STARTALK program include increasing the number of students learning critical languages, increasing the number of highly effective teachers of critical languages in the U.S., increasing the number of highly effective materials and curricula for critical languages, and enhancing workforce development in the federal government to meet national security needs.

Concordia Language Villages (CLV), founded in 1961, is a nationally recognized language and cultural immersion program affiliated with Concordia College, a private liberal arts college located in Moorhead, Minnesota. CLV provides language and cultural programs in 18 languages including the STARTALK critical languages: Arabic (begun in 2006), Chinese (1984), Korean (1999), Persian (2019) and Russian (1966). Each year, 10,000 language learners of all ages from all 50 of the United States attend the Villages in northern Minnesota. The experiential, residential setting fully immerses the "villagers" in the cultures of the countries where the language is spoken through cuisine, music, sports, dance, theater, history, and exploration of real-world problems. CLV is also one of ten Language Training Centers (LTC) for the U.S. Department of Defense. In 1988, CLV added professional development for world language educators, sharing how languages are taught at the Language Villages and how those methods can be adapted to classroom instruction. In 2006 a Master of Education in World Language Instruction was launched in collaboration with Concordia College.

This chapter reports on the 2023 STARTALK professional development project for critical language teachers, Engaging All Learners Through Brain-based Strategies, offered by Concordia Language Villages. The eight-month project included both online and in-person components in three stages. Stage One focused on an online book discussion of Learning That Sticks (Goodwin et al., 2020). Stage Two included observation, participation in, and discussions about instructional

strategies at Concordia Language Villages, Bemidji, MN. During Stage Three, participants applied their learning about brain-based strategies to their classroom instruction. The goals of the project were to (1) enhance understanding of how the brain learns, stores, and then retrieves information; to adapt brain-based strategies to the learning of Arabic, Chinese, and Russian; and (2) to implement and reflect on the successes and challenges of using brain-based strategies to teach world languages. Ultimately through the integration of brain-based strategies as a regular part of instruction, the intent was to increase students' confidence and competence in communicating in a critical language and to increase students' motivation to continue learning the language.

Literature Review

Learning and Memory and the Brain

Learning and memory are inextricably linked in the brain. Learning is the process of acquiring information and skills and storing them for future use. A Swedish educational psychologist, Roger Säljö, was among the first to observe and document that people have different concepts of learning (1979). He identified five categories of learning followed by the addition of a sixth category by Dall'Alba and Beaty in 1993. Säljö's research described learning as:

- the acquisition of information;
- storing information that can be retrieved for use later;
- acquiring facts, skills and methods that can be retained and used as necessary;
- relating parts of the subject matter to each other and to the real world;
- comprehending the world by reinterpreting knowledge from different perspectives;
- growing or changing as an individual, seeing the world in a new way.

Säljö's categories of learning are compatible with the goals of the World-Readiness Standards for Learning Languages offered by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL):

> The ability to communicate with respect and cultural understanding in more than one language is an essential element of global competence. This competence is developed and demonstrated by investigating the world, recognizing and weighing perspectives, acquiring and applying disciplinary and interdisciplinary knowledge, communicating ideas, and taking action (ACTFL, 2014).

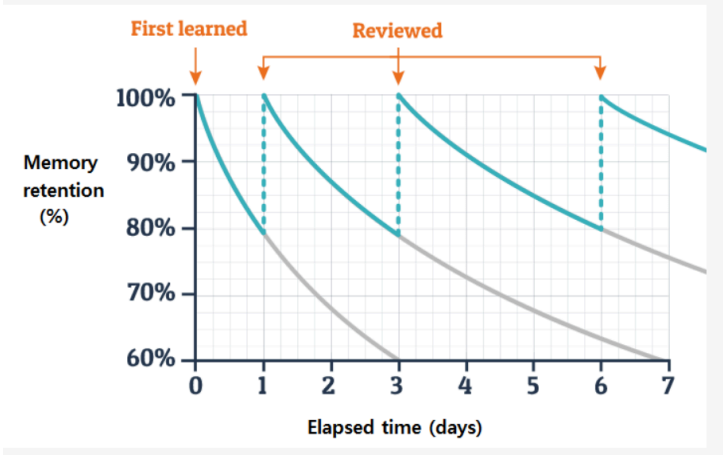
Learning takes place in the brain as networks of neurons connect with neighboring neurons to communicate information that comes in through our senses. These connections or synapses are constantly changing as learning happens. There are about 86 billion neurons in the brain making approximately 150 trillion connections or synapses (Cunnington, 2019).

Memory stores learning for later use. German psychologist Ebbinghaus (1850–1909) was a pioneer in the study of memory. He conducted experiments on himself that led to the Forgetting Curve (the rate at which we forget new learning).

According to Ebbinghaus, we forget 50% of all new information within a day, and 90% within a week. However, he also found that the rate of forgetting can be reduced by reviewing and refreshing periodically what we learned. This is called spaced learning or spaced repetition. Figure 1 illustrates the Ebbinghaus Forgetting Curve and the reduction in forgetting through spaced learning.

Figure 1

Ebbinghaus Forgetting Curve and Spaced Learning



Wik. (2022, April 17). *The forgetting curve: Why spaced repetition is important -. -.*

Ebbinghaus continued his research when he tried unsuccessfully to remember a list of nonsense syllables and concluded that we remember very little of things we don't understand or are not of interest to us. He also found that it is easier to remember information that is presented clearly and is logically organized, and that stress and lack of sleep influence how well we remember (1908). In 2015, Murre and Dros successfully replicated Ebbinghaus' research and concluded that his methods and theories still hold true today.

Atkinson and Shiffrin (1968) proposed the Modal model to illustrate how information is processed in the brain. Information comes into the brain through one or more of the five senses when we notice something that we think is interesting and/or important. This is called sensory memory. For example, students entering a classroom might hear a song or see an image of an open-air market from the target culture. When that song or image is noticed, it is immediately encoded in our short-term memory which lasts about 30 seconds (Miller, 1956). If we connect or cluster or manipulate that first impression, it becomes working memory which can last up to 20 minutes. If we want to keep the information for more than 20 minutes, we need to do something with the information to move it into long-term memory (Young, 2015). A memory system is composed of three steps: notice the information, save the information in memory, retrieve the information (Baddeley et al., 2020).

Brain-Based Learning

Neuroeducation, also called brain-based learning or educational neuroscience, is the study of the activities that occur in the brain when individuals learn and the application of this knowledge to improve classroom instructional practices and optimize curriculum design. Neuroeducation is considered an emerging field linking neuroscience, psychology, and education. This field explores brain research related to learning and memory with the goal of improving education. It was not until the 1990s and the Decade of the Brain, a designation by President George H.W. Bush, that technological advances in imaging of brain function led to the theoretical advances that made educational neuroscience viable as a field (Varma et al., 2008). While acceptance of Educational Neuroscience has grown, there are still some challenges to the field due to misconceptions about the brain and education. These misconceptions are called "neuromyths" because they are either not yet supported by data or are contradicted by existing science. Neuromyths are attributed to a lack of scientific knowledge, a lack of communication and collaboration between scientists and teachers, and resources consulted by teachers that are not grounded in scientific research (Torrijos-Muelas et al., 2021).

In 2006, Hardiman co-founded and directed Johns Hopkins' Neuro-Education Initiative (NEI). Her vision was to combine how the brain learns with classroom strategies that would strengthen learning. She was motivated by the disconnect she observed between educational research and classroom instruction. She saw a need for research-based practical teaching strategies to share with classroom teachers. Since 2006 over 100 universities in the U.S. have established courses and initiatives in neuroeducation. Hardiman says: "I think we really made a significant contribution to closing that gap between educational research and classroom practice. And the winners are the students" (Johns Hopkins School of Education, 2023, para.15).

Professional Development Model

Overview

Engaging All Learners Through Brain-based Strategies: A STARTALK Program for Teachers of Critical Languages was designed for a cohort of 18 K-16 teachers of Arabic, Chinese, and Russian. The overarching goal of the project was to increase critical language teachers' repertoire of effective brain-based teaching strategies. The intent was to strengthen students' memory of the language they are learning and ultimately increase motivation to continue learning the language. After a book study on brain-based instructional design and observation of active learning at Concordia Language Villages, participants applied brain-based strategies in their classrooms, reflecting on the effectiveness of the strategy on learning and memory.

The eight-month professional development project included three stages: Stage One was an online book study and discussion based on Learning that Sticks: A Brain-based Model for K-12 Instructional Design and Delivery (Goodwin et al., 2020). Stage Two was a ten-day in-person residency at Concordia Language Villages including observations and participation in activities at several of the Vil-

lages. In Stage Three, the participants returned to their classrooms to implement a brain-based strategy and reflect on its effectiveness in improving learning and memory through a series of online discussions with the cohort members.

Selection of Participants for the Project

Cohort enrollment targeted 18 Arabic, Chinese, Korean, Persian, and Russian teachers at the K-16 levels. Qualifications for participation included at least two years of classroom-teaching experience, and employment teaching during the 2022–2023 and 2023-2024 years. Priority was given to those teachers who had not previously participated in a STARTALK program. After completing an application, including reasons for applying to this project, the project director interviewed each candidate on Zoom to learn more about their teaching situation and their interest in and background knowledge related to brain-based learning. After details of the project were reviewed and questions from the candidates were addressed, the candidates made verbal commitments to actively participate in the full complement of online and onsite project components if selected. The project director selected 18 participants with attention to a balance of languages, levels of instruction, and teaching experiences. The final cohort included eight Arabic teachers, seven Chinese teachers, and three Russian teachers. There were eight K-8 teachers, three 9-12 teachers, and five postsecondary teachers from Alaska, California, Florida, Georgia, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Ohio, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, Washington. In terms of teaching experiences, four participants had three to five years of teaching experience, three had six to ten years of teaching experience, and 11 had ten or more years of teaching experience. At the end of Stage One of the project, one Arabic post-secondary participant withdrew because of changes in employment. At the end of Stage two, a second Arabic post-secondary participant withdrew because of changes in employment.

Project Format

The project included three stages. Stage One was an eight-week online book study and discussion via Zoom based on Learning that Sticks: A Brain-based Model for K-12 Instructional Design and Delivery (Goodwin et al., 2020). Stage Two was a ten-day residency at Concordia Language Villages, Bemidji, Minnesota where participants observed and participated in activities at a variety of Language Villages. Stage Three took place when participants returned home to implement a brain-based strategy in their classrooms.

Project Stages

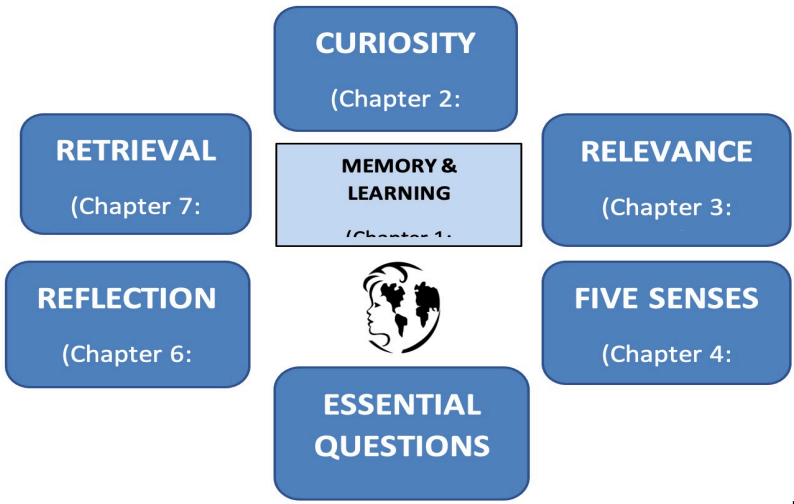
Stage One: Online Book Study and Discussion

The participants completed an eight-week book study including weekly webinars, discussions, and written reflections on Learning that Sticks (Goodwin et al., 2020). The combination of webinars, discussions, readings, and written reflections accounted for 38 hours of synchronous and asynchronous activity. According to Goodwin, his book presents "the big ideas that have emerged from cognitive psychology—the study of learning—over the past few decades and their implications for teaching and learning in your classroom". Each chapter reflects a phase of learning with brain-based strategies that support each phase. During the book

study participants discussed each of these phases and how the recommended strategies in the chapters contributed to "making learning stick". Figure 2 shows the phases of learning represented by the six chapters in the book. The strategy for each phase that evolved from cohort discussions is given in boldface.

Figure 2

Phases of Learning and Key Brain-based Strategy (adapted from Goodwin et al., 2020).



Stage Two: Observation and Participation at Concordia Language Villages

The cohort of STARTALK critical language teachers participated in a 10-day residential summer program at Concordia Language Villages, Bemidji, MN. In addition to the observations and participation in the Language Villages programs, this in-person residential program was designed to create a Teacher Learning Community (TLC) intended to continue after the end of the STARTALK program. Because many of the participants were "departments of one" in their schools, the teachers greatly benefitted from the community development in Bemidji. A reunion on the first day of the in-person residency brought the cohort members together face-to-face. They shared a welcome dinner and played two active learning games facilitated by a teacher of Arabic from Chicago, and a teacher of Chinese based in the Twin Cities.

Visits and observations at the Language Villages began on the first full day of the program in Bemidji. The Chinese teachers traveled to Sen Lin Hu, the Chinese Language Village, the Arabic teachers traveled to Al-WaHa, the Arabic Language

The second day of the program focused on play. The lead instructors taught the participants several games integrating language and culture. They discussed research from the LEGO Foundation on play. The research foundation team iden-

Table 1
Brain-based Strategies Highlighted in the Webinars

CHAPTER THEME	BRAIN-BASED STRATEGIES
Chapter 1: Understanding the Science of Learning Theme: Memory and Learning	• Moving from short-term to long-term memory • Bringing joy to learning through play
Chapter 2: Become Interested Theme: Curiosity	• Creating a safe environment for trying new things • Sparking learner curiosity • Connecting students' prior knowledge to new knowledge
Chapter 3: Commit to Learning Theme: Relevance	• Creating tasks that help students find meaning and purpose in learning • Designing meaningful objectives for lessons and units with students' interests in mind • Helping students create their own personal learning goals
Chapter 4: Focus on New Learning Theme: Five Senses	• Creating mind maps with students to visually represent ideas • Taking learning outdoors to incorporate five senses
Chapter 5: Make Sense of Learning Theme: Essential Questions	• Chunking language • Integrating brain breaks • Asking and responding to higher order questions • Providing wait time for students to think before responding. • Facilitating cooperative group learning to discuss questions
Chapter 6: Practice and Reflect Theme: Reflection	• Creating prompts for reflection • Providing actionable feedback.
Chapter 7: Extend and Apply Theme: Retrieval	• Practicing retrieval of information • Designing performance assessments to demonstrate learning.

Village, the Russian teachers traveled to Lesnoe Ozero, the Russian Language Village. All groups observed and participated in the language and culture environments of the Villages. The debriefing at the end of the day included discussion of Having the Immersion Talk with Young Language Learners (Borey, 2020). Both the article and the observations at the Villages reinforced the importance of creating meaningful tasks for students and giving them the courage to use the target language to complete the tasks.

tified five characteristics of playful learning linked to findings in neuroscience. Play is joyful: joy is a motivator linked to enhanced memory, attention, and creativity. Play is meaningful: knowledge is easier to retain when it is personally relevant and useful. Play is actively engaging, capturing the attention of the players and developing higher cognitive processing. Play is iterative: people play games of all sorts over and over again, building long-term memory. Play is socially interactive: it is a natural context for conversation among the players (Zosh et al., 2017, p. 17).

The characteristics of playful learning are magnified at the Language Villages which are sometimes referred to as playworlds (Hamilton & Cohen, 2004). Villagers use their imagination to simulate living in a country where the language spoken is the language they are learning. They choose a name from one of the countries where the language they are learning is spoken. They eat authentic meals in the dining hall. They learn traditional songs and dances and participate in traditional sports. They go to the village store to shop and to the village café for a beverage and snack. They participate in cultural celebrations and re-enact historic events. They create skits based on an authentic song or story or character. All of these activities take place in a summer camp setting in the woods of northern Minnesota in a "playworld" tapping into the villagers' imaginations.

The atmosphere of learning in a summer camp was also informed by a discussion of an article by the Dean of Skogfjorden, the Norwegian Language Village (2013). The article highlighted the benefits of an informal learning environment where the villagers felt they were in a safe space to practice the language and try new things. The STARTALK teachers left the Villages sharing ways that they could create a safe environment in their classrooms and incorporate purposeful play.

On the third day of the residency, a professor in the Department of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies at a large, regional public university, gave a presentation linking the concept of play with whole brain learning. She focused on active language learning strategies to engage and motivate all learners. She explained an inquiry-based model of learning, the 5E Model, developed in 1987 by the Biological Sciences Curriculum Study. The 5E Model is student-centered where students are actively leading their own learning. The five Es represent the steps that students follow related to a topic or problem they choose: Engage, Explore, Explain, Elaborate, and Evaluate. The participant teachers brainstormed topics and problems that different levels of language learners might pursue using the 5E model with attention to creating higher order questions to engage the brain.

On Sunday, the participants took a field trip to Itasca State Park for a day of learning in nature capitalizing on the role of the five senses to improve learning. The teacher participants walked in the park to smell the fresh air and forest, waded across the headwaters of the Mississippi River to touch and feel the water, listened to the sounds of the birds and people in the park, tasted Minnesota and Language Villages specialties during a picnic lunch, and completed a scavenger hunt where participants took photos of items on the scavenger list without disturbing nature. When the cohort returned to Bemidji everyone created stories based on their experiences and photos they took using an app called BookCreator (Bookcreator.com). This app facilitates creating storybooks using writing systems in Arabic,

Chinese, and Russian., visuals, and sound. The activity reflected the ultimate in engagement as each teacher created a story in the target language based on personal choice. It was truly a memorable day of learning based on the five senses and joy.

During the following week of residency, participants discussed and shared other brain-based strategies. The participants took turns leading brain break activities. Brain breaks are activities that get students up and moving out of their seats. The activities generally take only three to five minutes to complete. When students' brains become anxious, confused, or overwhelmed by the quantity of information, new learning no longer reaches long-term memory. The amygdala can no longer efficiently move information through the networks into long-term memory. Brain breaks return the amygdala to successful transmission of information. Brain breaks allow students and their brains to revitalize.

Brain breaks should take place before fatigue, boredom, distraction, an overload of information, or inattention set in. The brain needs opportunities to pause and cluster information, to "turn and talk" with a partner to review what was just presented, to connect new learning to past learning. As a guideline, elementary school students need a break after 10 minutes; middle school and high school students need a break after 15 - 20 minutes. Post-secondary and adult learners also benefit from brain breaks. The STARTALK participants often took a brain break to practice Tai Chi after 30 – 45 minutes. Goodwin et al. (2020) warns that if brain breaks are not incorporated into daily lessons, the brain will take its own break, no longer paying attention to what is happening in class.

STARTALK participants visited the Villages two more times during the second week in Bemidji. During these visits, participants viewed examples of project-based learning where villagers completed a service project such as labeling plants in the target language along a nature trail. They saw how villagers self-evaluated their progress learning the target language using can-do statements in their CLVisas. The CLVisas include ten key language functions that villagers can practice in order to build their communication skills during their stay at the Villages. The CLVisas also contains a Global Self-Assessment Grid where villagers can chart their language progress in more detail based on the three modes of communication. The CLVisa helps villagers set personal learning goals, an important brain-based learning strategy.

Stage Three: Application of Learning

Participants returned to their classrooms in September to implement a brain-based strategy they chose from among the strategies they discussed. During this application stage, participants also attended six weekly Zoom sessions for 90 minutes per session where they shared questions, ideas, successes, and challenges in implementing brain-based strategies in their classrooms. Stage Three also included 12 hours of asynchronous activity where participants continued individual reading and research about the brain-based strategy they chose to implement. In order to guide their planning, implementation and reflection related to the strategy they chose to implement, participants responded to a sequence of four questions:

1. **Critical question(s):** What is the problem or question that you want to explore?
2. **Action plan**: What strategy will you implement as a possible response to your problem or question?
3. **Observations:** How will you gather evidence about the success or challenges related to the strategy you implemented?
4. **Findings:** How did student learning impact implementation of the strategy? What actions did you take as a result? How will your findings change the way you teach or students learn in your classroom?

Table 2 lists the classroom contexts, critical questions and brain-based strategies that participants implemented in their classrooms. These strategies were drawn from the book study or modeled at Concordia Language Villages or presented by the lead instructors. The goal was to strengthen learning and memory of the Arabic, Chinese, and Russian language learners.

Table 2
Classroom Contexts, Critical Questions, Brain-based Strategies

CLASSROOM CONTEXT	CRITICAL QUESTION	BRAIN-BASED STRATEGY
Post-secondary Arabic	Will experiential learning strategies lead to improved communication in Arabic?	Taking learning outdoors Sensory Memory
High School Arabic online	How do I engage students in an online class?	Providing wait time Retrieval Practice
Kindergarten Arabic immersion	How can songs and chants enhance language acquisition?	Bringing joy to learning Emotional Valence
Online post-secondary Arabic	What is cultural heritage, and how does it fit in an Arabic language class?	Asking higher order questions Inquiry-based Learning
Middle school Chinese immersion	How can brain breaks effectively enhance language immersion teaching and foster stronger connections among students?	Incorporating brain breaks in daily lessons Pausing to Cluster Information

Third Grade Chinese	How can I keep my students interested in class after the initial hook?	Connecting personal interest and goals Personal Relevance
Post-secondary Introductory Arabic	Does the use of more senses in exploring artifacts help extend students' retention?	Sparking curiosity Sensory Memory
Post-secondary Advanced Russian	How can I help students choose a topic for their independent project?	Framing learning around big ideas/questions Inquiry-based Learning
Public High School Chinese	How can students improve their recall rate of new words?	Designing relevant lessons Retrieval Practice
Grades 9 – 11 Chinese	How do movements empower high school students' learning of Chinese?	Using actions to enhance memory Chunking/Switching Up Learning
Independent Middle School Chinese	How can I use retrieval practice to help my students remember?	Ticket Out Retrieval Practice
Grades 9 – 11 Chinese	How do movements empower high school students' learning of Chinese?	Using actions to enhance memory Chunking/Switching Up Learning
Independent Middle School Chinese	How can I use retrieval practice to help my students remember?	Ticket Out Retrieval Practice
Post-secondary first and second year Russian	How do I support creativity, cultural awareness, and personal connection among my students?	Creating storybooks for young learners Relevance

9th Grade Private School Arabic	How can I encourage students to speak Arabic with confidence and fluency?	Setting personal goals through can-do statements Personal Learning Goals
5th – 8th Grade Chinese - Public elementary school	How can inviting students to become "Chinese experts" in school increase their use of the target language?	Finding meaning and purpose Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivation

Implementation of the brain-based strategies continues at the time of this report. Reflections by teacher participants during Stage Three of the project provided some preliminary findings related to the success of brain-based strategies. A K-8 Chinese teacher who explored retrieval practice using the "Rose, Thorn, Bud" activity to help students recall their learning said she didn't get the results she had hoped for. The students didn't think that this categorization of their learning into favorite learning (rose), need for more practice (bud), or thorn (a negative aspect of the lesson) helped them. However, when the teacher revised the strategy by having students end class each day by stating one thing (a rose) they had learned, the retrieval strategy was successful.

Another K-8 Chinese teacher found that helping students set personal goals increased motivation to use the Chinese language they were learning. In this case the teacher implemented a system of Chinese Experts where students made the choice to wear a nametag to indicate that they were going to communicate only in Chinese for a certain time period in class. Before using this strategy, the teacher estimated that students used the target language 50 percent of the class time. When students became Chinese Experts, the teacher documented that the students used the target language about 80 percent of class time. When asked what made speaking Chinese easy and what made it hard, the students said it was hard when they didn't know the words they needed. The teacher realized that he needed to teach useful phrases instead of words to help the students express their thoughts. He also realized that the students needed extrinsic motivation to encourage their use of Chinese. He rewarded the students who successfully used Chinese with fake money that they could use to buy items in their class store. The extrinsic motivation of earning play money to buy items in the class store along with the intrinsic motivation to become a Chinese Expert encouraged the learners to use more Chinese in class.

An Arabic kindergarten immersion teacher implemented routines via songs and chants in Arabic to signal transition to different activities. As classroom routines were established, students eventually began to join in the songs and chants as they moved from activity to activity. They enjoyed singing the songs and eventually began to initiate the songs and chants as activities changed. Connecting classroom routines to songs and chants helped the students remember the routines and made completion of the routines fun for the students.

A post-secondary teacher of Russian invited her students to read children's books in the target language which created a sense of joy and accomplishment as they could understand an authentic story completely written in Russian. This served as a springboard for the students as they learned that they were going to write children's books to give to Russian language learners in their community. The students were motivated to create stories that were creative and interesting. The stories were beautifully illustrated and incorporated Russian culture. Creating the stories became more than a classroom exercise as the stories were destined to be read by children learning Russian. The writers read the stories to the children and received immediate positive feedback on their work, a memorable experience for all.

A third grade Chinese teacher wanted to explore how to keep her students engaged during her 80-minute classes. First she implemented a "hook" to spark the curiosity of her students. She showed a funny video or told an anecdote related to the day's lesson. Then, to keep the students engaged, she introduced brain breaks, short activities to get the students moving around the classroom and interacting with their classmates in Chinese. Both strategies were successful and she found her students to be excited to come to class and happy to practice Chinese.

Conclusion and Recommendations for Professional Development

This article described an extended professional development model and its potential to positively impact instructional practices of critical language teachers. As Säljö (1979) states in his research, learning has a variety of definitions. It is both a process and a product: learning is increasing knowledge; learning is memorizing; learning is acquiring skills; learning is making connections among different topics; learning is making sense of the world; learning is growing and changing as a person. Memory is the ability to recall what you have learned from past experiences. Both learning and memory are strengthened by applying what we know about the brain. This knowledge provides insights into how to teach effectively.

Teachers continuously look for strategies to improve teaching and learning. Extended professional development gives teachers the gift of time for collaboration with colleagues, in-depth learning about effective strategies, implementing new strategies and reflecting on the impact of the new strategies on student learning and motivation. With this extended model of professional development, teachers have the courage and support to try new strategies, knowing that they may need to make adjustments to the strategy they implement. It is recommended that professional development organizers consider an extended model that gives teachers support to participate in a workshop series that includes:

- learning via an online series of workshops or a book study, or a series of presentations by a specialist in the strategy or strategies identified for exploration;
- observation via videoclips or in-person visits of classrooms that showcase the strategy or strategies in action;
- implementation of the strategy or strategies studied with documentation of the successes and challenges experienced during implementation;
- analysis of the effect(s) of the newly implemented strategy, making adjustments to the strategy as appropriate.

With an extended professional development model focused on a specific topic that includes a cohort of teachers learning, observing, and applying their learning with ongoing reflection and sharing of successes and challenges, the results will be "learning that sticks."

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4 Scaffolding in the World Language Classroom

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Challenge Statement

In a world language class, scaffolding is crucial as it provides essential support to learners, guiding them through progressing complex language tasks. This pedagogical approach aids in building linguistic competence, cultural understanding, and communicative skills, ensuring a solid foundation for the language classroom. Instructors should be aware of the steps involved in effective scaffolding as they guide students through their zone of proximal development toward mastery.

Abstract

Scaffolding is a pedagogical device used to provide guidance and support to learners as they are introduced to and ultimately integrate new content. It is a key concept in sociocultural theory, based on the work of Vygotsky, who studied the role of language in the development of thought and behavior. Language, in this context, serves as a tool or a scaffold, for the negotiation of meaning and construction of understanding. Through mediation, the more knowledgeable expert guides the novice through their zone of proximal development (ZPD); that is, where they can accomplish a task with assistance. Through observation and discourse review, the researcher seeks to discover where scaffolding occurs in a university-level, lower-division French language class, particularly between instructor and students. The present study will outline the background and characteristics of scaffolding as well as specify where instances of scaffolding occurred naturally in the class. A closer examination of these occurrences offers opportunities for ways that scaffolding can be utilized for maximum student success.

Keywords: *scaffolding, sociocultural theory, Vygotsky, world language instruction*

What is meant by scaffolding in the world language classroom? Does it occur naturally or deliberately, or both? What indicates its effectiveness? Scaffolding in education is a general term that encompasses several sequential and deliberate steps in instruction as a means of support for the gradual recognition and subsequent integration of new knowledge. Bruner (1978) defines scaffolding as "the steps taken to reduce the degrees of freedom taken in carrying out some task so that the child can concentrate on the difficult skill s/he is in the process of acquiring" (p. 19). It is meant to simplify and clarify the assimilation of additional content onto previous knowledge; the term 'scaffolding' suggests support. According to sociocultural theory, based on the work of Vygotsky (1986), scaffolding in the form of language occurs between the expert (instructor) and the novice (learner) as they move through the zone of proximal development (ZPD). At this stage, the novice needs assistance in order to complete the task; however, with scaffolding provided by the expert, the novice in time will become self-sufficient. Dialogic exchange between the expert and the novice constitutes the primary means of mediation. Thus, a mindful approach to the language used to guide the novice not only enables the learner to complete the task successfully, but it also establishes the internalized speech used to guide their thought and behavior when faced with a similar task in the future.

The present study looks to see where instances of scaffolding occur in a university-level, lower-division French language class. It is the aim of this study to demonstrate how an awareness of the steps of scaffolding can be implemented to provide students the necessary support to move through their zone of proximal development toward task completion and self-sufficiency.

Scaffolding in Language Classes

Firth and Wagner (1997) argued that language should be seen and studied as a socially constructed phenomenon and by investigating its characteristics, one can determine the dynamics involved. Fahim & Haghani (2012), Han (2018), Lantolf (2000), Panhwar, Ansari, & Ansari (2016), and Van Compernolle & Williams (2013), amongst others, support that sociocultural theory provides a legitimate framework for studying and analyzing the nature of this socially constructed phenomenon in world language classroom settings. Much can be learned by reviewing how language is used as the primary tool for mediation and scaffolding. Brooks and Platt (1994) in their study of second language adult learners, found that speech activity functions beyond the mere exchange of information and serves as an important contributor to language development itself. Anton (1999) examined teacher- and learner-centered discourse in interactive exchanges in the second language classroom. Results revealed that learner-centered discourse provided opportunities for negotiation of content, creating an environment favorable to second language learning (p. 303). Results demonstrated that when learners were engaged in negotiation, language was used as a supportive structure and provided effective assistance as learners progressed in the zone of proximal development.

Scaffolding in and of itself has been a part of education since its introduction by Wood, Bruner, and Ross (1976). Rogoff (1990) built upon their ideas and out-

lined deliberate and conscious steps in order for scaffolding to be considered successful (p. 94). These include the following:

1. Recruiting the [learner's] interest in the task as it is defined by the [instructor]
2. Reducing the number of steps required to solve a problem by simplifying
3. the task, so that the learner can manage components of the process and
4. recognize when a fit with task requirements is achieved
5. Maintaining the pursuit of the goal through motivation of the [learner] and
6. direction of the activity
7. Marking critical features of discrepancies between what a [learner] has
8. produced and the ideal solution
9. Controlling frustration and risk in problem-solving
10. Demonstrating an idealized version of the act to be performed.

Scaffolding in the world language classroom has been explored in a number of studies (Bradley & Bradley, 2004; Chism, 2015; Thomsen, 2003; Yildiz & Celik, 2020) and is considered a viable pedagogical tool. Yildiz and Celik (2020) support the use of scaffolding as a means to extend understanding in the world language classroom. They note, "modelling, employing prior knowledge of learners for the purpose of teaching new concepts, presenting the new information in a meaningful context, allowing learners to conduct activities in which they can recognize the connections and providing opportunities to experiment with the language; in particular, by means of communication activities are significant scaffolding strategies which can be implemented in language teaching" (p.152).

Chism (2015) acknowledged the role and the importance of guided discussions toward this end: "Since language provides the necessary tool for…scaffolding to take place, guided discussion can be the means by which students build upon their prior knowledge toward deeper understanding" (pp. 96-97). Bradley and Bradley (2004) identified three types of scaffolding as being helpful for world language learners: simplifying the language, asking for completion, not generation, and using visuals (p. 1). Thomsen (2003), when investigating scaffolding in an English as a world language classroom in Denmark for 13-year-old learners, found that when learning strategies were intentionally co-constructed and employed, students succeeded. Thomsen wrote:

> Learner logs…helped learners as well as the teacher to find their way through this process. Posters kept in class helped to remind them of what was especially important. Evaluations, questionnaires, portfolios, exhibitions, interviews and discussions were also valuable tools to help learners get to grips with the multifaceted project of learning a world language. (p. 45)

Donato and MacCormick (1994) had students submit portfolios to showcase concrete evidence of their language growth in the French language classroom. The portfolios served as a vehicle for mediation, self-reflection, and actualization in the French classroom. The instructor responded "in writing to all portfolio submissions, commenting on the documents, encouraging strategy use when it was reported, and responding to the content of reflections….students had

frequent opportunity to externalize in discourse to their instructor and themselves their own learning" (p. 457).

Not only can the instructor serve as the expert, so can other learners. Donato (1994) referred to this as "collective scaffolding" where a group of learners provide scaffolding to each other. De Guerrero and Villamil (2000) investigated the dynamic between two peer reviewers and found that both partners were actively engaged in the revision task and activated each other's ZPD. They concluded that revision scaffolding may be "mutual rather than unidirectional" (p. 51). Nguyen (2013) looked at student reflections on the use of peer scaffolding in collaborative oral presentations and found that they were not only engaged in the sharing of content and ideas, but also providing support and feedback. Haider and Yasmin (2015) studied the impact of peer scaffolding on reading comprehension and found that tutoring helps more competent peers to scaffold learners within their ZPD to augment their own comprehension and cognitive development. Swain et al. (2002) posit that peer-to-peer collaborative dialogue effectively mediates second language learning. The dialogic steps of scaffolding outline the approach and the content for the learner.

In these scenarios, the negotiation of meaning occurs between the expert (individual or collective) and the novice as they together move toward completion of the task. It is this external guiding dialogue that serves as the scaffold. With deliberate practice, this external dialogue subsequently becomes internalized, which can be accessed by the learner as needed in the future. Ultimately, the goal is for the novice to become self-actualized in that they can complete the task without assistance and thus proceed to the next level within the zone of proximal development. In addition, the external dialogue serves as a means of self-reflection and awareness of the learning process.

Although language in the form of verbal dialogue is a key component for the construction of knowledge; other semiotic tools can be useful as well, notably L1, writing, pictures, media, graphic organizers, or other symbols. Scaffolding in the world language classroom can be applied to the three modes of communication (interpretive, interpersonal, presentational), pronunciation, grammatical concepts, cultural knowledge, or anything that entails new information and/or processes that students are expected to comprehend and eventually apply.

In order to implement the six steps of scaffolding as defined by Rogoff (1990, p. 94), it is helpful to know where students are in their prior knowledge since this is the entry point, considered their zone of actual development. Any gaps can be addressed either by the instructor or in collaboration with others. Once a common base has been established, the first step per Rogoff is to recruit interest. What this entails can vary, depending on the class and the unique incentives and interests of the students. In world language instruction, this could be done by using a hook or an essential question (ACTFL, 2024). Presenting a real-life scenario, inquiring about a situation, posing a problem to be resolved, demonstrating the purpose and usefulness of the content, or directly appealing to defined student interests can all serve as ways to recruit interest. Since this is the place to set the stage for what is to come, inquiry and predictions can also be used.

Once their interest is piqued, it is essential that the instructor break the content down into manageable and logical chunks in order to proceed to the second step, simplifying the task. This is a crucial step in order to help students focus on one aspect at a time and not become overwhelmed. Tasks must be designed to be challenging, yet attainable, so that students are able to be successful and thus, remain involved. It is also useful to illustrate how the pieces will eventually come together as it pertains to the third step, maintaining pursuit of the goal through motivation and direction. Motivation can be propelled through praise and acknowledgement as students find they can be successful in mastering the steps. This is also an occasion to reintroduce the purpose of the task. The instructor can facilitate proficiency and performance by giving direct or indirect feedback to the learners, acknowledging what they are doing well and pointing out any discrepancies, if applicable, as part of the fourth step. Additionally, the instructor should also anticipate potential roadblocks or challenges in order to control frustration, the fifth step. The enthusiasm and encouragement of the instructor is also vital for students to remain goal-oriented and engaged in the process in order to reduce any signs of frustration or confusion. This is also the stage where dialogue between instructor and student, or between peers, can be revealing and instrumental in the internalization of any language used to guide or redirect the learners. Throughout the entire process, the instructor should model the idealized version, the sixth step. In order to maintain the ability of the learner to reach the goal, the instructor should convey what students are expected to do at the onset of the task and as they move toward completion. This is another point where discourse can be particularly useful in that the expert should act as guide rather than authority and gently guide the learner in their own negotiation of meaning through inquiry and think-alouds. At each step of the process, instructors should be galvanized to provide opportunities for dialogue as language serves as a tool for the construction of meaning. For this to occur, students need sufficient wait time as well as room to work things out, including errors or other hesitations.

Given the role of scaffolding in instruction, the researcher was interested in investigating instances of its occurrence as it might naturally occur in the world language classroom. This study explores the role of scaffolding in the classroom and how it can be best maximized for student success. In addition, it showcases how increased awareness of the instances of scaffolding can provide insight into the effectiveness of instruction. By becoming aware of the role of language and other semiotic tools in scaffolding, new and experienced instructors alike can purposefully and consciously provide guided assistance to their students. This study also promotes a sociocultural approach based on the ideas of Vygotsky toward second language acquisition and related research, providing an alternative viewpoint for second language acquisition.

The Study

The study took place in the fall semester of a university-level, lower-division French language class at a large, Midwestern state university. The instructor, a her-

itage speaker of French, is in his second year of teaching at the university. Although he was not trained for a career in teaching, he had some prior experience as a tutor and taught Spanish and French the previous year during which he was closely guided and monitored by more experienced and formally trained faculty. In addition, the instructor had taken a course in second language acquisition the prior spring and is notably active in building on his skills as an educator. The instructor was formally observed by the researcher, who has an extensive background in teaching world language and has an advanced degree in second language acquisition. She regularly observes and supervises undergraduate student teachers in secondary schools and is familiar with best practices.

The researcher was curious to investigate instances of scaffolding as they may occur naturally during a university-level, lower-division French language class. The instructor was briefed prior as to the purpose of the observation and was instructed to teach as he normally would, meaning he did not have to purposefully modify his instruction. Two university-level, lower-division French language classes (50 minutes each) taught by the instructor were observed over two consecutive days. The instructor used the same lesson plan for both classes. The researcher both audio and video recorded the classes for future reference and data collection purposes. The students were informed of the proposed study and voluntarily agreed to participate, with the understanding that they could withdraw their consent at any time under no risk of penalty. Prior to the observation, the instructor sent the researcher the slide deck for that week, outlining the plan for the day. He also explained that every day before class, students have to complete a short quiz on the university supported learning management system, Canvas, corresponding to a grammar section of the eBook, *Deux Mondes* (Terrell, Rogers, Kerr, & Spielmann, 2021) that they have to read before class. He also provided a copy of a verb conjugation sheet that students fill in as he introduces new verbs.

Although the researcher observed a total of four classes, only one class was selected for the study. There were approximately fourteen students present; class began on time and as students entered the room, the instructor greeted them in French and used the time to return self-corrected tests. At the beginning of the semester, the instructor collected information sheets from the students describing their background. In the selected class, half of the students had completed three years of French in high school or earlier; three of those students also took one year of Spanish. Two of the fourteen students had taken four years of French in high school or before. Lastly, five of the students had not studied French before, but took Spanish (one student took three years, one student two years, two students one year, and one student four years including college credit classes). The instructor also informed the researcher that among those who had studied French before, many of them have had a gap since high school or even since middle school and had forgotten a lot. He also remarked that they did not have much emphasis on grammar or verb conjugation before arriving at the university, so much of the content seemed new to them. The use of the background information sheets, in addition to assessment, provided information to the instructor regarding where students were in their knowledge of the language.

Methodology

Using a Vygotskian approach, which holds that knowledge is created through social interaction, the researcher observed the interactions in class as a means of data collection for this qualitative case study. The research questions posed were the following:

1. Does scaffolding occur naturally in a university-level, lower-division French language class?
2. If yes, in what ways?

Observation as a means of investigation is common in qualitative research (Friedman, 2012). The audio/video recording of the observed class provided examples of the dialogic use of language which could later be referenced. The researcher transcribed the dialogue from the observation and reviewed the materials used in class as well as personal notes to ascertain the nature of any scaffolding. The researcher then used the steps outlined by Rogoff (1990) to identify the instances of scaffolding that took place. It is helpful to realize that the steps aren't necessarily progressive and there may be some overlap as well.

The purpose of this study is to witness and identify what may occur naturally in a university-level, lower-division French language class in terms of how the instructor and/or students engage in scaffolding. By conducting this study, the researcher hopes to highlight where scaffolding already occurs to bring more awareness to its effectiveness in instructional settings. This study also offers a chance to consider implementing these steps into one's own instruction for purposes of knowledge, reflection, and improvement.

Findings

Overall, the researcher found that the instructor has an easy, confident rapport with students. He possesses very strong natural instincts as a teacher. His explanations are clear and well-paced. His screen displays are colorful and animated. He offers plenty of guidance in both content and pronunciation by providing direct and clear instructions and frequent reminders during the activities. The interactions in the class were respectful and positive. The instructor expertly anticipated potential points of confusion and addressed them ahead of time. He reintegrated material as well.

After the observation of the class and transcription of the dialogue, the researcher referenced the six steps of scaffolding as identified by Rogoff (1990, p. 94) in order to ascertain their presence in the class. These steps are reiterated, followed by detailed description of their occurrence and additional commentary.

Recruitment of Interest

Rogoff (1990, p. 94) described the first step as "recruiting the [learner's] interest in the task as it is defined by the [instructor]." In this instance, the instructor was organized and used entertaining displays to set the tone. The students were already willing to participate in what was being asked of them. This points to the benefits of establishing a positive and encouraging environment when it comes to recruitment. The instructor officially started class with a screen display of the day's

agenda: a review of questions with the verb faire (to do or to make), les verbes pronominaux (reflexive verbs), and l'utilisation des verbes pronominaux (use of reflexive verbs). He proceeded to the next slide showing images illustrating the verb faire, asking students, Qu'est-ce que ça veut dire? (What does this mean?) when pointing to an illustration. The power points were colorful and animated; they showcased pictures, color-coded designations of parts of speech, and timed displays. By asking students to think about what something means, he engaged their curiosity and construction of meaning.

While the instructor created a positive learning environment for the students, much more could be done to elicit genuine curiosity on the part of the students. In order to recruit student interest more deliberately in the task, there are several additional strategies that can be used: a hook, an essential question, a real-life authentic cultural scenario, or posing a problem to solve could help to achieve this. Helping students see the purpose of the knowledge (e.g. where and how one might use reflexive verbs, for instance) and how this knowledge can be used to achieve a goal (e.g. finding a roommate with a similar morning routine) can also help to entice recruitment. Student-centered content can also add significantly to the recruitment process; particularly when bringing in areas of skill and expertise as well as interest.

Simplifying The Task

Rogoff (1990, p. 94) described the second part as "reducing the number of steps required to solve a problem by simplifying the task, so that the learner can manage components of the process and recognize when a fit with task requirements is achieved." Toward this end, the instructor made a cursory comprehension check to ascertain whether the students understood the grammar point before continuing with new information. Students were able to practice this new knowledge with their peers, more as a partnered activity rather than a true interpersonal exercise. For example, the instructor first showed a sample response which translated to "Yes, I like to do homework" before asking them to form the appropriate question for this response. He guided them through the formation of the question, first asking them to consider what would elicit a "yes or no" response; then asking for the subject of the question. In this manner, he displayed the answer, then guided students in the formation of the appropriate question.

While the instructor used guiding questions to lead the students, at this juncture, it would be helpful to use lots of repetition and reinforcement, both verbal and symbolic, so there are multiple ways for students to realize how the simplified parts build on each other toward the whole. It would also benefit the students to have the time to articulate their understanding of the concepts as a self-reflection or with another student with the use of language logs or portfolios.

Maintaining Pursuit of The Goal

The third step per Rogoff (1990, p. 94) is "maintaining the pursuit of the goal through motivation of the [learner] and direction of the activity." As such, the instructor was very patient and very encouraging with the students. He also gave them the chance to work with a partner to practice the new information whilst he

circulated amongst them, answering questions, and commenting on progress. He also provided a puzzle activity, completed in small groups. When students were working together in pairs and/or groups, they would often exclaim, "oh I see" or other discursive indicators of comprehension.

Practicing information in pairs/groups, as well as having the space to construct meaning in this manner is an effective strategy for maintaining pursuit of the goal. The activities can be further shaped by having the students practice tasks or other forms of problem-solving in order to experience the dialogic use of the target language. Yildiz and Celik (2020) found that…

> presenting the new information in a meaningful context, allowing learners to conduct activities in which they can recognize the connections and providing opportunities to experiment with the language; in particular, by means of communication activities are significant scaffolding strategies which can be implemented in language teaching (p. 152).

It is important for the instructor to not only provide reminders of the steps in the process to maintain pursuit of the goal, but to also remind students of the overall purpose of the goal and how it fits into the larger picture of their language acquisition and use. Again, the role of scaffolding is to provide support during the process until it is no longer needed.

Marking Discrepancies

Rogoff (1990, p. 94) describes the fourth step as "marking critical features of discrepancies between what a [learner] has produced and the ideal solution." The instructor anticipated where students might have difficulties and made sure to point out specific forms to focus on; for instance, when talking about weather, the instructor drew their attention to the verb faire and the impersonal expression il fait, used to describe weather. For example, il fait beau means "it's nice out." He pointed out how the rest of the world outside of the United States uses Celsius versus Fahrenheit to record degrees, and how le temps means weather, not temperature. He also explained how the impersonal expression il y a (this is/there are) can be used with weather. He was also attentive to guiding students in their pronunciation. In this manner, he facilitated the fourth hallmark of scaffolding, marking discrepancies. This is a technique that seeks to close any gaps that may exist in order to redirect the students' understanding and use of the concept. Again, repetition and multiple iterations of the new information, particularly if it contradicts what one would expect, can help solidify the new synapses. Eventually, students should be given the chance to notice the discrepancies on their own without the scaffolding.

Controlling Frustration

The ability to anticipate difficulties also helped students with the fifth hallmark of scaffolding according to Rogoff (1990, p. 94), "controlling frustration and risk in problem-solving." The instructor was able to mitigate this by circulating during the pairings and answering individual questions as needed. He was open and flexible, and students were comfortable asking questions. Having students work in pairs or groups can help create an environment of collective scaffolding

(Donato, 1994). In this particular class observation, instances of apparent frustration were few; however, in other instances, this may need to be managed. By following the previous steps of successful scaffolding, one can be more likely to avoid a total shutdown on the part of the students. Patience, reassurance, and achievable goals will certainly help alleviate any doubts. This is where it is important to accurately ascertain the ZPD of the students so that they are able to be sufficiently challenged and ultimately successful. And, while having students work in pairs/groups can ease a students' comfort level, in order for true collective scaffolding to take place, the task must establish the setting for authentic interpersonal communication.

Critiques of peer scaffolding include the perception (or actuality) of being with less-capable peers, which can have the opposite effect on mitigating frustration. For instance, Philp et al. (2010) in their study on peer-interaction in the foreign language classroom found that students felt providing peers with corrective feedback was challenging in view of the fact that they are also students, and they all make mistakes in the target language. Sato and Storch (2023) suggest that educators should take some time to get to know what students believe and how they feel regarding their peer's interaction and social environment, since these two facts can significantly affect their language development. Pair work needs to be a process where both students have a chance to demonstrate their capabilities and try to align each other's purposes and interests. It can be very challenging as a learner to try to engage with pair work activities when they might have very particular goals that are not necessarily the same as the other person's (Tavakol et al., 2022). Simply assigning learners to review each other's work is not enough and it does not necessarily create appropriate language learning environments. Rather, educators need to try to create the conditions where learners can make use of strategies such as negotiation of meaning to collaborate and facilitate each other's learning (Zhao, 2018).

Demonstrating the Idealized Version

Rogoff's (1990, p. 94) final step is "demonstrating an idealized version of the act to be performed." The instructor consistently displayed and reviewed the correct (idealized) forms of vocabulary and grammar. The instructor used verb conjugation sheets, quizzes, power points with imagery and color codes to show the forms. He used the animation feature on the power point to slowly build the parts needed. The slides were clear and easy to follow. He also maintained verbal guidance as students were introduced to the material as well as when they had the time to practice with others.

Although the instructor made sure students had opportunities to practice asking each other questions; however, there could be even more solicitation of student language by extension. Using a dialogic pattern known as Initiation, Response, and Follow-Up (Wells, 1993), the instructor can prolong an exchange. For instance, the instructor could initiate with the question "what is the weather today?" followed by the student response "the weather is nice." Typically, an instructor might be tempted to evaluate the response by stating "very good;" however, this is a conversation ender. Instead, the instructor can elicit more target language from the student by asking follow-up questions. After the student replies, "the

weather is nice," the instructor can then ask, "what do you like to do when the weather is nice?" This way, more of the targeted structures can be practiced in an authentic conversational pattern.

Limitations of the Study

There are several limitations to the study. First, the observation period took place in two classes over two consecutive days; a longer observational period could provide more evidence for analysis. In addition, only one class taught by only one instructor was chosen for the purposes of the study, namely because of time constraints. Ideally, the other three classes could have been reviewed for instances of scaffolding as well. Also, the scaffolding observed could have been further dissected according to the type of knowledge; for example, looking more closely at the strategies used to scaffold pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, culture, etc. Because there was only one researcher observing the one instructor, there is the possibility of bias and/or weakened reliability. And the fact that most of the students in the class had previously studied French or Spanish may also have contributed to their current level of proficiency and performance, thus making their true zone of proximal development difficult to determine. The existence of naturally occurring scaffolding techniques on the part of the instructor could be attributed to his internalization of strategies from his own experiences as a student, an observer, and as an instructor. Additionally, the strategies used by a heritage speaker may or may not be similar to those of a non-heritage speaker. One could conduct another study with the addition of personal survey responses or formative and summative assessments. It would have been interesting to see the impact that purposeful and deliberate use of scaffolding by the instructor would have had on students; this may present a study for further research. The present study only considers whether scaffolding occurs naturally and in what ways. In addition, the description of scaffolding employed by Rogoff (1990) presents only one way to investigate scaffolding; a more thorough discourse analysis and/or another model of analysis besides Rogoff's could present more insights into the phenomenon of scaffolding.

Conclusion

The researcher was curious to investigate instances of scaffolding as they may occur naturally in a university-level, lower-division French language class and found that yes, scaffolding did occur. Using observation, video and audio recording, course materials, and personal notes, the researcher documented where this occurred. Using the six steps outlined by Rogoff (1990, p. 94), the researcher then categorized the instances of scaffolding accordingly. The researcher found that although the instructor recruited learners to the task as witnessed by their overall positive engagement in the activities, this recruitment could be further strengthened by using a hook or an essential question as part of the inquiry in order to draw students into the task. Relating the grammar and vocabulary to real-life scenarios also adds to the overall rationale for the content. Additionally, directly appealing to areas of student expertise and/or interest can entice students even further.

The instructor approached the material by simplifying and clarifying the concepts in ways that could be easily understood and followed by the students, something that is not always the case with heritage speakers. He was able to put himself

in the learner's shoes and lead the students in manageable parts. However, his approach remained very teacher centered. After initial guidance, the instructor should remove the scaffolding and allow students to reflect on their understanding and construct the steps for themselves using portfolios or language logs, for instance. He maintained pursuit of the goal throughout in a variety of ways, including modeling, colorful and animated displays, and practice. Instructors can further facilitate this with frequent indicators of the overall goal. Yildiz and Celik (2020) remind us that the instructor needs to remove the scaffolding and allow learners "to conduct activities in which they can recognize the connections and provide opportunities to experiment with the language" (p.152).

The instructor provided plenty of feedback in order to mark discrepancies. The instructor was able to elicit responses from the students by placing them in pairs and/or small groups, providing a safe environment for practice. By circulating amongst the groups, he was able to listen intently to the students' responses and was able to guide them appropriately and answer any questions that emerged. This dialogic exchange between the students and the instructor as well as the students themselves can provide ample occasions for scaffolding to take place. However, it is crucial for the instructor to allow for mistakes to occur as students experiment with the language; the goal is not necessarily an idealized and perfect version right away, but rather the opportunity for students to construct their way toward that authentic version. Focus on form can be useful, as long as it does not overwhelm the student and take precedence over communication (Philp et al., 2010).

In order to limit frustration, students need to be reassured that they are on the right track and that what they are doing is leading them toward completion. The instructor used frequent praise, welcomed, and answered all questions, and offered alternate explanations as needed. The circulation on the part of the instructor provided opportunities for students to ask questions in a more relaxed and direct manner while giving the students a chance to practice. While putting students together may give the appearance of mutual support, tasks designated to pairs should be set up to require interpersonal communication and mutual achievement of the goal. Students working together should be striving toward a common pursuit that allows time to mutually scaffold.

Frequent reference to the idealized version can also assist students as they compare and contrast their solution with the correct one. The instructor provided this by referencing resource materials, displaying the corresponding slide, and using frequent verbal affirmation. Students were well aware of the idealized version they were practicing. However, instructors should also allow for students to see for themselves where they are in their progress toward the idealized version. Again, this is where a portfolio or language log could be useful to document their construction of meaning.

While it is easy to think of scaffolding as just help or guidance, there are specific steps that can ensure that the scaffolding is successful. The researcher found through this qualitative investigation that there were occurrences of scaffolding that took place. Scaffolding can occur naturally, as one brings one's prior internalized experiences in instructional settings to the forefront. Scaffolding in the form

of dialogic exchange reflects Vygotsky's belief that language is a tool for the negotiation of meaning and the construction of knowledge and that sociocultural interactions account for the ways to use language as a means to negotiate meaning. Vygotsky considered language a sophisticated tool that can be employed for a variety of purposes, including the modification of behavior, the expression of needs, problem-solving, and as means to manage one's emotions and one's environment, amongst others. Donato and MacCormick (1994) note that teacher-centered discourse provides fewer opportunities for such negotiation of meaning.

The observed class was very teacher-centric in that the instructor directed any scaffolding that occurred, with little collective scaffolding. Yildiz and Celik (2020, p. 150) write, "teachers play a significant role as facilitators while learners interact with each other to accomplish tasks. When learners practice the language in a reliable learning environment with someone knowledgeable, they are at an advantage in acquiring the language."

This study supports that intentional implementation of scaffolding in world language instruction, particularly the steps outlined by Rogoff (1990), can provide purpose and guidance in instruction and occasions for authentic engagement. Donato and MacCormick (1994) propose a "reappraisal of what is meant by 'strategy training,' the importance of establishing dialogic and reflective communities of language learning practice, the inclusion of mediation as a critical variable in the development of strategic learning, and a genetic research approach for capturing the emergence and restructuring of strategies" (p. 462).

Tajabadi et al. (2023), in their study on EFL learners' peer-negotiated feedback, countered that that students should try to collaborate with each other and notice their mistakes/errors in a formative way, since collaborative pairs exchanged the highest amount of feedback in total and could attain the goals of the activity more successfully in comparison to the other pairs. Instead, they should all work on becoming aware of the main purpose of using a language, which is being able to communicate and convey ideas to fulfill a purpose. By consciously implementing scaffolding, instructors can facilitate such an environment. The use of authentic materials and asking meaningful questions to work towards enduring understandings of real-world topics bring relevance and connection to the language for the learner. In this manner, scaffolding becomes even more vital to go beyond surface-level form and function, but to integrate cultural and real-world meaning to the experience.

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5 Teacher Motivational Behaviors in a Remote Versus an In-Person Class

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Challenge Statement

Following the COVID-19 pandemic, remote language instruction has become more commonplace. The consensus is that motivating students in remote classrooms requires more effort than in face-to-face classes. How do teacher motivational practice and student motivated behavior differ in remote classes than in face-to-face classes?

Abstract

Motivation in language learning has been studied for quite a long time. However, until recent years, the focus has been on motivation in face-to-face (FTF) learning environments. Motivation in online learning can be different due to many factors. This study compared how a language instructor used motivational strategies in a FTF vs. in a synchronous online class; and how students reacted to these motivational strategies. For these purposes the Motivational Orientation of

Language Teaching (MOLT) was used for observations. Results showed that while the teacher used many of the same motivational strategies in both sections, strategies in the categories social chat, referential questions, and volunteering had significantly higher scores in FTF classes. Results suggest that good teaching is good teaching, however remote classes offer differ affordances and such courses require careful planning.

Keywords: *motivation, online learning, L2 motivation, Russian as a second language, motivational strategies, teacher motivational practice*

Introduction

Motivation is a complex concept which contains multiple components. In its simple definition, motivation is a desire and willingness to do something specific (Brown, 2007). Scholars have long recognized how important motivation is in language learning (Gardner & Lambert, 1972). According to Guilloteaux (2008, p. 55), "motivation provides the primary impetus to initiate second or foreign language learning and later the driving force to sustain the long and often tedious learning process." Thus, understanding how to influence student motivation can allow educators to better improve student outcomes.

In the last decade, scholars have turned their attention to studying how teaching behavior and classroom environment can affect student motivation. The development of the Motivational Orientation of Language Teaching (MOLT), by Guilloteaux and Dörnyei (2008) allowed researchers to explore how students react to their instructors' motivational strategies on a minute-by-minute basis. The MOLT also allows comparisons of students' motivated behavior to their self-reported motivation. Previously, the MOLT has only been utilized in face-to-face (FTF) classes. Since the COVID-19 pandemic, however, remote learning has become more prevalent. The MOLT has not been applied to investigate how remote teaching influences both teacher motivational behavior and student engagement. Thus, this study sought to examine how one teacher might change her motivational behaviors from one F2F to remote instruction and how students' motivated behavior might vary between these contexts.

Literature Review

Motivation and the L2 Learning Experience

In the late 1990s and early 2000s, scholars in the field of language teaching and learning began to study how different aspects of the learning environment affected learners' motivation. Several scholars have examined group dynamics in the language classroom (Dörnyei & Murphey, 2003; Little, 2003). Classroom practices may also affect learner motivation. Scholars have found that classroom practice correlates with student success in language learning (Csizér & Kormos, 2009; Donista-Schmidt, Inbar, and Shohamy, 2004; Inbar, Donita-Schmidt, & Shohamy, 2001; Nikolov, 2001; Noels, et al., 2000; Noels, 2001). Moreover, teacher attitudes have been shown to affect the learning experience. For example, "the teacher's level of enthusiasm and commitment is one of the most important factors that can

affect learners' motivation to learn" and "teacher motivation has a direct impact on student motivation and achievement" (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011, pp. 158, 185)

Much of the early research examining motivational teaching strategies was based on teacher or student responses to questionnaires (Csizér & Dörnyei, 2005; Moskovsky, et al., 2013; Noels et al., 2000; Papi, 2010; Ruesch et al., 2012; Sen, et al., 2014; Taguchi, et al., 2009; Yu, & Downing, 2012), and such surveys are still in use (Bargard, 2020; Dombrovan & Mitina, 2021; Ismailov & Ono, 2021; Salih & Omar, 2021; Sivachenko & Nedashkivska, 2021). Since survey data relies on self-report, Guilloteaux and Dörnyei (2008) created and employed the MOLT to validate the data and to examine correlations between teacher motivational practice and student motivated behavior. This instrument allows researchers to observe not only the teachers' actual motivational teaching practice but also the motivational behavior of the learners. Results of studies using the MOLT since 2008 provide evidence that teacher motivational strategies do indeed correlate significantly with increased levels of observed motivated behavior among language learners (Guilloteaux & Dörnyei, 2008; Hoopes, 2015; Mullen, 2015; Papi & Abdollahzadeh, 2012).

Synchronous Remote Language Classes

Remote learning refers to a form of education in which teachers and students are physically separated during instruction, and various technologies are used to facilitate student-teacher and student-student communication. This term can be used to describe both asynchronous (in which the participants are separated by both space and time) and synchronous (in which the participants are separated by space, but not time). Recent research on the topic of remote learning emerged as a result of emergency remote teaching at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. Due to the increase of research on remote language teaching, the importance of effective language teaching in a remote environment has come to the forefront of research on online and remote teaching.

Gacs et al. (2020) provide foundational information about teaching in a remote environment. They write that "gestures, body language, a common physical experience, and often even facial expressions are missing" (Gacs et al., 2020, p. 382), making it difficult to build a class community (Payne, 2020, Bell & Damron, 2022; Hickenlooper & Bell, 2022). This lack of community often contributes to lack of motivation among students, since, as Gonzales-Lloret (2020) points out, students who do not feel that they are part of a group can easily fall prey to feelings of isolation and a lack of confidence.

Additional studies have investigated student and teacher attitudes towards distance learning (both synchronous and asynchronous), as well as learner motivation and engagement (Aini, 2021; Bell & Damron, 2022; Dombrovan & Mitina, 2021; Fajiri et al., 2021; Hickenlooper & Bell, 2022; Meşe & Sevilen, 2021; Salih & Omar, 2021; Sivachenko & Nedashkivska, 2021). In a survey of teachers and students involved in both synchronous and asynchronous language instruction, Dombrovan and Mitina (2021), found that teachers view remote learning positively. Benefits of remote language learning included better opportunities to supervise student work and reduced tension between teachers and students. How-

ever, the authors found that most of the student participants found remote learning unsatisfying. Additionally, students reported that remote learning demands greater motivation to keep studying than FTF learning. Meşe and Sevilen (2021) showed similar results: students encountered greater challenges in maintaining self-discipline during an asynchronous EFL course with voluntary synchronous meetings. They also found that students' motivation suffered because of lack of socialization (Meşe & Sevilen, 2021).

Overall, studies on motivation in remote learning have yielded mixed results. For example, Sivachenko and Nedashkivska (2021) found that remote students experience disconnectedness between students and instructors, which negatively affects quality of communication and motivation. On the other hand, Salih and Omar's (2021) study found that student attitudes towards online language learning during COVID-19 were largely positive. The majority of students reported that the online teaching was engaging and the instructors' encouragement particularly helpful. Whereas many of the studies of remote language learning have focused on student and/or teacher attitudes towards online learning, Ismailov and Ono's (2021) study examined factors that correlated with higher level motivation. They found that social interaction, personal interest in the tasks, and assignments that facilitate learner autonomy were among the most important.

Taken together, the studies suggest that student motivation is particularly important in distance language learning. Moreover, the social context and teacher practice are critical factors in student motivation. Most of the studies cited above have relied on surveys to gauge student motivation, with only Ushida's (2013) study employing observation to validate the data. But, to the authors' knowledge, no studies have used the MOLT to quantify teacher motivational behaviors or student engagement. Moreover, none of the studies compared teaching practices and student motivated behavior in FTF vs. distance courses.

Methodology

This study used direct classroom observation and the MOLT to examine teacher motivational practice and student engagement in both a FTF Russian course, as well as in a remote version of the same course taught by the same instructor. The research questions addressed in this study are as follows:

1. How do the motivational strategies used by an instructor in a FTF class differ from those used in emergency remote learning?
2. How does the learning environment affect learner engagement?
3. What do university students report about the experience of learning in FTF versus Zoom classes?

Participants

This study involved 25 students enrolled in two sections of first-year Russian and one instructor. Sixteen participants were enrolled in a FTF class (nine female and seven male students), and nine participants were enrolled in a course taught remotely via videoconferencing software (seven female and two male students). All students were invited to participate in an interview, and of those 25 students, nine students participated in an interview. Of the nine who agreed to the inter-

view, two (one male and one female) were from the remote course and seven (two female and five male students) from the FTF class.

Instructional Context

All students were in the second semester of first-year Russian. Both courses met synchronously for 50 minutes a day, five days a week. The only difference was that one section met FTF, and the other met over Zoom. The instructor for this course was a heritage Russian speaker who had been teaching Russian at this university for four years. It was her third semester teaching remotely.

Instruments

Motivational Orientation of Language Teaching (MOLT)

The MOLT Classroom Observation Scheme was created by Guilloteaux and Dörnyei (2008). They combined Dörnyei's system of motivational teaching practice with the Communicative Orientation of Language Teaching (COLT) instrument created by Spada and Fröhlich (1995). This allows researchers to record on a minute-by-minute basis changes in the motivational strategies used by teachers and student motivated behavior. The latter is operationalized as the proportion of students demonstrating attention, active participation, and eager volunteering. The proportions range from very low (a few students), low (one third to two thirds of students) and high (more than two thirds of students).

The MOLT also focuses on 25 teacher motivational strategies grouped into four categories: teacher discourse, participation structure, encouraging positive retrospective self-evaluation, and activity design. Teacher discourse concerned teacher talk in the class, including the types of questions asked, responses to questions, and other means of talking about activities. Sample practices in this category include "stating the communicative purpose of an activity" or asking "referential questions" (to which the teacher does not know the answer). Participation structure refers to the types of interactions in class, for example group work, pair work, or whole-class activities. Encouraging positive retrospective self-evaluation was concerned with the types of feedback that teachers give, including eliciting peer- or self-correction and encouraging students to consider their progress. Activity design refers to aspects of classroom tasks, including the extent to which they were personalized, involved team or individual competition, or led to the creation of a tangible product.

The MOLT follows a time-sampling format, requiring the observer to record classroom events every minute. Each minute, the observer checks off any of the 25 motivational variables that were used by the teacher during that minute. The observer also records the proportion of students demonstrating attention, actively participating, and/or eagerly volunteering. Each section was observed ten times, beginning in the middle of the semester. When possible, both sections were visited on the same day.

Interview

The other instrument used was a semi-structured interview with students. The interview probed students' reasons for studying Russian and explored the activities they found most and least engaging (see Appendix A for sample interview

questions). The interview was the last step of data collection and took place at the end of the semester.

Data Analysis

To evaluate the difference between motivational strategies and students' engagement in FTF versus Zoom classes, we used both quantitative and qualitative analyses. Qualitative data from the interviews provided insights into the students' experiences in their language classes. The MOLT allowed us to compare teacher behaviors and student motivated behaviors in the FTF class as opposed to the Zoom section.

To compare the results of observations, we counted measures of teacher motivational practices and learners' motivated behavior. We counted the total number of minutes dedicated to the use of particular strategies by the teacher. We also counted frequencies for alertness, participation, and volunteering of students based on categories in the MOLT. After that, we averaged them to get the learners' motivational behavior (LMB) index for each observation. Finally, we used a chi-square test to compare the mean scores of FTF and Zoom class observations.

To analyze the student experience, we relied on responses during the semi-structured interviews. Descriptive exploratory methods were used in the analysis of the interview questions (Sandelowski, 2000). The interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed. Then the research team read student responses multiple times to identify common themes and categories. As themes were identified, the research team looked for patterns in the data and determined broader categories to which the themes belonged. These themes emerged from the interview data. For purposes of this study, we focused primarily on comments that specified differences between the FTF and Zoom classes.

Results/Findings

Research Question 1

To answer the first research question, "How do the motivational strategies used by an instructor in a FTF class differ from those used in a remote classroom?," the results of the

MOLT were calculated. For this portion of the study, we examined the four categories of teacher motivational teaching practice as described in the MOLT. These four categories included: teacher discourse, participation structure, encouraging positive retrospective self-evaluation, and activity design. As with the student motivated behavior, we calculated frequencies for each practice in each of the four categories separately for the classroom and remote class. Results for each of the four categories are discussed individually below.

Teacher Discourse

This category includes the following practices: Referential Questions, Scaffolding, Stating Common Purpose/Utility of the Activity, Social Chat, and

Signposting (see Guilloteaux & Dörnyei, 2008, for descriptions of each strategy). Table 1 shows results for teacher discourse.

Table 1

Teacher Discourse

	Remote Total	Face to Face Total	Combined Total
Referential Questions	25	41	66
Scaffolding	64	53	117
Stating Communicative Purpose/	28	19	47
Utility of the Activity	0	0	0
Signposting	12	10	22
Social chat (unrelated to the lesson)	12	24	36
Total	141	147	288

These calculations were submitted to a chi-square goodness of fit analysis, $X^2(4) = 10.698$, p=.03, finding a statistical significance between the remote and FTF classes. Further post-hoc pairwise chi-square analyses revealed a significant difference between the two groups occurred in the subcategories referential questions, $X^2 = 3.88$, p = .04, and social chat, $X^2(1) = 4.00$, p = .04. For both categories (referential questions and social chat) the FTF class had significantly higher scores than the Zoom class.

Encouraging Positive Retrospective Self-Evaluation

The second category, Encouraging Positive Retrospective Self- Evaluation, contains the following motivational practices: Effective Praise, Elicitation of Self/ Peer Correction, Process Feedback, and Neutral Feedback (see Guilloteaux & Dörnyei, 2008 for descriptions).

Table 2

Encouraging Positive Retrospective Self-Evaluation

	Remote Total	Face to Face Total	Combined Total
Effective Praise	195	183	378
Elicitation of Self/Peer Correction	57	60	117
Process Feedback	9	20	29
Neutral Feedback	49	55	104
Total	310	318	628

Table 2 shows the frequencies for this theme. Differences were not statistically significant, X^2 (3) = 4.8, $p = .18$, indicating that the teacher used the same kinds of encouraging positive retrospective self-evaluation in both sections for all practices under this category. However, the i2mportance of this category for student learning was reflected in the interviews. Students expressed appreciation for the

instructors' efforts to help them feel successful. For example, one student reported: "She's good at reminding us that what we're doing is difficult, so it's okay if it's hard" (Participant 1, remote section). When giving feedback, the instructor frequently pointed out what students did well.

Activity Design

The third category Activity Design contains the following motivational practices: Team Competition, Individual Competition, Tangible Task Product, Intellectual Challenge, Creative/Interesting/Fantasy Element, Personalization, and Tangible Reward.

Table 3
Activity Design

Category	Remote Total	Face to Face Total	Combined Total
Team competition	0	0	0
Individual competition	3	0	3
Tangible task product	0	0	0
Intellectual challenge	3	16	19
Creative/interesting/fantasy element	0	3	3
Personalization	0	5	5
Tangible reward	0	0	0
Total	6	24	30

As Table 3 indicates, very few of the motivational teaching practices under the category "activity design" were employed on the days the courses were observed. For those teaching practices that were employed, they were used more frequently in the FTF than in the Zoom class.

Participation Structure

The fourth category, Participation Structure, included the following motivational teaching practices: Pair Work and Group Work. The frequencies for these two practices (in Table 4) between the two groups were nearly identical, and therefore were not subject to chi-square analysis.

Table 4
Participation Structure

Category	Remote Total	Face to Face Total	Combined Total
Group Work	0	0	0
Pair Work	140	139	279
Total	140	139	279

Summary

The answer to research question 1, "How do the motivational strategies used by an instructor in a FTF class differ from those used in a remote class?" suggests that the two classes differed the most in terms of Teacher Design and Activity Design.

Research Question 2

The second research question of this study, "How does the learning environment affect learner engagement?" was examined next. The Learners' Behavior section of the MOLT was used to calculate these frequencies. For this question, we counted occurrences per minute of each of the relevant learner behaviors separately for FTF and remote classes. The MOLT specifies the following behaviors: Eager Volunteering, Engagement, and Attention.

The Learners' Behavior section included in Table 5 shows the frequencies of learners' motivated behavior for the FTF and remote settings. A chi-square test, $X^2(2) = 28.395$, $p<.001$, demonstrated a significant difference between Zoom vs. FTF classes specifically in terms of the three behaviors in question. Post-hoc pairwise comparisons revealed that the difference between eager volunteering was significant ($X^2(2) = 27.5$, $p < .001$), but all other comparisons were not (all X^2's $(2) < 2.19$, all p's $> .138$). In answering this research question, therefore, the results suggest that students are more likely to display eager volunteering in FTF versus remote learning contexts.

Table 5

Frequencies of Student Motivated Behavior

	Remote Total	Face to Face Total	Combined Total
Eager Volunteering	2	33	35
Engagement	141	167	308
Attention	498	485	983
Total	641	685	1,326

Though the MOLT does not include a category for learner engagement related to target language (TL) use, the researcher observed that students in the FTF section were more likely than their counterparts in the remote section to sustain use of the TL. This difference may be due to the different affordances of pair and group work in the two environments. In the FTF class during group work, if the instructor heard certain groups switching to English, she would encourage them to speak Russian by reciting "russkii, russkii" ("Russian, Russian" and clapping her hands (as confirmed in the interview by Participant 5). As reported in the interview, everyone responded to this encouragement by redoubling their efforts to speak the TL. This strategy was not observed in the Zoom class, nor was it mentioned by the Zoom students in their interviews. Zoom, while allowing for pair work in breakout rooms, does not allow an instructor to monitor all the breakout rooms at once, meaning that the instructor could only encourage one group at a time. The researcher observed that pairs often switched to English because it was convenient, and they knew that the instructor could not hear them.

Research Question 3

The final research question of this study concerned the student experience in their language classes: "What do students report about the experience of learning in FTF versus Zoom classes?"

Results of Research Question 1 indicated that the teacher used similar strategies in both sections, however this does not mean that the students experienced both learning environments similarly. Though data from the MOLT provide insights into teacher and student behaviors, interviews were conducted to better understand the student experience in the classroom. In general, students in both sections had similar motivations for studying Russian and found the same types of activities engaging. Generally, the main differences they reported related to the format and context of the Zoom vs. FTF classes. Students reported that formation of relationships was the primary difference between the two sections. Remote students noted increased difficulties building relationships with the teacher and fellow classmates.

For example, one student in the Zoom class (Participant 1) mentioned feeling disconnected from the instructor due to the nature of the class. The student knew that she could reach out to the instructor with questions, but felt reluctant to do so, because she did not feel as comfortable with the instructor as she would have in a FTF class. As this participant put it:

> Even though I knew from the very beginning of my very first class that I could reach out to my professor if I needed help with anything, it was harder to feel that same kind of connection that I would feel to a professor to seeing them in person and getting to know them in person.

This participant also mentioned having a harder time creating connections with classmates as well. She mentioned that in FTF classes she could start a conversation by, for example, complimenting the shoes of a student sitting next to her, but she could not do this in Zoom. Without the opportunity for spontaneous conversations afforded by the FTF environment, getting to know other students took longer. Working with a variety of different people in breakout rooms throughout the semester helped remote students to get to know each other better. However, FTF students had the advantage of being able to talk before and after class. FTF students did not have to wait for an opportunity to work with someone in pairs to get to know them better. For example, participant 4 (from the FTF class) reported, "Sometimes I'll see my classmates [not in class] and I would just be like "Здравствуйте, как дела?" [Hello, how are you?]."

Though only two of the remote students agreed to be interviewed, some students from the FTF class had been forced to quarantine during the semester and to join their class over Zoom. One such student (participant 4) described how the first time she joined class over Zoom, she felt judged mostly because she did not know her classmates well enough and could not read the atmosphere in the classroom.

> I'm the kind of person that really likes in person things, so I can kind of

> feel like, uh, I don't know, like read the body language better and just kinda feel the situation, and so I think that's why it was more challenging cause it's just somebody's face [on Zoom] (Participant 4, FTF).

In addition, this participant indicated that sometimes other students joining over Zoom turned off their cameras, making her feel uncomfortable. However, when she joined the class over Zoom later in that semester, she found it less awkward because she already knew her classmates well by this point.

Though the instructor did require students to keep their cameras on, she made exceptions for students who were suffering from anxiety. However, according to the interview data, the blank screens of even a few participants made the atmosphere less comfortable in the remote section. When participants could not see other classmates, they could not read the reactions of other students and worried about being judged. Moreover, gauging student engagement was made more difficult for the researcher when the cameras were turned off.

In addition to group dynamics, technical difficulties, and attention span issues related to the Zoom format were other factors discussed in the interviews. Technical difficulties in the FTF class were much less significant than in the remote section. Two people, one from each section, experienced technical difficulties when joining class via Zoom. Participant 1 from the remote section mentioned slow connections as a big problem with remote learning. She also reported that it was easier to get distracted during the Zoom class. For example, Participant 1 reported: "Cause like I said, it's so much easier to be distracted when you are at home on your computer and your phone starts to buzz, or your roommate comes in, or whatever it might be." The lag characteristic of video conferencing software also made volunteering during class difficult.

Participant 4 from the FTF section reported: "The question will be asked and then, like, over virtual, like, it's just a little bit off and so then it's kind of awkward cause I'll start talking when she'll start repeating the question and then it was like ugh…".

Though students from the remote section mostly talked about the negatives associated with learning via Zoom, they did mention some positive aspects. For example, one Zoom participant felt that the PowerPoints and White Board in Zoom were even more effective than in the FTF class because of his poor vision. It was easier for him to read the PowerPoints on Zoom from their computer than in class.

While FTF students and Zoom students did have different experiences due to specifics of online vs. FTF settings, both groups acknowledged that the instructor helped them to succeed in class and motivated them to put effort into the class.

Discussion

Limitations of this study include the small sample size and the use of a convenience sample. Moreover, we have no data as to why students chose the remote section as opposed to the FTF. Most of the students in the remote section were on campus and in town, so it is unclear whether they opted into the Zoom section or whether their schedule only allowed for the remote section. In addition, the number of students who participated in the interview was quite low (nine), and only

two of the interviewees were from the remote section. Moreover, the fact that students self-selected into the interview may have biased the results.

The primary limitations of this study are related to the suitability of the MOLT instrument and the course design. First, the MOLT was designed for FTF, rather than remote classes. As such, it does not include items such as camera on/off or microphone on/off, which could be helpful for evaluating remote instruction. Moreover, even when cameras were on, and students were looking into the cameras, it was still not always clear to the researchers whether students were paying attention. Second, the course was not initially designed to be a completely synchronous remote course. It had been designed as a FTF course, but due to the pandemic, it became an emergency remote course.

Despite these limitations, this study yielded findings that may be of interest to scholars and practitioners alike. The data show that there was relatively little difference in the type of strategies that this teacher used in remote vs. FTF classes, except for teacher discourse.

It is interesting that, despite a general belief that students are less engaged on Zoom, there were no significant differences between the frequencies of student "attention" and "active participation" in the remote and FTF sections. Overall, students appeared engaged in both sections—likely because the class required students to speak and interact with each other frequently. However, there was a significant difference in "eager volunteering," with the students in the remote section being much less likely to volunteer to speak in class than their counterparts in the FTF section.

This difference may be related to the nature of remote classes themselves. As Zoom participants reported in the interviews, remote students may feel less comfortable with their peers and have more difficulty reading social cues. Moreover, Zoom requires greater effort to participate. Students have to consciously unmute themselves to make sure everyone can hear them. They also run the risk of talking over someone else, since it can be harder to judge when others want to talk. The work of conversation analysts on turn-taking behaviors in conversation indicates that turn-taking involves several signals, including eye gaze and audible pre-utterance inbreaths (see overview in Levinson & Torreira, 2015) that are lacking or less obvious in video conferences.

Teacher motivational practices did not differ significantly between sections except for two practices related to teacher discourse: referential questions (questions to which the instructor did not already know the answer) and social chat. The lower frequency of referential questions in the Zoom class may be related to the above-noted difficulties surrounding interaction via videoconferencing software.

There was also a significant difference in the amount of social chat used by the instructor; not unexpectedly, the instructor used more social chat in the FTF setting. Opportunities for social chat are more likely to arise in a FTF class when body language and reactions are easier to see.

Another finding that arose from observation and interview data is that students found it easier to stay in the TL in the FTF section as opposed to the Zoom

section. As indicated, some of this may be due to the affordances of the classroom setting as opposed to Zoom. The instructor made extensive use of the breakout room feature in Zoom for pair and group work. However, the nature of Zoom is such that the instructor can only be in one breakout room at a time. Instructors cannot overhear what is going on in other groups or pairs and thus cannot encourage students to stay in the TL. Moreover, when students are aware that they are not being monitored, it is easy for them to slip back into their L1.

Conclusion

This research aimed to investigate the shifts in a teacher's motivational approach when transitioning from FTF to remote instruction. Additionally, it explored potential variations in students' motivated behavior across these different instructional contexts. Results of the study indicate that while there is no significant difference in terms of activity design and participation structure, there are differences in use of some motivational practices and how students respond to them. Overall, these findings underscore the very different nature of interaction and conversation in remote synchronous settings versus in FTF settings.

Pedagogical Implications

This study indicates that good teaching is good teaching regardless of the environment. However, the limitations of videoconferencing can have a significant impact on interaction and group dynamics. Instructors should consider whether to require learners to keep their cameras and microphones on during remote language learning. Research by Turner (2022) suggests that to preserve student privacy, the camera policy could encourage students to turn on their cameras but not require student camera use. She suggests that teachers explain their camera policy in the syllabus, proactively build a class community, remind students of camera alternatives (keeping camera on in small groups, turning it off in big groups or during a lecture), tell students they can bring up concerns about camera use, and gauge participation in way that do not require camera use.

Extra effort must be made to build a sense of group cohesion. Teachers should consider starting the Zoom class a bit early and remaining on Zoom for several minutes afterwards to allow instructors to engage in social chat and could encourage students to join the class early and linger afterwards. Since the learners in the remote section indicated less comfort with the instructor than those in the FTF section, it seems that teachers of remote courses need to do additional work to build a sense of social presence (Garrison 2000). Some suggestions include creating a video introduction prior to the start of the semester, module introductions in text, video, or audio format, and explanations and interactions with students via email, forums, and live classroom events, and recording feedback to learners (Boettcher & Conrad, 2016).

Learners in the remote section also reported less sense of community with their classmates than those in the F2F class. Video conferencing does not afford the same opportunities for spontaneous interaction and connections that are available in the F2F setting. Thus, building a sense of community is another important task for teachers instructing remote language classes. Hosting a "get-to-

know you" session at the beginning of the course, even if some use of the L1 is required, is one way to build a sense of community. Other options include engaging learners in group text or audio discussions using forums or tools like VoiceThread or Flip.

Finally, courses to be taught on Zoom should be designed specifically for the context of synchronous online learning. During the pandemic when emergency remote teaching and learning came into play, courses that had not been planned initially to be taught synchronously and online suddenly became synchronous and online. By designing courses for the context of Zoom, teachers will be able to manage difficulties they and students experienced as part of this study.

Implications for Future Research

It is important to consider how the MOLT could be adapted for use in a remote learning environment by adding additional categories specific to this mode. Moreover, following up this research with a larger sample size might yield different results. As remote learning becomes more and more widespread, it may also be interesting to study students' reasons for choosing a remote section rather than a FTF section. This study hints at the differences in interaction on Zoom versus FTF settings. Scholars may consider analyzing interactional transactions, especially as related to turn taking in videoconferencing versus FTF settings.

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Appendix A

Sample Interview Questions

1. Why did you decide to learn Russian?
2. Tell me about your experience in Russian class this semester
3. Tell me about a specific occasion in class when you felt especially engaged, especially motivated?
4. What are some activities that helped you to be motivated in class?
5. What does your teacher do to help you be more motivated in class?
6. Are there any activities that make you feel less motivated?
7. Did you notice some kind of difference between your FTF experience and your Zoom experience in language learning?
8. Were there times when you felt less focused in your class?
9. What helps you to get back to becoming alert?

6 Talking About Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Issues in Japanese

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Challenge statement

How can language classes contribute to social justice? Should students with limited target language skills discuss critical social issues? Can we encourage them to explore such critical issues? This article details a project aimed at raising students' awareness of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion issues within Japanese language education.

Abstract

This paper details a course project in a fourth-semester Japanese language class (Japanese 202) designed to encourage students to think about Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) issues. The project aims to make students become more aware of EDI issues while also advancing their Japanese studies so that they can discuss these issues in Japanese. Employing translanguaging pedagogy (Canagarajah, 2011; Chukly-Bonato, 2016; Leung & Valdés, 2019; Nagy, 2018; Turnbull, 2018), the project narrowed the gap between the students' level of Japanese proficiency and the complex content they were required to grasp. Students explored a facet of EDI, developed a related survey, and subsequently presented their findings. A post-program survey with eight participants indicates that over half of them felt the project increased their awareness of various issues surrounding EDI. Randolph Jr. and Johnson (2017) advocate for "small thoughtful steps to promote social justice in your classroom" (p. 118). Advancing social justice in language education calls for participants across all proficiency levels to record and disseminate their experiences and insights, including educational strategies and research find-

ings (Randolph Jr. & Johnson, 2017). This paper adds to the ongoing dialogue in this field.

Keywords: *translanguaging, Japanese as a foreign language, EDI, social justice, course project*

As I envisioned my future as a Japanese language teacher, I imagined my students traveling to Japan, and engaging in meaningful conversations with locals in Japanese. I believed these interactions could foster deeper understanding and contribute to a more peaceful and just world by overcoming conflicts and prejudices rooted in ignorance. However, the realization that many students might never travel to Japan and could lose their language after their studies ended drove me to seek tangible ways to create a lasting impact through language education.

Bridging from the classroom to the wider world, EDI embodies the imperative of fostering fairness and justice (Equity), acknowledging and valuing individual differences (Diversity), and cultivating inclusive spaces that offer equal opportunities for all (Inclusion) (Independent Sector, 2016). 'Equity' demands systemic fairness and justice in all societal structures, ensuring equitable access and opportunity for every individual regardless of their background. 'Diversity' recognizes and values the range of human differences, including but not limited to race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, age, social class, physical ability or attributes, religious or ethical values system, national origin, and political beliefs. It acknowledges that each person brings a unique perspective that can contribute to a richer, more complex understanding of our world. 'Inclusion' is about creating environments in which any individual or group can be and feel welcomed, respected, supported, and valued to fully participate. Addressing equity involves dismantling systemic disparities to offer equal opportunities to all members of society, irrespective of their diverse backgrounds (Independent Sector, 2016). Together, these principles of EDI are foundational to building a more just and respectful global community, and they are essential considerations in our mission to educate students who are not only skilled in language but also equipped to be empathetic and informed citizens of the world.

Hartwell et al. (2017), in their extensive work, advocate for integrating EDI principles into teaching across various subjects and offer a range of strategies and activities for the classroom. Nonetheless, I felt limited by my students' language proficiency, which seemed insufficient for engaging with complex social justice topics in Japanese. Osborn (2006) challenges this perspective, arguing that it is defeatist and against our profession's interests to believe we cannot teach social justice simply because our students lack advanced language skills (p. 58). The pressing question remains: how can we advance in incorporating these critical topics into our curriculum?

How Can We Include EDI Topics in a Japanese Class?

Language teaching commonly advocates for immersive instruction in the target language, aiming for usage up to 100% during classroom activities. Turnbull and Dailey-O'Cain (2009) critique the unquestioned endorsement of this practice,

highlighting the importance of deliberate and reflective language use in the classroom. My approach has always been to prioritize immersion in the target language, with English reserved for clarifying complex linguistic concepts. Nagy (2018), however, argues for the benefits of integrating students' first language in world language education. Translanguaging pedagogy, as discussed by Canagarajah (2011), Leung and Valdés (2019), Liu and Fang (2022), and Chukly-Bonato (2016), embraces the use of a student's native language as a strategic resource. This pedagogy acts as a bridge for students of diverse linguistic backgrounds, supporting the development of proficiency by leveraging familiar linguistic structures. As Nagy (2018) outlines, effective translanguaging activities may involve students reading a text in the first language (L1) and summarizing it in the second language (L2) or vice versa, conducting research on a topic in L1 and then presenting their findings in L2, and using L1 in group work (p. 48). This pedagogical approach was applied in my Japanese class project, where participants engaged with EDI topics in English, crafted reports, learned relevant vocabulary and sentence structures in Japanese, and ultimately presented their findings in the target language.

Course Project

Context

Contextual factors are crucial in devising a multilingual pedagogical strategy (Fortune & Tedick, 2019; Gopalakrishnan, 2021), as the teaching methodology often varies with the instructional environment. To aid other instructors, it is vital to outline the context in which I developed and implemented this project at my institution. This project was implemented for a fourth-semester Japanese language class at a mid-size regional American public university. The university has approximately 9,300 undergraduate students and 100 graduate students. The racial-ethnic demographics of the university are 86.2% White, 3.4% Hispanic, 3.1% Asian, 2.9% International, 2.9% Multi-ethnic, 1.1% Black or African American, and less than 0.2% American Indian or Alaska Native.

The Department of Languages hosts the Japanese program, which provides a minor but not a major. There are six semesters of Japanese classes offered in the Japanese program. While the Japanese program offers the first four semesters of Japanese annually, the fifth and sixth semesters are available biennially due to enrollment limitations. Without the major, it is often difficult to retain enough students into the fifth and sixth-semester courses to offer them every year. Consequently, Japanese 202, the fourth-semester course, is often the final Japanese class for many students. Hence, integrating social justice into language instruction must occur at this level, without deferring to more advanced courses.

Participants

The study involved nine students enrolled in the Japanese 202 course during the Spring 2022 semester. These students had either completed 140 hours of instruction through Japanese 101 to 201 or were placed in Japanese 202 based on a placement test. Course details are presented in Table 1, which includes the class schedule, textbook used, and the oral proficiency levels of the students, ranging from novice high to intermediate low.

Table 1
Japanese 202 Course Details

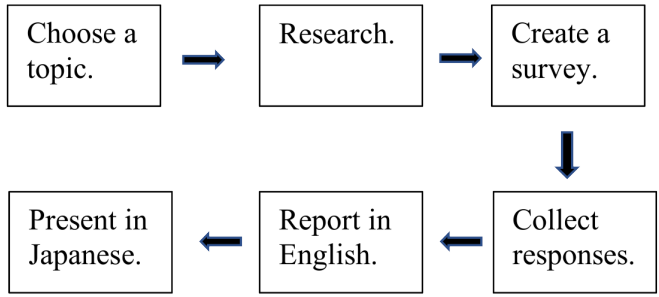
Aspect	Details
Semester	Spring 2022
Dates	January 31 to May 13
Class size	9 students
Class hours	50-minute face-to-face session, 4 times/week, for 14 weeks
Main textbook	Lesson 18 to 23 from *Genki II: An Integrated Course in Elementary Japanese* (Banno et al., 2020)
Students' Oral Proficiency Level	Ranging from Novice High to Intermediate Low

Student oral proficiency levels listed in Table 1 were assessed through my direct observations, in lieu of formal Oral Proficiency Interviews (OPI). As a certified OPI tester and rater, I observed a spectrum of language abilities among the students, predominantly within the novice-high to intermediate-low range. One student, however, stood out with an intermediate-high proficiency.

Project Overview

Students were provided with project guidelines that included a definition of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion, adapted from the Independent Sector's website (see Appendix A). They were tasked with selecting an EDI-related topic, conducting research, designing and administering a survey, gathering and interpreting responses, writing a report in English, and delivering a presentation in Japanese. Figure 1 describes the flow of the project.

Figure 1
The Flow of the Project



The project had two primary learning objectives: (1) to heighten student awareness of surrounding EDI issues and (2) to equip them with the vocabulary and sentence structures necessary to discuss these issues in Japanese. The decision to have students create surveys and present results, rather than conduct traditional research, was informed by their existing knowledge of textbook material on sur-

vey reporting. The instructional content illustrated that reporting survey findings can be effectively accomplished using simple language. Furthermore, presenting survey results aligned more closely with the students' language proficiency level, as the grammatical structures needed to describe quantitative results were relatively straightforward and within their capabilities.

In order to learn about EDI issues, the students did a small amount of research about their topic by reading in English. English was the first language for most of the students in this study. Surveys were generated in both Japanese and English, with responses solicited from Japanese-speaking residents of Japan and English-speaking US residents. The students analyzed the responses by comparing those from Japanese speakers and English speakers and wrote a report in English. Then they presented their findings in Japanese. Discussions after the presentation took place in both Japanese and English.

The project contributed 10% to the overall course grade. Despite its challenging nature, which required learning beyond current proficiency levels, the project was designed to be low-stakes. To support student progress, the course included numerous smaller assignments, which are detailed in the following section. Many assignments were graded on completion, reducing the anxiety associated with performance evaluation (Kitano, 2001) and the apprehension of tackling tasks perceived as too challenging (Bandura, 2015). Collectively, these assignments amounted to 280 points. Out of this total, 50 points (approximately 18%) were allocated to the written report in English, and 90 points (approximately 32%) to the oral presentation in Japanese. While these two components were assessed using specific rubrics, the remaining points were awarded based on task completion.

Project Steps

Project Flow

The project, which was divided into incremental steps to ensure manageability, culminated with an in-class oral presentation. The description and timeline of each step are detailed in Table 2 on the following page. This course project was conducted alongside the fourth-semester Japanese language course curriculum, which encompassed Lessons 18 to 23 of Genki: An Integrated Course in Elementary Japanese (Banno et al., 2020), yet it functioned as a separate component of the coursework. Owing to time constraints, most of the steps outlined in Table 2 were assigned as homework, except for those explicitly designated as in-class activities. In total, the project encompassed one initial instruction session followed by 12 steps.

Orientation

The project began with an in-class orientation where students received a comprehensive seven-page document in English. This document outlined the project's objectives, skills to be honed, knowledge targets, and a step-by-step guide, adhering to the principles of transparent design pedagogy (Dick, 2020; Felten & Finley, 2019). Transparent design pedagogy focuses on clarifying assignment objectives and procedures, ensuring accessibility and comprehension for all students, especially those less familiar with the task.

Table 2
Project Steps and Timing

Week	Step	Activity
1	Introduction	In-class project orientation.
2	Step 1	Students selected an EDI-related topic.
3	Step 2	Students outlined their learning objectives in English.
4	Step 3	Research conducted; one-page summary and 10 key phrases in English identified; translation into Japanese.
5	Step 4	Five multiple-choice and one open-ended survey questions were devised in English.
6	Step 5	Survey questions were refined post-feedback and translated into Japanese.
7	Step 6	Dual-language surveys crafted using Qualtrics; ethics training in human subject research completed.
8	Step 7	Surveys disseminated; responses collected.
9	Step 8	Analysis of survey responses; English report drafted.
10	Step 9	Oral presentation preparation; PowerPoint slides submitted for feedback.
11	Step 10	PowerPoint slides revised.
12	Step 11	Students compiled lists of key phrases, providing translations from Japanese to English.
13	Step 12	In-class oral presentations delivered.

During the orientation, the class reviewed the project introduction document, which included the EDI definition from the Independent Sector's website, as referenced in the Project Overview above (see Appendix A). This initiated discussions and elicited questions about the project's scope and objectives. The document provided examples of EDI topics, such as race, ethnicity, language, gender identity, and disability, along with their corresponding Japanese translations. It also emphasized that students were encouraged to delve into topics beyond these examples, fostering a broader exploration of EDI themes.

Step 1. Topic Selection

Topic selection consisted of various activities. First, as part of a structured activity, students were instructed to identify various aspects that contribute to the world's diversity. This exercise aimed to engage them in the practical application of EDI concepts. They recorded their thoughts in English and then utilized online translation tools to convert these concepts into Japanese. This activity was intended to not only reinforce their language skills but also to provide an opportunity for them to begin exploring the complexities of global diversity.

Following the translation exercise, students gathered in small groups to deliberate on potential research questions that related to the diverse elements they had identified. They were allowed to speak in English if it was necessary. This collaborative phase of topic exploration was further enriched as each student subsequently posted their potential topics and associated research questions on Padlet (https://padlet.com/site/product/education), thus creating a shared space for idea

exchange and topic refinement. This phase concluded with students having a week to finalize their topic choice. To ensure a broad range of discussions, each student was required to choose a unique topic. In cases where students initially selected the same topic, they either chose different aspects of that topic or entirely different topics after mutual consultation. For example, if multiple students initially chose 'gender roles' as their topic, some shifted to focus on specific aspects like 'gender roles in Japanese corporate culture' or 'gender representation in anime', while others might have switched to completely different topics such as 'ageism in Japanese society' or 'dialect attitude'.

Steps 2 and 3. Topic Development and Research Process

To ensure alignment with EDI themes, Step 2 involved students drafting and submitting a concise paragraph outlining their learning objectives for their selected topics, pending teacher approval. In Step 3, students engaged in focused research on their selected topic and crafted a one-page summary with citations, ensuring a manageable scope of investigation. In order to keep them from being overwhelmed by too much information they did not know how to discuss in Japanese, the instructions emphasized that the research did not have to be extensive. They had to research enough to gain some knowledge about the topic and to think about questions to ask in their survey. From their research, students identified 10 key phrases pivotal to their topic's discussion, providing the Japanese translation alongside each English term. Given the challenges of translating complex English into Japanese, students were advised that exact translations were not required. This step allowed the instructor to view what the students were trying to talk about and help them with the Japanese phrases they needed to know.

While the project engaged students with EDI issues within the Japanese context, it was primarily aimed at eliciting individual perspectives, not an in-depth cultural study. As a component of a language course with time constraints and a curriculum encompassing a broad range of intermediate-level grammatical and communication topics, an exhaustive social science inquiry was not feasible. Therefore, the project's design strategically focused on participant-driven discussions to foster language skills alongside an awareness of EDI matters.

Steps 4 and 5. Survey Question Development and Translation

The next step was formulating survey questions. Students composed a series of four to five multiple-choice questions along with a single open-ended question. These questions, first drafted in English, were refined through feedback to ensure they would effectively elicit the intended information. After incorporating the feedback, they proceeded to translate their questions into Japanese. Initially, students translated their questions into Japanese on their own prior to submitting them. Subsequently, they collaborated with their instructor to tackle unfamiliar words and complex sentence structures.

Step 6. Survey Creation and Ethics Training

Once the translation was finalized, students constructed online surveys. While various platforms like Survey Monkey (https://www.surveymonkey.com)

and Google Forms (https://www.google.com/forms/about/) are available, the project utilized Qualtrics (https://www.qualtrics.com), supported by the university, facilitating oversight. The instructor provided templates to students for collaboration, enabling direct access to the surveys for potential adjustments. Students unfamiliar with the application could receive training from the university's help desk. Class time was allocated to initiate the creation of Qualtrics surveys, ensuring students' competency with the tool. Students crafted two versions of the survey, one in English and one in Japanese. Students additionally completed a mandatory online training module on human subject research ethics, a university requirement for any student project involving human subjects.

Step 7. Data Collection

After students completed their surveys, the instructor reviewed them for clarity, thoroughness, and anonymity of the data collection method. Students were given approximately two weeks for data collection. Students independently determined their response collection methods, though email, social networking systems, and social media were suggested. The goal was to collect a minimum of 20 responses from both the Japanese and English-speaking cohorts. The instructor was able to monitor the number of responses each student received by collaborating in the creation of their Qualtrics surveys. The instructor facilitated data gathering from Japanese participants by sharing the survey on personal social media and targeted Facebook groups (e.g. https://www.facebook.com/groups/1127351884008088/). Japanese respondents, mainly reached via Facebook, may have represented an older demographic, potentially outside the student population. On the other hand, the English respondents, gathered through the students' network of people, may have exhibited characteristics of a younger generation. These potential biases were discussed in class when presenting the survey findings.

While the survey sought insights into EDI issues from both Japanese and English speakers, a notable limitation was the scope of data collection. It did not include detailed inquiries into the respondents' community contexts. The focus was on capturing individual perspectives on EDI themes, not on conducting an in-depth analysis of community-specific factors. Therefore, the EDI issues were categorized based on general themes and individual viewpoints, rather than the unique characteristics of each community.

Step 8. Data Analysis and Report Preparation

After the survey response collection period, students analyzed the survey data and compiled an English report adhering to the written report guidelines provided to them (see Appendix B). In this project, English was utilized as a scaffolding tool to support students—most of whom were more proficient in English—in developing their Japanese presentations. Drafting their report in English before creating their Japanese presentation helped students organize their thoughts and delve deeper into the subject matter.

Steps 9, 10, and 11. Oral Presentation Preparation

Following the completion of their reports, students developed their PowerPoint slides in Japanese, following the oral presentation guidelines previously sup-

plied (see Appendix C). The oral presentation, delivered in Japanese, required the use of a simpler language than the written report, which was in English. Consequently, significant guidance was necessary to help students prepare their slides effectively. Students submitted their slides for instructor feedback, which was then incorporated into slide revisions. Shortly before their presentations, students submitted word lists featuring key presentation phrases. Upon collating the key phrases from each student's presentation into comprehensive lists, the instructor shared these with the entire class to serve as a reference tool during presentations. This measure was critical given the breadth of topics and the introduction of specialized vocabulary, ensuring all students had access to the necessary language support to understand each unique presentation topic.

Step 12. Final Presentations and Student Engagement

A total of nine students presented over two class periods at the end of the semester. Presentation topics varied widely, encompassing minority treatment, dialect attitude, ageism, labor disparity, gender roles, religious discrimination, and single parenthood. To prime the class for their talks, each student prefaced their presentation by introducing key phrases relevant to their topic, drawn from a word list the instructor had prepared. This step also served to prepare the class for the content that would follow. Presenters were allotted a five-minute window for their talks, emphasizing conciseness and the importance of focusing on the most salient findings. This time limit was also set to enhance fluency and reduce the potential stress associated with longer presentations, making the task more manageable. While students were encouraged to stay within this time to maintain the schedule, slight overruns were not penalized. Following each presentation, two to three minutes were dedicated to a question and answer period during which students had the option to engage in English, thus accommodating all levels of Japanese language proficiency. Despite some students experiencing difficulties during the project, with support and guidance from the instructor, every student was able to prepare adequately and present on their scheduled date.

Language Proficiency and Presentation Strategies

As noted in Table 1, the participants' language proficiency spanned from Novice-High to Intermediate-Low. Novice-High learners are capable of performing some functions of the Intermediate level on occasion, but with inconsistencies. They can communicate basic needs and familiar phrases, often relying on rehearsed or highly predictable language structures. Their ability to construct language beyond these contexts is limited and sporadic. In contrast, Intermediate-Low students are more consistently able to handle daily communicative tasks, engage in basic dialogues, and convey essential information orally and in writing, although with a simpler level of complexity and limited to familiar topics. Given these proficiency constraints, in-depth discussions on complex subjects like EDI issues can be challenging for students at these levels without mediation.

In light of these proficiency levels, the project was designed to support students' engagement with EDI topics within their linguistic capabilities. Preparation for their presentations involved drafting scripts and creating outline index cards, a strategy aligning with the 'rehearsed' language use typical at these proficiency

levels. To foster elements of spontaneous speech, students were encouraged not to read verbatim from their scripts during presentations. Simple, direct questions such as "Why did you choose this topic?" or "What interests you about this topic?" were posed in Japanese during the Q&A sessions. Responses to these questions, particularly when requiring analytical thought or personal opinions, often shifted to English. Queries like "Why do you think...?" or "What caused...?" elicited this switch, reflecting the need for a more advanced language proficiency than they currently possessed.

The presentations on EDI topics, delivered in Japanese, demonstrated the students' thorough preparation and the structured instructor support they received. Their ability to engage in Q&A sessions in both Japanese and English, supported by English translations for complex terms, demonstrated their comprehension skills. Despite these successes, the difficulty of engaging in deeper discussions and expressing complex ideas in Japanese remained apparent, signifying the advanced proficiency level that is required for such sophisticated engagement, a leap beyond their current capabilities.

Post-project Survey Responses

In the week following the in-class presentations, a survey was administered to capture students' reflections on the project. This survey was conducted during a 15-minute segment of class time using the Qualtrics platform. To ensure anonymity and mitigate any potential bias, the results were accessed by the instructor, who was also the author of this study, only after the course grades had been officially recorded. Of the nine students enrolled in Japanese 202, eight responded to the survey. Although the small cohort size precludes the drawing of broad statistical conclusions, the aggregate responses still offer valuable insights into the students' perspectives and experiences.

The survey was structured around a series of five-point Likert scale statements intended to gauge the students' awareness and engagement with Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) issues post-project. In addition to the Likert items, open-ended questions were included to elicit detailed feedback on what students perceived as the project's strengths, areas necessitating improvement, and actionable recommendations for future endeavors. Responses to the Likert statements, reflecting the extent of students' agreement on EDI-related topics, are summarized in Table 3. The specific statements addressed in the survey are as follows:

1. I feel that the project made me more aware of various issues surrounding Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion.
2. Talking about various issues surrounding Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion made me feel more connected to my classmates.
3. I learned how my classmates think about various issues surrounding Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion.
4. I learned some new vocabulary items that will help me talk about EDI issues in Japanese.
5. I learned some sentence structures that will help me talk about EDI issues in Japanese.

6. I can talk about EDI issues in Japanese if the opportunity arises.
7. I plan to engage other people to discuss EDI issues I learned in this project, either in Japanese, in English, or both.
8. I think it's important for me to discuss EDI issues with my peers.

Table 3

Responses to Five-Point Likert Scale Statements in the Post-project Survey

	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Neutral	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
Statement 1	2	5	0	1	0	8
Statement 2	2	3	2	1	0	8
Statement 3	2	5	0	1	0	8
Statement 4	4	3	0	1	0	8
Statement 5	2	4	1	1	0	8
Statement 6	1	2	3	2	0	8
Statement 7	1	3	2	2	0	8
Statement 8	3	1	3	0	0	7

The survey responses in Table 3 tentatively suggest that the students might have developed an increased awareness of EDI issues (as indicated by Statement 1), gained insights into their classmates' perspectives (as shown in Statement 3), and learned new vocabulary and sentence structures for discussing these issues in Japanese (as assessed by Statements 4 and 5). While Statements 4 and 5 aimed to gauge the project's success in fostering the ability to discuss EDI issues in Japanese, the findings hint at a moderate level of achievement. Furthermore, the project seemed to enhance students' sense of connection with their peers (as seen in Statement 2). However, responses to Statement 6, "I can talk about EDI issues in Japanese if the opportunity arises," were mixed, reflecting varying degrees of confidence: three students each indicated "somewhat agree" or "strongly agree," another three were neutral, and two felt "somewhat disagree." Similarly, the students' intentions to engage in discussions on EDI topics learned from the project (presented in Statement 7) showed variability comparable to the confidence expressed in Statement 6.

Positive Feedback about Their Experience

The participants provided valuable insights into what worked well during the project. They appreciated the paced approach, contrasting with the typically condensed timelines of college projects, leading to reduced stress and deeper engage-

ment with the subject matter. Insights into Japan's socio-economic landscape were praised for enriching both language acquisition and cultural understanding. The practical elements like data collection and development of presentation materials were well-received. Presenting in Japanese was highlighted as a beneficial practical application of language skills, and the structured timelines and checkpoints of the project framework underscored students' preference for clarity and organization in project management. For detailed individual responses, see Appendix D.

Constructive Feedback for Improvement

While the project was largely successful, students faced challenges, particularly with translating advanced vocabulary into Japanese and memorizing these terms. Some struggled to gather sufficient Japanese survey responses, and personal hurdles like lack of interest in the topic or presentation anxiety were also noted. To address these issues, students suggested enhancements for future iterations, including:

- Introduction of a short unit on key phrases and vocabulary relevant to the project.
- Providing more vocabulary during the semester to assist with the project.
- Offering alternatives to traditional in-class presentations, possibly integrating group work to diversify perspectives.
- Adjusting the presentation format, such as using English for the oral presentation while using Japanese in the PowerPoint slides to facilitate better understanding among peers.
- Broadening the scope of project themes beyond EDI to include more engaging subjects.

These suggestions reflect the students' desire for more comprehensive language support and varied presentation formats, aiming to enhance both comprehension and engagement in future projects. See Appendix D for individual responses.

Discussion

The application of transparent design pedagogy (Dick, 2020; Felten & Finley, 2019) proved effective, evidenced by all students, irrespective of their language proficiency, successfully completing the project. This approach, emphasizing clarity and stepwise progress in the project instructions, enabled students to confidently navigate the tasks. Additionally, the project fostered enhanced social connectedness among students, aligning with research that underscores its significance in fostering class participation, academic engagement, and a positive learning environment (Frisby & Martin, 2010; McKellar & Wang, 2022; Strayhorn, 2018).

From the survey, it emerged that while students recognized their learning of vocabulary and sentence structures for EDI discussions in Japanese, this aspect was notably challenging for them. Student feedback indicates a need for enhanced vocabulary instruction within the class to better facilitate the shift from conceptualizing EDI issues in English to articulating them in Japanese. Consequently, a reevaluation of the current Japanese 202 curriculum is imperative to allocate sufficient time for this critical aspect of the project. Despite difficulties in comprehending

presentations due to unfamiliar terminology, students reportedly gained insights into their peers' perspectives on EDI. This suggests supplemental learning may have occurred informally, possibly through English discussions outside of class.

To facilitate easier collection of survey responses, it could be beneficial to introduce students to Japanese Facebook groups focused on surveys early in the process. Leveraging personal social networks and email, alongside these dedicated groups, could streamline the data collection phase. Moreover, engaging with these Japanese-language platforms necessitates reading and composing in Japanese, fostering genuine linguistic engagement for the students.

Student feedback on experiencing anxiety during presentations underscored the need for varied assessment forms to meet diverse learner needs. Alternatives to PowerPoint presentations, such as creating videos or posters, should be considered to offer different modes of expression. One suggestion involved presentations in English accompanied by Japanese slides, aiming to improve comprehension among peers. While an English presentation may not align with the goal of enhancing Japanese oral skills, supplementing comprehension is vital for peer learning. Consequently, a viable option might involve video presentations in Japanese with English subtitles. This approach allows presenters to practice necessary language skills while presenting their topic, and at the same time, it aids audience understanding through subtitles, facilitating a more profound engagement with the content.

A student's suggestion to undertake more enjoyable projects resonates with the students' current linguistic capabilities. The instructional challenge lies in augmenting the appeal of the project for those disinterested in EDI topics. Facilitating students' selection of engaging topics connected to EDI could bridge this gap. Given the widespread interest in Japanese pop culture, such as video games and anime, students might investigate representations of race, ethnicity, gender, or diversity in these domains. Although I want to avoid directing topic choice, offering examples may benefit some students. Additionally, implementing a pre-project activity that examines issues from various angles could deepen analytical skills through the Making Thinking Visible framework (Perkins & Ritchhart, 2008; 2003), with further strategies accessible via Project Zero (http://www.pz.harvard.edu/thinking-routines).

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study demonstrated the integration of translanguaging pedagogies, supported by principles of transparent design, in a Japanese language class project that sought to enhance awareness of EDI issues. Emphasizing the students' ability to navigate between languages served as a key facilitator in their engagement with the subject matter. All students successfully completed the project, underscoring the utility of these pedagogies to accommodate diverse linguistic

diversify assessment strategies, and enhance the project's relevance to cater to a broader spectrum of student interests. These improvements will continue to align language proficiency enhancement with a more profound comprehension of EDI.

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Appendix A

Definition of EDI Presented to Students

EQUITY, DIVERSITY, & INCLUSION
Independentsector.org

Diversity includes all the ways in which people differ, encompassing the different characteristics that make one individual or group different from another. While diversity is often used in reference to race, ethnicity, and gender, we embrace a broader definition of diversity that also includes age, national origin, religion, disability, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, education, marital status, language, and physical appearance. Our definition also includes diversity of thought: ideas, perspectives, and values. We also recognize that individuals affiliate with multiple identities.

Equity is the fair treatment, access, opportunity, and advancement for all people, while at the same time striving to identify and eliminate barriers that have prevented the full participation of some groups. Improving equity involves increasing justice and fairness within the procedures and processes of institutions or systems, as well as in their distribution of resources. Tackling equity issues requires an understanding of the root causes of outcome disparities within our society.

Inclusion is the act of creating environments in which any individual or group can be and feel welcomed, respected, supported, and valued to fully participate. An inclusive and welcoming climate embraces differences and offers respect in words and actions for all people. It's important to note that while an inclusive group is by definition diverse, a diverse group isn't always inclusive. Increasingly, recognition of unconscious or 'implicit bias' helps organizations to be deliberate about addressing issues of inclusivity.

Appendix B

Written Report Format Guidelines Given to Students

Please include the following sections:

1. Introduction
2. Result and Comparison: Compare the responses you received from the people in the US and Japan for each question. How are they similar or different?
3. Analysis: What do you think caused their similarities and differences? Cite at least two academic references that support your analysis. Use APA in-text citation format.
4. Discussion: Discuss how individual and collective decisions impact EDI issues in Japan and the US. For example, how does the EDI condition of the community/institution reflect how people from that community/institution think about EDI issues? How do individual decisions impact collective decisions or vice versa?

5. Conclusion
6. Reference list: Follow APA format. You may use a citation generator, but please ensure it is done correctly.

Appendix C

Oral Presentation Guidelines Given to Students.

Note: The Japanese script used in the original guidelines has been transliterated in this appendix from the Japanese writing systems—hiragana, katakana, and kanji (collectively comprising the mixed script used in the Japanese language)—following the Modified Hepburn system.

Oral Presentation Guidelines

1. Create a clear title page with your name and topic.
2. Use only the short form in your slides, except for the survey questions.
3. DO NOT write out whole sentences on the slides, except for the survey questions.
4. Include your survey questions in your presentation.
5. Include appropriate tables and charts that demonstrate comparison.
6. Clearly label your tables and charts.
7. You may follow the outlines given below but DO NOT simply use the example sentences in your presentation. You are expected to expand and create your own sentences.

Introduction (はじめに***Hajimeni***)**: Introduce your topic and talk about why you chose that topic.
Examples of beginning sentences.

- 私のプロジェクトのトピックは____です。____のでこのトピックをえらびました。
  Watashi no purojekuto no topikku wa ____ desu. ____node kono topikku o erabimashita.

My project topic is ____. I chose this topic because ____.

- 私はこのプロジェクトで____についてべました。
  Watashi wa kono purojekuto de ____ni tsuite shirabemashita.
  I investigated ____ in this project.

Results（***Kekka***）**:** Present the results with tables, charts, or graphs. For responses to an open-ended question, DO NOT list all the answers. Instead, group similar ones together and summarize them with some kind of quantification.

- 「　　」というに、30パーセントぐらいのアメリカ人は、「　　」とこたえました。それにして、80パーセントの日本人は「　　」と答えました。
  "_____" to iu shitsumon ni 30 päsento gurai no Amerikajin wa "_____" to kotaemashita. Sore ni taishite, 80 päsento no nihonjin kaitösha wa "_____" to kotaemashita.

To the question "_____", about 30 % of American respondents answered, "_____". On the other hand, 80% of the Japanese respondents answered, "_____".

You only have about 6 minutes to talk, so select the results that are most interesting to discuss.

Analysis/Discussion（*Kösatsu*）: Analyze and discuss what you think about the results. You may also talk about what you predicted and whether or not your prediction was born out.

Examples:

- アンケートをする前に、私は_____と思っていました。そして、アンケートの、私のはたっていたことがわかりました。この結果はおもしろいと思いました。
  Ankéto o suru mae ni, watashi wa _____to omotteimashita. Soshite, ankéto no kekka, watashi no yosö wa atatteita koto ga wakarimashita. Kono kekka wa omoshiroi to omoimashita.
  Before conducting the survey, I thought _____. And the result of the survey showed that my prediction was born out. I thought the result was interesting.
- アンケートをする前に、私は_____と思っていました。でも、アンケートの結果、私のはっていたことがわかりました。この結果にはおどろきました。
  Ankéto o suru mae ni, watashi wa _____to omotteimashita. Demo, ankéto no kekka, watashi no yosö wa machigatteita koto ga wakarimashita. Kono kekka niwa odorokimashita.

  Before conducting the survey, I thought _____. However, the result of the survey showed that my prediction was wrong. I was surprised by this result.
- 「　　」というの答えは、日本とアメリカで少しっていました。日本では____、アメリカでは_____。ですから、どうして違うか、考えてみました。私は_____からだと思います。
  "_____" to iu shitsumon no kotae wa, Nihon to Amerika de sukoshi chigatteimashita. Nihon dewa_____, Amerika dewa _____. Desukara, döshite chigauka, kangaete mimashita. Watashi wa _____kara da to omoimasu.

  The answers to the question "_____" were a bit different in Japan and in the US. In Japan, _____, but in the US _____. So I thought about why the answers differed. I think it is because _____.

Conclusion（*Ketsuron*）: Summarize your thoughts about the results and what you learned from the project.

Summary:

- このアンケートをとおして_____ [short form]ことがわかりました。
  Kono ankéto o töshite _____[short form] *koto ga wakarimashita.*
  Through this survey, I found out that _____.

Thoughts:

- このアンケートの結果から、_____ [short form]と思いました。
  Kono ankéto no kekka kara, _____[short form] *to omoimashita.*
  From the results of this questionnaire, I thought _____.

Useful phrases:

はじめに *Hajimeni:* First of all
に *Tsugini:* Next
に *Saigoni:* Lastly
する *Chösasuru:* to investigate
べる *Shiraberu:* to research
する *Bunsekisuru:* to analyze
する *Kösatsusuru:* to discuss, examine
する *Setsumńsuru:* to explain
Kaitösha: respondent
Kekka: result
Kökateki: effective
アンケート*Ankéto:* questionnaire
する *Shitsumonsuru:* to ask questions
それにして *Sore ni taishite:* On the other hand
に *Hantaini:* On the contrary
同じように *Onaji yöni:* Similarly
ている *Niteiru:* to be similar
う *Chigau:* to be different

Appendix D

Post-Project Survey Responses to Open-Ended Questions.

Question: What do you think worked well when you were working on this project?

Responses:

- "I think working at a slower pace helped me succeed in this project. Most projects in college are focused in a 2-3 week period, which is very stressful."
- "I think we had a sufficient amount of time to work on the project."
- "I feel that when working on this project, we were able to learn more about Japan in a more socioeconomic sense. Learning a language is a great way to learn about a country. There is also the aspect that learning about said country helps with learning the language."
- "Collecting responses wasn't too difficult."
- "The research into my EDI Project was good, and I managed to find a handful of journals and articles about it."
- "Getting English responses, creating the PowerPoint slides, and doing the initial research on the subject to learn more about it as it pertains to America and Japan."
- "I think it was good that I was able to give a presentation in Japanese, which is a good practice, such as responding to the questions in Japanese."

Question: What were some of the obstacles you had when you were working on this project?

Responses:

- "A lot of the obstacles I encountered were the vocabulary that had to be

translated into Japanese, as well as memorizing them."
- "Receiving Japanese responses for the survey, finding the vocabulary to use in the presentation that was correctly translated."
- "I think it was a very hard project for the level of Japanese that we know. For every topic, there were so many words we didn't know; it was hard to understand other people's projects."
- "I don't know much vocab relating to both my own topic and others, so it's hard both to speak and to listen to others."
- "Trying to simplify the knowledge that I have and acquired to Japanese that is easy to understand."
- "Definitely the presentation. I have presentation anxiety, so presenting is a larger issue for me."
- "I didn't have an interest in the project, so it was hard to push myself to actually research."

Question: Please write any suggestions you may have in order to improve how the project was implemented.
- "I'm not really sure how to improve it, but maybe we could have a short unit beforehand introducing key phrases and vocabulary."
- "Providing more vocabulary during the semester that would be useful towards the project."

- "I feel like having an alternative to presenting would be nice. Otherwise, the project was well-paced."
- "Students may work as groups to share perspectives."
- "Most of my classmates and myself weren't able to understand others' presentations because it was so fast with new words. EDI-wise, I think it would be better to present in English. The PowerPoint could still be in Japanese, but I think we would learn more if the presenter is speaking in English."
- "I think the project can be something unrelated to EDI and more fun and broad project topics."
- "Nothing much, it was a fun project."

7 An analysis of Seal of Biliteracy implementation in U.S. states

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Challenge Statement

The Seal of Biliteracy is widespread in the U.S, yet few studies examined its cross-state implementation through direct analysis of texts that function as policy guidance. This study serves to fill this gap by exploring the implementation of the Seal within a neoliberal context through the analysis of policy texts.

Abstract

The Seal of Biliteracy (SoBL) is widely implemented to honor and recognize high school graduates who have demonstrated language proficiency in English and one or more other world languages. Exploring the SoBL policy texts from five state —California, New Jersey, Iowa, North Dakota, and Montana—this study investigates how the SoBL is implemented across these states and analyzes the academic and career prospects for recipients of the SoBL within neoliberal discourse. Additionally, this study explores the potential inequalities that multilingual learners might still confront, particularly in terms of valuing their language backgrounds and ensuring equitable language education for them.

This study employs horizontal intertextuality to analyze the language in the SoBL policy texts from five states, aiming to reveal how the SoBL is implemented within different contexts. Findings indicate inequitable practices, mainly evident through additional requirements for English proficiency tests and the lack of language assessments for multilingual learners. Such practices may lead to the marginalization of these students, as languages considered more economically valuable are prioritized within a neoliberal discourse. Moreover, the study highlights how the SoBL is often portrayed as a credential for enhancing career opportunities in a global economy. In light of these findings, there is a need for a more equitable approach in implementing the SoBL to ensure all students have fair access and guarantee that every recipient can benefit from what the SoBL has to offer.

Introduction

In the United States, the Seal of Biliteracy (SoBL) is an award offered by the state Department of Education or local school districts to high school graduates proficient in English and one or more other world languages (ACTFL et al., 2020). Initially a grassroots initiative emerging in California in 2008, the SoBL encourages linguistic diversity, fostering bilingualism among both English native speakers and multilingual learners (Davin & Heineke, 2017; Deleon, 2014; Olsen, 2012). In this study, the term 'multilingual learners' refers to students who are, or have been, consistently developing proficiency in multiple languages (Mitchell, 2013; Molle & Wilfrid, 2021; WIDA., 2020). Martinez (2018) and WIDA (2020) have stated that multilingual learners encompass those commonly identified as English language learners (ELLs), dual language learners (DLLs), heritage language learners, students with English as an additional language (EAL), and students proficient in varieties of English or indigenous languages. As of 2024, the SoBL has been adopted in 50 states and the District of Columbia (Seal of Biliteracy, 2024).

This study conducted a critical examination of SoBL policy texts, including the Guidelines for Implementing the Seal of Biliteracy and specific policies in California, New Jersey, Iowa, North Dakota, and Montana. This analysis was guided by three primary objectives: discerning the implementation of the SoBL and language proficiency assessments; investigating the possible creation of inequitable environments for multilingual learners; and evaluating the potential academic and career advancements for SoBL recipients in a neoliberal context. To facilitate a more inclusive recognition of language proficiency and to create supportive environments for all language learners, this study aims to offer recommendations for a range of entities, from educational institutions to advocacy groups, steering towards a beneficial and equitable implementation of this pivotal language policy.

Literature Review

The Seal of Biliteracy as a Bottom-Up Language Policy

Multiple scholars have considered language policy and planning from top-down and bottom-up perspectives (Gorter, 2013; Hornberger, 2009; Johnson, 2009; López, 2008). The development of language policies takes place at different levels of policy creation, and whether a particular policy is top-down or bottom-up depends on who is responsible for designing and developing the policy (Johnson, 2013). Language policy that is top-down in nature is designed and developed by some governing or authoritative body or person, with implementation intended for the masses, while bottom-up language policy is created by the community in the absence of explicit, top-down policies related to language education (Johnson, 2013; Sabatier, 1986; Wiley & García, 2016). Notably, a language policy can be both top-down and bottom-up, as these terms are relative (Johnson, 2013).

The inception and development of the SoBL in California epitomized a bottom-up language policy. In 2008, California Together, a statewide advocacy coalition composed of teachers, administrators, parents, and non-profit organizations, developed the SoBL initiative and launched efforts at the local level to encourage school districts throughout California to implement the award (Heineke & Davin,

2018). Eventually, the SoBL was officially established and ratified at the state level in California through Assembly Bill No. 815 in 2011. According to Heineke and Davin (2018), "interested citizens...initiated broader discussions to push forward code or legislation related to the Seal of Biliteracy, rather than policies enforced from the top-down by state or federal government actors" (p. 13). Thus, the SoBL was generated at the grassroots level.

Collaborative efforts are typically considered a feature of bottom-up language policy, wherein state and local stakeholders and policy arbiters at different levels collaboratively maneuver and negotiate issues of local interest by considering different contextual factors (Davin & Heineke, 2017; Hancock & Davin, 2020; Koontz & Newig, 2014). Studies have shown that the SoBL, a grassroot, bottom-up language policy initiative, engaged state and local stakeholders in voluntary collaboration to develop this language policy within the unique contexts of various states (Heineke & Davin, 2021; Olsen, 2020). Evident in many states, the Department of Education facilitated the SoBL's realization, while local districts took the lead in its administration, thereby substantiating a collaborative, bottom-up nature in the implementation of the SoBL (Davin & Heineke, 2017; Heineke & Davin, 2021; Schwedhelm & King, 2020).

Orientations in Language Planning

Language-as-Problem Orientation

The language-as-problem orientation is a set of values that originate from assimilationist and monolingual ideal mindsets (Evans & Hornberger, 2005; Hornberger, 1990). Language policies that align with this orientation aim to minimize or eradicate multilingualism in society, promoting the development of a single, dominant language (Ruiz, 1984; Akinnaso, 1994). Nevertheless, this perspective may result in language stratification, where certain languages or dialects are considered more valuable and prestigious than others. Consequently, multilingual learners are frequently viewed from a deficit perspective that emphasizes their lack of proficiency in the dominant majority language, rather than recognizing their bi-/multilingual abilities (Harrison, 2007; Mora et al., 2001; Zéphir, 1997). This situation often leads to linguistic inequalities and discrimination against speakers from disadvantaged backgrounds, including those who are impoverished, disabled, or have limited education, especially if they speak languages viewed as less prestigious or important in society (Ruiz, 1984).

The equality of the SoBL initiative has come under increasing criticism, particularly in its uneven implementation practices (Davin & Heineke, 2017; Heineke et al., 2018). Researchers have pointed out that multilingual learners often experience limited access to language assessments (Schwedhelm & King, 2020). Moreover, studies by De Costa et al. (2021) and Subtirelu et al. (2019) have highlighted a tendency for the SoBL to favor English-speaking students. This emphasis on English, coupled with the undervaluation of other languages spoken by multilingual learners, diverged from the goal of fostering equality in the discourse surrounding the SoBL.

Language-as-Resource Orientation

The language-as-resource orientation stands in opposition to the language-as-problem orientation. In the language-as-resource orientation, language is seen as an asset with inherent value in various aspects, including cultural preservation, community relations, intergenerational communication, identity construction, self-esteem building, and intellectual engagement (Crawford, 1998; Ruiz, 2010). It has been suggested that multilingual learners' home languages should be valued for their specialized linguistic knowledge, contributing to the development of bi-/multilingualism and cultural diversity (Baker, 2001; Cummins et al., 2006; Gómez et al., 2005; Hult, 2014; Mora et al., 2001; Ruiz, 2010).

In alignment with the language-as-resource orientation, the SoBL has acknowledged bilingualism as a valuable resource that can be leveraged on a broad scale (Seal of Biliteracy, 2024). This language policy has been established to recognize and celebrate students' bi-/multilingual abilities and cultural diversity (Tollefson, 2013). Importantly, the SoBL offers valuable opportunities for multilingual learners to maintain their home languages while simultaneously promoting the development of world language skills for English native speakers (ACTFL et al., 2020), thereby enabling language learners to engage more fully and effectively in a global society.

The Seal of Biliteracy within Neoliberal Discourse

Neoliberalism is an economic and political doctrine that advocates for free markets, private property rights, and competition as the primary drivers of economic growth and individual success (Harvey, 2005). In recent years, the influence of neoliberalism on language policy has become increasingly significant. Scholars have shown that the historical and political changes in recent decades have led to the explicit and direct framing of language as an economic resource (Heller & Duchêne, 2016). Particularly, language is commodified in a neoliberal environment, where it is viewed as an asset for students' academic and employment prospects in the marketplace (Heller, 2010; Shin & Park, 2016). Researchers analyzing the SoBL highlighted the economic advantages that bilingual skills can provide, noting a high demand for bilingual employees in the contemporary labor market (Schwedhelm & King, 2020; Subtirelu, 2020; Subtirelu et al., 2019). Thus, the development of the SoBL comes to be seen as an embodiment of neoliberal educational policy, emphasizing the economic value of bilingualism.

While neoliberalism is intended to promote economic growth and prosperity, critics have argued that neoliberal policies may lead to increased income and wealth inequality and exploitation of labor, as they may favor the already wealthy and powerful (Harvey, 2006; Peck, 2010). In the context of the SoBL, treating language as a marketable asset raises concerns about possible inequities and exploitation, particularly if certain students are favored or privileged in the pursuit of economic success, while those from marginalized backgrounds or language communities encounter obstacles in accessing language learning opportunities and resources. Thus, the relationship between the SoBL and the critique of neoliberalism lies in the dilemma of language policies fostering economic benefits, yet possibly intensifying social inequalities.

Many existing studies on the SoBL have primarily focused on interviews with individuals involved in policy implementation, including school district administrators, educators, and students (Borowczyk, 2020; Davin & Heineke, 2018; Hancock & Davin, 2020; Heineke & Davin, 2020). Findings of these studies have suggested that while the SoBL provides significant benefits for students, its implementation faces challenges, which include the status of languages, prevailing English-dominant ideologies, high school collaboration, parental involvement, and issues in assessment. However, these studies often overlook an analysis of policy texts themselves. Such analysis is important as it provides a clear understanding of the policy's intent and anticipated goals, which are vital in guiding the implementation of the policy. Additionally, while some research has delved into the implementation of the SoBL in particular states, such as Georgia, Illinois, and Minnesota (Davin & Heineke, 2018; Hancock & Davin, 2020; Jansa & Brezicha, 2017), there is a lack of comparisons of how the SoBL is implemented across various states in the U.S. To bridge these research gaps, this study conducts a detailed analysis of the SoBL policy texts from different states. The investigation is guided by three research questions:

1. Based on policy texts, what are the differences in the approaches taken by various states to implement the SoBL?
2. How might implementing the SoBL based on policy texts create an inequitable environment that hinders multilingual learners from earning the Seal?
3. What are the benefits for students attaining the Seal as reflected in policy texts?

Methods

Contexts

Policy texts are of great significance as they can serve as the foundation upon which policy administrators shape the implementation process of policies and dictate the guidelines for decision-making. This paper examines guidelines for implementing the SoBL in the U.S., focusing on policy texts from a selection of five states, including California, New Jersey, Iowa, North Dakota, and Montana. These states successively adopted the SoBL in 2011, 2016, 2018, 2019, and 2021, respectively.

The rationale behind choosing these five states is based on two reasons. Firstly, these states differed in their implementation of the SoBL, including variations in language proficiency criteria, the use of standardized and alternative assessment options, and methods of disseminating information about the SoBL to school districts and the wider community. Thus, these states provide insight into the diverse approaches in SoBL implementation and assist in gaining an in-depth understanding of the policy's effectiveness, while also highlighting exemplary practices.

Secondly, the selected states represent a rich variety of geographic, demographic, and socioeconomic features, facilitating a nuanced comparative analysis across diverse contexts. For instance, both California and New Jersey are hubs of racial and ethnic diversity, boasting a significant proportion of multilingual learners within their K-12 student demographics (Jepsen & De Alth, 2005). Economic

indicators from the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) (2023) underlined that California and New Jersey have robust economies, occupying leading positions in the annual nominal GDP charts for U.S. states and the District of Columbia. Moreover, California has the distinction of pioneering the Seal program, holding the record for the highest number of Seal recipients (Davin & Heineke, 2017). However, states such as Iowa, North Dakota, and Montana have a more racially and ethnically homogenous student body, coupled with a comparatively modest economic footprint in terms of annual nominal GDP. Therefore, this research delves into the SoBL policy texts to reveal the divergent approaches of SoBL implementation across varied states, assess the equitable implementation of the SoBL, and analyze the advantages gained by those who receive the award.

Data Collection

This study examines eleven policy texts and the presentation material concerning the implementation of the SoBL. All these documents are sourced from publicly available online resources. The eleven policy texts and presentation slides are listed in Table 1. It is important to note that, excluding the Guidelines for Implementing the Seals of Biliteracy and the Montana presentation material, the remaining nine texts were issued at the state level. These materials, being recent, authoritative, and comprehensive, facilitate a multi-faceted exploration of the SoBL implementation across different states.

Table 1
A list of the SoBL policy texxts from various states in the U.S.

State or Organizations	Year	Policy
California	2011	*Assembly Bill No.815 Instructional programs: State Seal of Biliteracy*
California	2022	*California State Seal of Biliteracy Implementation Guide*
New Jersey	2016	*Chapter 303* An act establishing the State Seal of Biliteracy
New Jersey	2018	*Chapter 8* Standards and Assessment
New Jersey	2022	*2022-2023 State Seal of Biliteracy Program District Information and Participation*
New Jersey	2022	2022 *New Jersey State Seal of Biliteracy*
Iowa	2022	*Iowa Biliteracy Seal Guidance*
North Dakota	2023	*2022-2023 North Dakota Seal of Biliteracy*
Montana	2023	*2022-2023 Montana Seal of Biliteracy Info Sheet*
Montana	2023	Presentation material from the conference
ACTFL, MLA, NABE, NAELPA, NCSSFL, Californians Together, and TESOL International Association	2020	*Guidelines for Implementing the Seals of Biliteracy*

Data Analysis

At the beginning of data analysis, I first reviewed the eleven SoBL policy texts to gain a preliminary understanding of how the SoBL is promoted and implemented across different states. Following this, I conducted a comprehensive analysis of these policy texts using the approach of horizontal intertextuality. Intertextuality involves texts referencing or directly quoting other textual sources from the same or a similar time period (Ball, 1993; Fairclough, 2015; Kristeva, 2010). This approach illuminates the intricate connections among various texts, rather than presenting them as isolated documents, thereby revealing the intricacies of policy implementation (Ball, 1993).

This study focuses on a critical analysis of the language utilized in the eleven SoBL policy texts. It examines the specific word choices, phrasing, and sentence structures. This study also uncovers common themes and recurring ideas, analyzing similarities in word choice, sentence structure, and grammatical frameworks throughout the policy texts. Additionally, the study highlights phrases that show links or relationships between the texts, identified through citations or quotations.

Notably, scholars have suggested that horizontal intertextuality can capture the relationship among the writing subject, the addressee, and the discursive universe (e.g., readers and other texts) of a text (Johnson, 2015; Kristeva, 1986). In this study, I delved into the significance of these elements and their intertwined relationships. Specifically, the "writing subject" refers to the policymakers who are responsible for designing the SoBL policy texts. This study aims to comprehend policymakers' writing approach and the underlying intentions guiding their writing. The "addressee" encompasses school district administrators and educators who receive information about the SoBL from the state level and maintain direct responsibility for the implementation of the SoBL, as well as students who seek to earn the Seal by demonstrating language proficiency. The "discursive universe" contains both the eleven SoBL policy texts themselves and the researcher of this study, who interpreted the eleven policy texts.

By using horizontal intertextual analysis in this study, both the researcher and readers (i.e., discursive universe) can gain a deeper understanding of how the SoBL policy texts (i.e., discursive universe) designed by policymakers (i.e., writing subject) guide school administrators and educators (i.e., addressee) to implement the SoBL, particularly considering its impact on diverse student groups (i.e., addressee), including native English speakers and multilingual learners.

Positionality

In the process of conducting this study, I recognized my dual roles: one as an international student in the U.S. and the other as an analyst of the SoBL policy texts. Each role cultivated a different dimension to my analysis, adding depth and unique perspectives to it. Firstly, stemming from my background as an international student and non-native English speaker, I brought to the table a unique perspective that enriched the analysis substantially. This standpoint allowed for a deeper connection and understanding of the experiences and challenges that multilingual learners might face. Drawing from my personal experiences granted me the empathy and insight to delve deeply into the unique challenges and needs

these students might encounter, enhancing the robustness of my analysis regarding the potential impacts of the SoBL on their linguistic journeys.

Secondly, my position as someone who was not involved in the U.S. K-12 educational environment informed my evaluation of the SoBL policy texts. Being nurtured in a different cultural, social, and educational environment shaped my perspectives and potentially influenced my appraisal of the effectiveness of the SoBL in encouraging bi-/multilingualism among students. Lastly, my involvement in this study went beyond mere linguistic interpretation. I played a role in connecting the complex SoBL policy texts with their potential practical impacts. I navigated the policy intricacies, discerned their subtleties, and communicated their deeper implications. This mediating role, coupled with my unique background as an international student, offered a fresh and invaluable viewpoint on how the SoBL impacted the domain of language education in the United States.

Findings

The eleven policy texts offer valuable guidance to participating school districts with diverse demographics on how to implement the SoBL. The policy texts cover a range of topics, such as introducing the SoBL and emphasizing the significance of biliteracy, providing information on general language proficiency, offering assessment options for demonstrating proficiency in English and world language(s), and addressing frequently asked questions. By examining the eleven SoBL policy texts, this study identifies and delves into four key themes: the SoBL as a top-down language policy, implementation practices of the SoBL across various states, addressing potential inequality in the implementation of the SoBL, and prospects of receiving the Seal in a neoliberal environment.

The SoBL as a Top-Down Language Policy

In the analysis of eleven SoBL policy documents in this study, most of the policy texts use words and phrases that convey an obligatory tone. For example, California's Assembly Bill No.815 indicates, "The study of world languages in elementary and secondary schools should be encouraged because it contributes to a pupil's cognitive development and to our national economy and security" (p. 1). The Iowa Biliteracy Seal Guidance states, "If there is not an assessment for the world language, the local school district or accredited nonpublic school must review and assess the students' portfolio in the four language domains: reading, writing, speaking, and listening" (p. 4). Similarly, the North Dakota Seal of Biliteracy states, "To be eligible for an NDSB award, each student shall demonstrate proficiency in reading, writing, speaking, and listening in English" (p. 6). Through the analysis of the eleven policy texts, commanding words and phrases, including "should," "shall," "ensure," "must," "should be," "must be," and "need to," are frequently utilized. The utilization of authoritative language not only highlights policymakers' emphasis on the significance of the SoBL, but also indicates that policymakers have stringent requirements and expectations for local school districts in implementing the SoBL. Consequently, the SoBL policy texts represent a top-down language policy, as policymakers at the state level are responsible for the cre-

ation of the policy texts, while local school districts are tasked with interpreting these texts to implement the SoBL.

Implementation Practices of the SoBL Across Various States

Stated Role of the Home Language

The SoBL policy texts, including *Guidelines for Implementing the Seals of Biliteracy, California State Seal of Biliteracy Implementation Guide,* New Jersey's *Chapter 303 An Act Establishing the State Seal of Biliteracy, Iowa Biliteracy Seal Guidance, North Dakota Seal of Biliteracy, and 2022-2023 Montana Seal of Biliteracy Info Sheet,* point out a common purpose for the SoBL: honoring and recognizing graduating high school students who have exhibited the required levels of language proficiency in English and at least one or more other world languages. In addition to considering how these policy texts discursively construct the purpose of the SoBL, I closely examined the language and content used in these policy texts to examine whether they emphasize the value of multilingual learners' home languages in the SoBL implementation. However, among the eleven policy texts, only two, from California and North Dakota, stand out for their recognition and support of the home languages of multilingual learners. Specifically, California values multilingual learners who "bring the asset of a home language other than or in addition to English to their school communities" and encourage these learners to "build literacy in the home language" (California State Seal of Biliteracy Implementation Guide, 2022, p. 6). Similarly, North Dakota recognizes the importance of multilingual learners as they "possess skills necessary for national security and prosperity and are an essential component of multilingual/multicultural society" (2022-2023 North Dakota Seal of Biliteracy, 2022 p. 5). Overall, the SoBL policies from California and North Dakota recognize and support multilingual learners' home languages.

Ways of Disseminating Information About the SoBL

The approaches to disseminating information about the SoBL vary among policy texts in different states. The *Guidelines for Implementing the Seal of Biliteracy* suggests that, to ensure families and heritage communities are informed about the SoBL, communications about the SoBL could be "translated into the heritage languages relevant to the local community" (p. 4). Additionally, among the other ten SoBL policy texts, the *California State Seal of Biliteracy Implementation Guide* and the *2022-2023 Montana Seal of Biliteracy Info Sheet* provide comprehensive guidelines for disseminating information about the SoBL to local districts and communities. Specifically, the *California State Seal of Biliteracy Implementation Guide* instructs school districts to share information about the SoBL with families, students, and assemblies. For families, the guide recommends providing the SoBL booklets, requirement flyers, and informational PowerPoint presentations in both English and Spanish. For students, the guide suggests sharing information about the SoBL in world language classes, English Language Development (ELD) and newcomer classes, and English Language Arts (ELA) or homeroom classes. The guide emphasizes the inclusion of all students and families, especially multilingual learners and their parents, in the process of implementing the SoBL.

Similarly, the *2022-2023 Montana Seal of Biliteracy Info Sheet* suggests several outreach strategies to promote the SoBL. These include contacting families whose home language is not English and students who are currently receiving or previously received EL services to see if students are interested in earning the Seal. Additionally, the policy recommends that counselors and teachers, particularly EL teachers and world language teachers, proactively discuss the SoBL with their students. The goals of implementing these outreach strategies are to improve access to information about the SoBL for multilingual learners, their parents, and their teachers, and to motivate students who may not be familiar with the SoBL to consider pursuing it.

Nevertheless, unlike California and North Dakota, policy texts from other states do not provide explicit guidance on disseminating information about the SoBL in school districts and communities. This lack of direction may stem from policymakers' recognition of the diverse circumstances that exist among school districts, such as variations in size, student demographics, and available educational resources. Consequently, it appears that these policymakers are aiming to grant local school districts the autonomy to determine the most suitable approach for implementing the SoBL, tailored to their unique circumstances. While this approach allows for flexibility and adaptation, it also places the responsibility on individual school districts to ensure equitable access to information and opportunities for all eligible students, including multilingual learners who come from culturally diverse backgrounds.

Language Proficiency Assessment Requirements Across Various States

The policy texts in the five states (i.e., California, New Jersey, Iowa, North Dakota, and Montana) state that all students are obliged to demonstrate English proficiency through the state's standardized English language arts exam, which is typically a requirement for high school graduation. However, some states mandate multilingual learners to demonstrate English proficiency through an additional test, which goes beyond the requirements for other students. For instance, California's *Assembly Bill No.815* explicitly states that students in grades 9 to 12 whose home language is not English must attain the early advanced proficiency level on the English language development test, in addition to meeting the criteria for all graduating high school students to qualify for the SoBL. The uneven requirements create additional challenges for multilingual learners to obtain the Seal, placing them under an additional burden compared to other potential Seal recipients in the five states.

Furthermore, the issue of uneven requirements is amplified by the limited scope of language assessment options. The policy texts from California, New Jersey, Iowa, North Dakota, and Montana detail available standardized tests for multilingual learners to demonstrate their English proficiency and assessments for students to show their proficiency in world languages (see Table 2). Table 2 reveals a notable disparity, indicating that the available tests to assess English language proficiency for multilingual learners are limited compared to the range of assessments available for demonstrating proficiency in world languages. Additionally, even though some world language proficiency assessments such as AP, IB, ACTFL

Assessment of Performance Toward Proficiency in Languages (AAPPL), and Standards-Based Measurement of Proficiency (STAMP) can test a wide range of world languages, including Arabic, Chinese (Mandarin), French, German, Italian, Spanish, Japanese, Korean, Russian, and Portuguese (ACTFL, 2023; Avant Assessment, LLC, 2023; College Board, 2023; Global Seal of Biliteracy, 2023), these assessments do not include tests for some multilingual learners' home languages. For instance,

Table 2
Available English and world language proficiency assessments in the five states

States	Assessments for Testing English Proficiency for Multilingual Learners	Assessments for Testing World Language Proficiency
California	English Language Proficiency Assessments for California (ELPAC) or any previous or successor state English language proficiency assessment for multilingual learners	AP
		IB
		Complete a four-year high school course of study in a world language
New Jersey	Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State for English Language Learners (ACCESS) for multilingual learners	AP
		IB
		STAMP
		AAPPL
Iowa	ACT	AP
	SAT	IB
	English Language Proficiency Assessment for the 21st Century (ELPA21) in grades 9-12	STAMP
		AAPPL
		Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI) Exam
	AAPPL	Writing Proficiency Test (WPT) Exam
	STAMP	National Examinations in World Language (NEWL) Exam
North Dakota	ACCESS for multilingual learners	ACTFL
		AAPPL
		STAMP
Montana	ACCESS for multilingual learners	AP
		IB
		STAMP
		AAPPL

languages, such as Marshallese, Lao, and Dinka, which are spoken by some multilingual learners in Iowa, are not included in these assessments (Iowa Department of Education, 2018). This limitation poses a significant challenge for multilingual learners who speak languages with fewer resources and recognition in the standardized testing landscape. Consequently, the current testing framework may not fully capture the diverse linguistic capabilities of multilingual learners, potentially hindering their chances of obtaining the Seal.

In conclusion, the analysis of the SoBL policy texts across states highlighted a concerning disparity, where linguistically privileged students might enjoy a significant advantage in obtaining the SoBL, raising questions about equality and access in language proficiency recognition for multilingual learners. California and North Dakota are commendable for recognizing and supporting the home languages of multilingual learners, while other states lack explicit guidance on valuing multilingual learners' home languages in SoBL implementation. Additionally, California and Montana provide comprehensive guidelines for disseminating the SoBL information, ensuring access for all students, particularly multilingual learners. Conversely, some states lack guidelines, potentially leading to information gaps and underserved multilingual learners. Moreover, language proficiency assessments for the SoBL create disparities and challenges for multilingual learners due to unequal requirements and limited testing options compared to linguistically privileged students. These issues are crucial to foster an inclusive environment where all eligible students can be recognized and awarded the Seal for their language achievements.

Addressing Potential Inequality in the Implementation of the SoBL

The eleven policy texts consistently underscore the principles of equitable access to the SoBL for all students and all languages. For instance, policy texts for California, New Jersey, and Montana highlight that the intentions of the SoBL are to offer fair and inclusive opportunities to all student groups, including current and former multilingual learners, students with disabilities, and other underserved populations, as well as to ensure that the Seal can be awarded in any language.

Additionally, upon examining the policy texts, it becomes evident that policymakers hold positive attitudes towards multilingual learners and their home languages. For instance, the *2022-2023 North Dakota Seal of Biliteracy* acknowledges that multilingual learners whose home language(s) is not English possess valuable skills essential for national security, prosperity, and the fostering of a multilingual and multicultural society. Moreover, policymakers in the texts firmly advocate for school districts to take a proactive approach in encouraging multilingual learners to maintain and improve their proficiency in their home language(s). Overall, these policy texts demonstrate guidance to promote equality, bi-/multilingualism, and inclusivity in the SoBL implementation, particularly regarding the recognition of biliteracy achievements among diverse student populations.

However, the policy texts bring attention to the presence of inequality in language assessments when implementing the SoBL. This inequality means that multilingual learners who are proficient in less commonly taught languages may not have equitable opportunities as other learners to test their language proficiency

and earn the Seal. Through an examination of the policy texts from various states, it becomes evident that only two states, namely Iowa and Montana, provide explicit guidance regarding the provision of alternative forms of assessment to measure language proficiency. Specifically, the *Iowa Biliteracy Seal Guidance* states that if no assessment is available for the world language, the local school district or accredited nonpublic school must review and assess the student's portfolio in the four language domains: reading, writing, speaking, and listening. The *2022-2023 Montana Seal of Biliteracy Info Sheet* specifies the STAMP WS and ACTFL OPI (interview) & WPT (writing tasks) as assessment options for less commonly taught languages. In sum, Iowa and Montana offer more flexible approaches to recognize multilingual learners' language achievements.

Nevertheless, the policy texts of the other three states, including California, New Jersey, and North Dakota, merely indicate that school districts should contact the Department of Education or Public Instruction to request alternative assessment options. Following this, districts may proceed to administer department-approved, locally designed proficiency-based assessments. This implies that the responsibility for the development and oversight of assessments, such as portfolios, shifts from the State Board of Education to school districts. Such a process requires considerable initiative, resources, and cooperation from school districts. However, certain school districts might lack the necessary resources to develop and administer high-quality, fair, and reliable alternative assessments for multilingual learners. Furthermore, some districts may not have the expertise to measure multilingual learners' language proficiency, potentially leading to assessments that do not accurately reflect students' actual capabilities. Taken together, the absence of clarity in the policy texts regarding alternative assessments and the shift of responsibility from the state level to local districts may limit opportunities for multilingual learners to demonstrate their world language proficiency.

In sum, policies emphasize the importance of promoting equality and inclusivity in the SoBL implementation, with a particular focus on acknowledging biliteracy achievements among diverse student groups. However, the opportunities for multilingual learners to demonstrate their biliteracy are still limited by the availability of language proficiency assessments in their languages. As a result, the overarching objective of the SoBL, which aims to foster bi-/multilingualism for all, is at risk of being hindered by the limited availability of accessible language proficiency assessments for multilingual learners.

Prospects of Receiving the Seal in a Neoliberal Environment

In the context of neoliberalism, which emphasizes market-driven values, languages are often viewed primarily as economic assets. This perspective is mirrored in the policy texts from California and New Jersey, where they emphasize the value of the SoBL and bi-/multiliteracy in relation to business and economic activities. Specifically, the policy text, Chapter 303 An Act Establishing the State Seal of Biliteracy, emphasizes that students' proficiency in multiple languages can open doors for New Jersey to engage more effectively in economic activities, as well as expand international trade and business opportunities. The policy text State Seal of Bilit-

eracy Implementation Guide in California highlights the state's dedication to fostering students' multiliteracy, recognizing its essential role in building a twenty-first century economy.

Additionally, some states portray the SoBL as a credential with the potential to benefit employers. For instance, the policy texts from Iowa, New Jersey, North Dakota, and Montana collectively acknowledge the increasing demand for employees fluent in more than one language. Specifically, *Chapter 303 An Act Establishing the State Seal of Biliteracy* points out several benefits to employers of having multilingual staff, including "access to expanding markets, allowing business owners to better serve their customers' needs, and the sparking of new marketing ideas that better target a particular audience and open a channel of communication with customers" (p. 1). Moreover, policy texts from Iowa, North Dakota, and Montana also highlight that earning the Seal can help providers of grants or scholarships in higher education institutions recognize an individual's achievements. Thus, the recipients of the SoBL may find themselves with enhanced employability and competitiveness in a globalized economy.

Discussion

Originating as a bottom-up language policy, the SoBL emerged from a statewide advocacy coalition comprising teachers, administrators, parents, and non-profit organizations (Heineke & Davin, 2018). However, an analysis of the eleven policy texts reveals that the language policy has a top-down nature, given that state-level policymakers in various states have established relatively explicit guidelines, incorporating authoritative language, to direct local school districts to implement the SoBL. This indicates that the SoBL policymakers create the policy texts and local districts are responsible for interpreting them for implementation. Therefore, the SoBL development is consistent with Johnson (2013)'s assertion that a policy's nature can be both top-down and bottom-up, contingent on the creators and interpreters of the policy. Furthermore, the combination of both top-down and bottom-up aspects suggests that the SoBL policy may possess a degree of flexibility. This allows for adjustment to the needs of local districts while still maintaining a certain level of standardized implementation.

Additionally, an analysis of the SoBL policy texts reveals that this language policy is developed with a language-as-resource orientation, a perspective that views language as an asset. Policymakers actively advocate for school districts to promote bi-/multilingualism. Importantly, policy texts from California and North Dakota acknowledge and endorse multilingual learners' home languages, contending that these languages can enhance the linguistic variety of the United States. This viewpoint is consistent with some scholars' emphasis on the importance of preserving multilingual learners' home languages (Baker, 2001; Cummins et al., 2006; Gómez et al., 2005; Hult, 2014; Mora et al., 2001). However, the SoBL's implementation guidance, including language assessment requirements and assessment options, seems to predominantly adopt a language-as-problem orientation. The policy texts reveal that, compared to peers, the opportunities for multilingual learners to demonstrate their biliteracy are hindered by the availability of

language proficiency assessments in their home languages. This emphasizes a linguistic hierarchy where particular languages are given greater attention and privilege compared to others. Additionally, multilingual learners face additional English proficiency testing, burdening them compared to other potential Seal recipients. These findings echo Ruiz's (1984) language-as-problem orientation and support earlier conclusions (Harrison, 2007; Mora et al., 2001; Zéphir, 1997) that the SoBL implementation process often views multilingual learners through a deficit lens, highlighting their deficiency in the dominant language. Such dynamics lead to linguistic disparities and bias against multilingual learners.

The SoBL policy texts align with findings from researchers, such as Schwedhelm and King (2020), Shin and Park (2016), Subtirelu (2020), and Subtirelu et al. (2019), highlighting the beneficial facets of the neoliberal discourse associated with the SoBL. These policy texts indicate that bi-/multilingualism is viewed favorably when framed within a neoliberal context, which emphasize the potential to increase students' marketability in the job and graduate school markets, as well as their economic competitiveness in a globalized world. Nevertheless, the implementation of the SoBL, as reflected in the policy texts, shows that multilingual learners encounter obstacles in accessing linguistic resources and opportunities, in contrast to their peers who are privileged in their journey to attain the Seal and achieve economic success. This finding resonates with Harvey's (2006) and Peck's (2010) viewpoints, suggesting that neoliberal policies may benefit individuals who are wealthy and powerful. Consequently, this disparity may pose additional challenges for multilingual learners in demonstrating their language proficiency and gaining equal recognition.

Conclusion

This study has critically examined the development and implementation of the SoBL across five states, including California, New Jersey, Iowa, North Dakota, and Montana, through an analysis of eleven SoBL policy texts. The analysis reveals disparities in promoting and implementing the SoBL across the states. The key issues identified are the limited availability of language assessments, particularly in languages spoken by multilingual learners, and the additional requirement for multilingual learners to demonstrate English proficiency. Such imbalances disadvantage multilingual learners in comparison to their native English-speaking counterparts, highlighting the need for policy reform.

To address challenges in implementing the SoBL as reflected in policy texts, several strategies are suggested. Firstly, inter-state collaboration is crucial. The Departments of Education from different states can come together to share best practices and develop a broader range of assessments for various languages. This collaboration could include regular meetings to discuss and standardize assessment options and criteria, which would make the SoBL more accessible to a diverse student population. Secondly, policy change is important. A joint effort from policymakers, local Boards of Education, administrators, educators, and language teachers is necessary to address the disparities in the implementation of the SoBL. By utilizing their firsthand experience, knowledge, and community connections, they

can advocate for the necessary funding and support and contribute to developing more inclusive educational practices. Thirdly, the integration of pedagogy in the implementation of the SoBL is essential. This involves incorporating language proficiency goals into everyday teaching and learning activities, thus making the acquisition of biliteracy a more integral part of the educational experience. Additionally, effective resource allocation and support are vital at the local school district level. Districts need to provide language development programs, tutoring, mentoring, and culturally relevant curricula that recognize and celebrate the linguistic diversity of their students. In conclusion, the SoBL can evolve into a more inclusive and equitable initiative through the adoption and execution of these recommendations.

Future Research

As I look towards the future, it is clear that continued research is essential to the evolution of the SoBL initiative. Firstly, it is important to investigate the discrepancies between the intended spirit of the policy and its actual implementation. This could involve conducting in-depth interviews with administrators, educators, language teachers, and students, to gather qualitative insights into the practical challenges and successes of the SoBL implementation in different educational settings. Secondly, exploring how the SoBL impacts long-term academic and career outcomes for students, especially multilingual learners, could provide valuable data to inform future policy adjustments. Thirdly, it is crucial to analyze the effectiveness of the strategies suggested in this study, and to continuously refine the SoBL policies.

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8 Leveraging the Seal of Biliteracy in Community-Based Heritage Language Schools

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The Challenge

Unlocking the potential of the Seal of Biliteracy (SoBL) goes beyond high school classrooms. Delve into our study exploring SoBL implementation in community-based heritage language. Discover how these schools leverage the SoBL, the benefits they experience, and the challenges they face while doing so.

Abstract

The Seal of Biliteracy (SoBL) is a language education policy that certifies an individual's proficiency in English and another language. Much of the existing research on the SoBL has studied its implementation in public schools, but the present investigation instead sought to contribute to the literature on SoBL implementation in community-based heritage language (HL) schools. Community-based HL schools are typically non-profit organizations founded and operated by specific immigrant or HL communities whose primary objective is to preserve and teach the language and culture of their heritage, fostering a deep connection to cultural roots. This qualitative study explored the implementation of the SoBL within four community-based HL schools, two situated in Illinois and two in Minnesota. Through interviews, we sought to understand how the schools implemented the policy, the benefits that they experienced from implementation, and the challenges that they faced along the way. Findings underscored the pivotal role of the SoBL in supporting recruitment and retention, the use of data to inform

decision-making, and the setting of language targets. They also highlighted the need for additional support and resources to ensure broader participation.

Keywords: *heritage language preservation, articulation, language assessment*

The Seal of Biliteracy (SoBL) is a recognition that certifies an individual's proficiency in English and another language, with the exception of Hawaiian residents where the anchor language can instead be Hawaiian. The policy originated in California with advocates working to change English-only policies that prohibited bilingual education. They hoped that such a recognition might change the public sentiment toward speakers of other languages, establishing multilingualism as an asset rather than a deficit (Olson, 2020). First signed into California policy in 2011, as of January 2024, a SoBL policy now exists in all 50 states.

Various research studies have examined implementation and outcomes of the SoBL, identifying both benefits and challenges. Students report that the potential of achieving a SoBL motivates them to become proficient in other languages (Davin, 2021a; Davin & Heineke, 2018). Many are motivated by the possibility of earning college credit (Davin & Heineke, 2018). Legislation requires institutions in the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system as well as state-funded institutions of higher education in Illinois and Rhode Island to offer college credit to SoBL earners (see Davin, 2021a).[1] Some private institutions also do so voluntarily, as do some institutions of higher education in other states. Students also report a desire for the proof of proficiency that the SoBL carries because they believe it will help with future employment opportunities. Language-minoritized students—speakers of non-dominant languages and non-standard varieties of English (Flores et al., 2015)—report that the SoBL validates their language and culture and strengthens ties to their heritage (Castro, 2020; Davin, 2021b; Davin et al., 2018; Hancock & Davin, 2020; Monto, 2022). At the programmatic level, many language programs now have access to assessment data used to award the SoBL that they can also use to evaluate curriculum and instruction (Davin et al., 2018).

Studies have also uncovered various challenges with this initiative, often tied to a lack of funding and unequal participation. The assessments used to award the SoBL can be costly and difficult to obtain for less commonly taught and tested languages (see Davin & Heineke, 2022). While students who study French and Spanish in school, for example, might easily be able to earn a SoBL through an Advanced Placement course, students who learned Urdu or Somali at home might not have access to an assessment necessary to demonstrate their proficiency to earn a SoBL. Moreover, because implementation is voluntary, under-resourced schools are less likely to offer the recognition (Subtirelu et al., 2019). Schools without the human resources or technology (e.g., computer lab, headsets with microphones) to secure and administer proficiency assessments, as well as to track assessment results, may choose to not implement the program. Therefore, in some contexts, the SoBL is more frequently awarded to students who learned a language other than English in school rather than to language-minoritized students who learned another language at home (Schwedhelm & King, 2020; Subtirelu et al., 2019).

However, implementation of the SoBL in community-based HL schools offers one way to increase students' access to the recognition. Community-based HL schools are typically non-profit organizations founded and operated by specific immigrant or HL communities (National Coalition of Community-based Language Schools, 2018). Their primary objective is to preserve and teach the language and culture of their heritage, fostering a deep connection to cultural roots. Typically, these languages are spoken within students' homes or by their relatives. Thus, these schools play a vital role in bridging generational and cultural gaps, and often extend their welcome to non-heritage language speakers. Community-based HL schools typically operate beyond regular school hours, offering language classes to diverse learners, ranging from early childhood to adulthood. They not only provide language education but also serve as cultural centers, preserving heritage languages and fostering a sense of community identity (National Coalition of Community-based Language Schools, 2018).

While almost all of the existing research on SoBL implementation was situated in public schools, the present study focused on community-based HL schools, filling a critical gap in the literature on SoBL implementation in diverse educational settings. In this study, we sought to understand the benefits and challenges reported by community-based HL schools in SoBL implementation. The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. How are community-based HL schools implementing the SoBL?
2. What do community-based HL schools report as the benefits of implementing the SoBL?
3. What challenges to SoBL implementation do community-based HL schools experience?

To respond to these questions, we conducted interviews with four key informants who ran programs at community-based HL schools implementing the SoBL – two in Illinois and two in Minnesota. Although implementation is always context-dependent, interviews with individuals at these schools provided insight into how other non-traditional schooling contexts might join the movement to expand equity, offering access to the SoBL to a wider population of students.

Background and Literature Review

The SoBL has the potential to help community-based HL schools with some of the challenges they face. These schools typically operate beyond the regulatory constraints of the U.S. education system (Liu et al., 2011; Lee & Wright, 2014) and struggle with the recruitment and retention of students. Students may view these extra classes that often occur on the weekend as punishment or extra work that does not contribute to their traditional schooling (Lao & Lee, 2009; Lee, 2002; Shin, 2005). Busy schedules, competition from other activities, and diminishing interest in heritage languages often result in enrollment declines as students get older (Liu et al., 2011). There are also recruitment and retention issues due to the informal nature of the programs and the misconception that heritage languages can be learned solely at home (Lee & Wright, 2014). Funding is a barrier, with programs struggling to secure the necessary financial resources for curriculum devel-

opment and sustainability. Tuition and donations, though valuable, often prove inadequate, leaving these programs financially strained (Liu et al., 2011).

Funding challenges exacerbate other issues like the recruitment and retention of qualified teachers and the acquisition of appropriate teaching materials (Lee & Wright, 2014; Liu et al., 2011). Teachers at community-based HL schools are often parents of students or individuals untrained in teaching methodology who learned the language in their native land. They may be unfamiliar with their students' needs and learning styles (Lee & Wright, 2014). Their lack of training can be further heightened by the paucity of and difficulty finding appropriate language curricula and materials (Lee & Wright, 2014; Liu et al., 2011). These challenges, too, are intensified by the diverse ages and proficiency levels of the student populations in these contexts. Many community-based HL schools rely on textbooks from home-land government agencies or materials from the field of foreign language education (Valdés et al., 2006; Wang, 1996), neither of which are appropriate for heritage learners. Moreover, teachers at these schools may not have received training in second language development and teaching and may not be familiar with tools such as the NCSSFL-ACTFL Can-Do statements (Lee & Wright, 2014).

Finally, articulation with public schools and universities also is a fundamental challenge (Lee & Wright, 2014). Collaboration with formal education systems is essential for the holistic development of HL students. However, the intricate processes involved in granting high school credits pose significant roadblocks and few community-based HL schools have been successful in granting students' credit for their language proficiency (Chao, 1997). The burden of advocating for these credits often falls to parents, necessitating streamlined accreditation procedures and closer integration between community-based programs and mainstream educational institutions (Lee & Wright, 2014; Liu et al., 2011). Too often, public school teachers are unaware of community-based HL schools and unaware that their students may attend them (Compton, 2001; Lee & Oxelson, 2006).

The SoBL offers one potential avenue for addressing some of these challenges (Lee & Wright, 2014). Community-based HL schools can be strong partners for SoBL implementation because not only do they frequently teach languages not taught by public schools in the United States, but many have extensive experience in preparing students to pass language assessments (National Coalition of Community-based Language Schools, 2018). The SoBL can serve as an incentive for students to continue study of their HL through high school and the data provided from SoBL assessments might help to inform curricula. While the lack of articulation with public school systems in some contexts does present a barrier, some HL schools have turned to the Global Seal of Biliteracy. Inspired by the state SoBLs, the Global Seal of Biliteracy is similar but different (Global Seal of Biliteracy, 2023). Table 1 displays a side-by-side comparison of the Global Seal of Biliteracy and the state SoBL.

Table 1
Comparison of the state SoBLs and Global Seal of Biliteracy

	State Seals of Biliteracy	Global Seal of Biliteracy
Requirments	Varies by state, but generally requires submission of qualifying scores on approved assessment	Submit qualifying scores on approved assessment
Tiers	Varies by state; Ranges from Intermediate Low to Advanced Low (See Davin et al., 2020)	Functional Fluency: Intermediate Mid Working Fluency: Advanced Low Professional Fluency: Advanced High
Founders	Varies, but typically state departments of education	Avant Assessment
Eligibility	High school graduates	No age or grade-level requirement
Notation	Varies by school, but typically appears as emblem on diploma or notation on high school transcript	Certificate with unique serial number
Tied to College Credit	Legislatively required by state institutions of higher education in Illinois and Rhode Island and the Minnesota State system in Minnesota; Institutions of higher education in many other states do so voluntarily	Program with Southern New Hampshire University; may vary by institution otherwise

As Table 1 illustrates, both programs typically require students to pass an approved language assessment, but the eligibility requirements and signaling power vary. While the state SoBLs are typically written into legislation, the Global Seal of Biliteracy was founded by an assessment company. Anyone in any country can earn a Global Seal of Biliteracy, whereas the state SoBLs are restricted to high school graduates in the United States. At this time, there is a continually growing list of institutions of higher education that award credit to students who earned a state SoBL (Davin & Heineke, 2022), but, to our knowledge, only one university with a formal agreement to award credit to Global Seal of Biliteracy recipients. Beyond college credit, the lack of research on post-secondary outcomes limits our understanding of how either the SoBL or Global Seal of Biliteracy might influence future employment. However, research suggests a strong preference from many U.S. employers for multilingual applicants (Damari et al., 2017).

Research on the SoBL and Community-based HL Schools

The present study was inspired by the work of Borowczyk (2020), who examined the implementation of the SoBL in community-based HL schools. She interviewed individuals at seven HL schools (i.e., two Czech and Slovak schools, two Lithuanian schools, one German school, one Polish school, and one French heritage program), three of whom had implemented either the SoBL or the Global

Seal of Biliteracy. She examined their perceptions of benefits and challenges of the SoBL. Participants highlighted that the SoBL served as an alternative to home country reward structures, offering a more attractive prospect for U.S.-based communities. They discussed the increasing demand for deliverables, as parents and students sought tangible proof such as grades or high school credits. Paraphrasing the words of one school director, Borowczyk wrote, "social and intrinsic motivations, such as connecting with friends and community members or being able to sustain conversations with relatives in the home country, rarely win out when placed in competition with high school requirements" (p. 36).

Two additional benefits described by her participants related to elevating the status of less commonly taught languages in the United States. Participants felt that, because the SoBL can be awarded in any language, it helped to equalize the value of languages. They also contended that the SoBL increased community visibility, acknowledging the vitality of entire linguistic communities. This public validation held the potential to empower smaller HL communities, making a significant statement about their importance in the U.S. education system (Borowczyk, 2020).

Accompanying the perceived benefits, participants in Borowczyk (2020) also described barriers to SoBL access. One major obstacle was a lack of appropriate assessments in certain less commonly taught and tested languages, making it difficult for learners to attain the SoBL. To earn a SoBL, students typically have to pass a language proficiency assessment by demonstrating their proficiency in reading, writing, listening, and speaking. While states' legislation typically allows for a wide range of possible assessments, such assessments may not exist for all languages. At the time of her investigation, several of the individuals with whom she spoke were working on creating assessments, which was a challenge in itself due to the difficulty of writing valid and reliable tests. Additionally, the lack of articulation with local high schools posed challenges, complicated by what Borowczyk (2020) referred to as "uneven parental power" (p. 42). Many states are local control states, meaning that the administration at high schools decide whether to implement and award the SoBL as well as what assessments to offer and accept. In these cases, students may qualify for a SoBL through an assessment offered at the community-based HL school, but they may attend a school not participating in the program. Uneven parental power further complicates access. Without clear articulation policies "the burden of negotiating for recognition is placed on parents" and "access often depends on the resources and clout of parents in particular districts, which inevitably reinforces inequality" (Borowczyk, 2020, p. 40).

Methodology

The present study sought to build upon the work of Borowczyk (2020) by studying four community-based HL schools that had successfully implemented the state SoBL and/or the Global Seal of Biliteracy. In the present investigation, Institutional Review Board approval allowed participants to choose whether to disclose their identities and the identity of their school. In Borowczyk (2020), pseudonyms were used. For that reason, there may have been overlap in partici-

pating schools between the two studies, specifically the two Czech schools. However, were that the case, the Czech schools had not yet implemented the SoBL at the time of Borowczyk's study, whereas all participants were engaged in implementation at the time of the present study.

To respond to the three research questions, the researchers first created an eight-question survey. The researchers consulted the Consortium for Language Teaching and Learning's language directory (https://webapp.cal.org/ConsortiumDB/) and sent the survey to all schools

Across the United States listed under the community-based language programs category. One hundred and thirty one of the 493 emails sent were undelivered and notified as "address not found". Of the remaining 362, only six schools responded. The research team contacted the STARTALK program office to request insight into the low delivery rate and were informed that many schools no longer exist due to changes in funding structures.

Although we had intended to identify interview participants using survey responses, we identified only one school implementing the SoBL through this process. This one interview participant recommended another, who then recommended another, until we reached four. In this way, interview participants were recruited using snowball sampling, resulting in two participating schools in Illinois and two in Minnesota. While we would have liked to include more, these were the only four community-based HL schools that we found to be implementing the SoBL in the fall of 2023.

To be sure, the small sample size was a limitation of the present study. We did not intend to include only schools in Illinois and Minnesota, but it is probable that HL schools in those states were more likely to participate in SoBL implementation due to the legislation related to awarding college credit. Community-based HL schools in those states likely have more pressure from students and parents and greater incentive to offer the SoBL. However, it was difficult to determine how many community-based heritage language schools actually exist. Based on an annual survey by the National Coalition of Community-based Language Schools (2019), there were over 300 such schools that taught 36 various languages in 2019. Of this sample, approximately 71 were located in Illinois (24%) and 11 (4%) were located in Minnesota. All were clustered around the largest cities in those states (i.e., Chicago, St. Paul, Minneapolis). Table 2 (following page) displays information about each participating school and key informant.

Data Collection and Analysis

To respond to the three research questions, we conducted virtual interviews with the four key informants. The interviews focused on the origins and characteristics of the school, their experiences implementing the SoBL, and the successes and challenges that they had experienced. All interviews were conducted via Zoom with two of the three authors present and were video recorded. They lasted between 30 to 45 minutes.

Table 2
Description of interview participants

School Name	Location	Participant	Language	Level
DANK Haus German American Cultural Center	Chicago, IL	Carina	German	Early childhood through high school
T. G. Masaryk Czech School	Cicero, IL	Klára	Czech	All ages
*Tamil School	Eden Prairie MN, Woodbury MN & Virtual (all over US)	Siva	Tamil	Early childhood through high school
Czech & Slovak School in Cities	St. Paul, MN	Jitka	Czech and Slovak	Early childhood through high school

*pseudonym

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For data analysis, the first researcher first cleaned the Zoom-generated interview transcripts. To respond to the first research question, she read each transcript repeatedly and wrote narratives describing each community-based heritage language school. We titled each narrative to describe how the school approached implementation, such as The SoBL as an Add-on to Existing Work. To respond to the second and third research questions, she uploaded all transcripts to NVivo, a data analysis coding program. She then engaged in first cycle coding using structural codes (Saldaña, 2016), such as increased enrollment and useful data. This initial round of coding identified large segments of text which were each reread for a second round of more detailed analysis. The full sets of codes were reorganized into a list of categories, which were then condensed into central themes to "bring meaning, structure, and order to the data" (Andara, 2008, p. 932).

Findings

RQ 1: How are community-based HL schools implementing the SoBL?

In this section, we provide a short description for each participating school, highlighting its unique journey with SoBL implementation.

The SoBL as an Add-On to Existing Work

The director of the German community HL cultural center, situated in Chicago, encouraged her students to pursue a SoBL. The school was part of a larger cultural center that included a museum, art gallery, and library, in addition to a school that offered classes to students of all ages. The school had regularly administered the Deutsches Sprachdiplom DSD 1 and DSD 2 assessments– assessments required to demonstrate German proficiency if one wishes to attend a university in Germany. Therefore, when Carina learned about the SoBL, she began telling her students and their parents to take their assessment results back to their high school to request the SoBL. She explained, "I try to make the parents put pressure on the educators and on their high school counselors to ask for it again and again". When asked whether students were earning the recognition, Carina explained that she "[hadn't] heard anything back.", indicating that she was not sure. Thus, for Carina, her approach was to promote the SoBL and encourage students and their parents to seek it out within their own schools.

Starting Small with the Global Seal of Biliteracy

Also in the Chicagoland area of Illinois, the director of the T. G. Masaryk Czech School, Klára, began implementation of the Global Seal of Biliteracy in 2023. She had learned about the SoBL four years prior at a conference and although it piqued her interest, her students at that time were too young for the assessment. In April of 2023, when her students reached an appropriate age, she decided to offer the Global Seal of Biliteracy. She explained that she "needed something easy to start with, to explore the path of testing, because [the] kids [had] been coming to the school for the past 11 years, some of them". Therefore, she chose to begin implementation with only the students in her class. She found a donor to sponsor the assessments and was able to assess her 11 students, whose ages ranged from 15 to 17. All 11 achieved the Functional Fluency level of the Global Seal.

Awarding the state SoBL and the Global Seal of Biliteracy

The Czech and Slovak School Twin Cities implemented both the SoBL and the Global Seal of Biliteracy. Jitka, the co-founder, leader, and teacher at the school, began to offer Czech classes out of her home in 2004, motivated by a desire for her children to acquire proficiency in the Czech language. Over the years, she built a community of language learners by offering classes to other Czech families in her area. In 2010, she was offered the opportunity to rent space in a nearby building. Five years later, Jitka saw an article about the SoBL and explained, "my brain just was like, 'Oh, my goodness, this is absolutely it. This is absolutely the goal of our school'." She began to look for a Czech assessment but was disappointed to learn that there was no affordable and practical option. She approached several assessment companies to request the creation of an assessment, but they declined due to the economics. So, Jikta explained, "I raised my hand to create the tests." She began to collaborate with the Minnesota Department of Education to create a Czech assessment and eventually worked with the Global Seal of Biliteracy as well to develop their assessment.

Expanding SoBL Implementation beyond the School

The Minnesota Tamil School (MNTS), run by Siva, began to implement the SoBL in 2016. To begin implementation, because no affordable and practical Tamil assessment existed, the school contracted with ACTFL to get training on the proficiency guidelines, assessment creation, and scoring. Initially, the school offered the assessment solely to their own students. But over the years, they formalized and streamlined their process to reach as wide of an audience as possible, including other Tamil schools in Minnesota and nearby states. The director explained that each year, they set a testing date and communicated it to students, parents, and school counselors in all of the local districts. Once the test was administered and the results were determined, the school then communicated the results directly to the Minnesota Department of Education. He explained that it was initially "a learning curve" for the districts in terms of recognizing students and that each district figured out their own path. Some would affix an emblem to students' diplomas while others would award a separate certificate. In the first year of implementation, MNTS recognized two students with a SoBL. Over the seven subsequent years, they recognized 45 more students, bringing the total number of seals awarded to 47.

RQ 2: What do community-based HL schools report as the benefits of implementing the SoBL?

In response to the second research question, we identified three benefits in the data, including: student recruitment and retention, using SoBL assessment data to improve teaching and learning, and goal setting for students. In this section, we present each of those in turn.

Student Recruitment and Retention

The school directors with whom we spoke reported that the SoBL supported their recruitment and retention efforts. Carina explained that they used the SoBL as "a selling point" for her program by advertising that it was "proof of language skills." She explained that the extrinsic motivation of earning a SoBL pushed students to continue their study of the language into high school. Whereas before their motivation might have been that "mom [said] to the children that you've got to do German because your grandpa speaks German," that the promise of a SoBL offered "more authority." She explained that the SoBL gave "the whole program a little bit of an extra push." Siva's explanation was similar. He explained that to know the language "should be the inspiration for the students" so "that they can pass on to that next generation," but that external factors often interfered. During the first three or four years that students take classes, he told us that there is "a lot of excitement" and that "people come and everybody enrolls" but that enrollment "drops off drastically because they go into the middle school, they go into high school, and they have a lot of regular work." He explained that students had to study a language in school to meet college entrance requirements, so they would quit Tamil coursework to learn a different language. By seeking accreditation for his program and implementing the SoBL, especially since institutions of higher education in the Minnesota State system award credit for the SoBL, he was able to change enrollment trends and recruit and retain more students.

Using SoBL Assessment Data to Improve Teaching and Learning

Because the SoBL requires students to take language proficiency assessments, implementation provided the teachers at the community-based HL schools in our sample with useful data on their instruction. The assessments used for the SoBL typically measure students' performance across the domains of reading, writing, listening, and speaking or the three modes of communication (i.e., interpretive, interpersonal, presentational; The National Standards Collaborative Board, 2015). In other words, they measure students' ability to communicate rather than their knowledge of grammar. As Jitka explained, "These weekend heritage schools cannot be something we dread, and the Seal of Biliteracy helps us avoid dreadful grammar." She explained that the SoBL focuses "truly on the communication" and that, after implementation, she "ditched all the textbooks." Instead, she began to incorporate more authentic reading and writing tasks, explaining that "the moms speak to them in Czech and sometimes the kids speak back to them in Czech, but rarely do any of them read or write."

Klára spoke about how the assessment data were useful for the students as well. She explained, "the kids are not really fans of reading a thick book," but that the assessments showed them that perhaps "their vocabulary maybe isn't the best. .. [that] it could be so much better." She stated, "All of a sudden, reading [made] sense." She reported that the same was true for speaking. She described how she "used to do one minute of speaking," but that the speaking part of the Global Seal of Biliteracy has a three minute limit." Students found the long time slot "extremely intimidating," so they began to work on this skill a lot more during class.

Goal Setting

In addition to supporting recruitment and retention efforts and providing useful assessment data, SoBL implementation also helped schools to set language targets. As Klára explained, most community-based HL schools "don't give out any marks or any grades" making the SoBL "extremely important, not only for the kids, but for the teacher as well." For the students, it is "a good opportunity to actually get tested" because it gives students "a little extra push" and motivates them to "reach a higher level." And for teachers, the SoBL helps them to "know where they are", and to also have the "excuse" to ask the students to work harder. Siva concurred, explaining that the assessments provided "a standard" and a "big motivating factor." They pushed teachers to "look up proficiency levels" and backward map curriculum, figuring out "what you can do per year based on how many years it will take them to prepare for a bilingual seal achievement."

RQ 3: What challenges to SoBL implementation do community-based HL schools experience?

In response to the third research question, we identified three themes in the data related to challenges. The themes were lack of assessments, information, state-level support and articulation.

Assessments

One of the biggest challenges reported by the community-based HL schools was the lack of assessments, especially for less commonly taught and tested languages. Siva explained that when he first started to implement the SoBL at his

school, there was not even "a syllabus, or a certification in Tamil language" Similarly, Jitka also reported that no Czech assessment existed when she first learned about the SoBL. In both cases, Siva and Jika eventually had to work with testing experts to develop their own assessments. As Siva explained,

> "If standardized assessments are available, there are no questions asked, the path towards is very simple and fast. Otherwise, it takes a lot of effort locally." Most testing companies require the promise of a minimum number of tests purchased to invest in the creation of an assessment.

Perhaps the biggest challenge in assessment creation the reading and listening portions, because they require test creators to develop appropriately-leveled texts and corresponding valid and reliable comprehension questions. In contrast, speaking and writing portions require only prompts to elicit students' responses at the targeted proficiency level. When heritage communities invest in creating reading and listening assessments, they often need more than one assessment so that students can engage in multiple attempts at different grades in high school. Confronting this challenge, the Tamil school had created two different assessments and was working on a third. Moreover, the Minnesota Department of Education had collaborated with a company called Extempore (https://extemporeapp.com) to be able to offer their assessment online. If willing to enter into a memorandum of understanding with the Minnesota Department of Education, other states (e.g., Nebraska) were able to offer Minnesota's Tamil assessment to students. In this way, through collaboration, the Tamil school and the Minnesota Department of Education were making great strides in increasing accessibility to earning a SoBL in Tamil.

Lack of Information & StateLevel Support

For the participants in our study whose schools were located in Illinois, a commonly reported challenge was a lack of information and insufficient state-level support. In Illinois, there is no individual dedicated solely to world languages at the State Board of Education and no member of the National Council of State Supervisors for Languages. Perhaps relatedly, individuals at community-based HL schools described difficulties in finding information about policy requirements. For example, related to the previous theme of assessment, Carina explained her challenge in determining which assessments were accepted for the Illinois SoBL. She said that there was not "one page where it's like really spelled out" and explained that she had spent a lot of time looking for information about how to award the SoBL. She said that, as the director of a Saturday school, she had to "prioritize what [she was] doing" and "didn't have the time to really like research and research." Also in Illinois, avoiding these issues, Klára decided to award the Global Seal of Biliteracy to her students rather than the state SoBL. She was able to work directly with the executive director of the company who came to the school to attend their recognition ceremony and hand out the certificates. However, Illinois is one of the three states where state law requires institutions in the state system of higher education to award credit to state SoBL recipients. Thus, it was unclear as to whether any of Klára's students were able to request the state SoBL through their school districts to earn those credits.

Lack of Articulation

Lending support to Borowczyk's (2020) findings, participants also lamented the lack of articulation with local school districts. Related to the lack of available information online and challenges with assessment, participants described a disconnect between their community-based HL schools and their students' public schools. Carina explained that she gave her students the German test and then told students that they had to "go to their high school and organize getting the Seal." In other words, they were able to take the required assessment with her, but her state did not allow her to award the SoBL. Therefore, students had to "show it to their high school counselor." As a result, Carina had to trust that students followed through with this action and that the counselors took the appropriate steps to have the SoBL recorded by the state and placed on her students' transcripts.

Discussion

This investigation examined SoBL implementation in four community-based HL schools located in Illinois and Minnesota. Analyses focused on the distinct ways that each school was implementing the SoBL and the benefits and challenges that they shared. Findings revealed that the SoBL supported participants' recruitment and retention efforts, informed teaching and learning practices, and helped schools to set language targets. Conversely, the study also highlighted several challenges with implementation. Notably, the absence of standardized assessments for less commonly taught languages posed a significant hurdle, which required substantial time and effort by participating schools to overcome. Additionally, the lack of comprehensive, easy-to-find information and state-level support as well as the challenge of articulation between educational institutions remained a considerable issue, hindering the seamless integration of the SoBL into community-based HL schools. In this section, we interpret these findings in relation to the existing literature and propose suggestions that will help to ameliorate the challenges these schools face.

Findings in the present study provided some initial evidence that SoBL implementation by community-based HL schools can provide mutual benefit for both schools and students. For students who use less commonly tested languages, implementation in these contexts provided a pathway to the recognition not available in their public school, addressing some issues of access described in existing research (Subtirelu et al., 2019). Unfortunately, the number of community-based HL schools offering the SoBL is small and such schools are typically located primarily in large urban areas (National Coalition of Community-based Language Schools, 2019), but future research might explore other approaches to online HL instruction. For community-based HL schools, findings suggested that SoBL implementation might help to ameliorate issues with the recruitment and retention of students (Liu et al., 2011). Both Carina from the German heritage school and Siva from the Tamil school spoke about how the possibility of earning this recognition motivated students to continue their study of the language into high school. They explained that the SoBL gave students a goal to work toward and represented an accolade that students could use to strengthen their college applications. In this

way, their HL coursework was better able to compete for time and resources with their other high school extracurricular activities.

The struggle that community-based HL schools face in regard to the lack of curricula and teaching materials (Lee & Wright, 2014; Liu et al., 2011; Valdés et al., 2006) certainly remains a challenge. However, participants in this investigation indicated positive washback from administering the assessments required to award the SoBL. Washback refers to the effect that assessments have on teaching and learning (Cheng et al., 2004). SoBL assessments measure students' communicative proficiency; that is, their ability to use the language to communicate across the three modes of communication or four domains. Jitka explained that the assessments changed the content of her instruction to avoid a focus on "dreadful grammar" and Klára explained that the assessments motivated students to work harder to improve on the domains in which they struggled (i.e., reading, speaking). Thus, while the SoBL does not come with a curriculum or materials to solve this challenge, the proficiency-focused assessments provided a model for teachers of what coursework should target. In contexts where teachers may not have received any training on language teaching methodologies (Lee & Wright, 2014), the SoBL assessments might provide some guidance what students should learn.

Findings of this investigation underscored that articulation with public districts and schools continued to be an issue. Just as Borowczyk (2020) reported, the schools located in Illinois reported that they did not have a way to directly award students a SoBL. As a result, Carina was not sure if any of her students were earning the state SoBL even though they were eligible. Klára chose to instead award the Global Seal of Biliteracy, even though this did not have the same guarantees of college credit as the state SoBL. In Minnesota, Siva had made significant progress in SoBL implementation, establishing strong relationships with staff in the school districts where his students were enrolled. This enabled him to effectively facilitate their attainment of the state SoBL. As these differences imply, the differences in states' SoBL policies (see Davin & Heineke, 2017) continue to present challenges for information dissemination and broad implementation.

Since the publication of Borowczyk (2020), at least for the schools in this investigation, the lack of appropriate assessments was no longer an issue. All participants in this investigation had access to affordable and practical assessments that they could administer to students to award the SoBL. With that said, in the case of the Czech and Tamil schools, Siva and Jitka expended substantial personal time and resources to assist in assessment creation. They both also continued to work as scorers for these assessments. To be sure, there are likely many other community-based HL schools that teach Indigenous languages or other less commonly tested languages that do not have an assessment.

Implications

These findings underscore the various challenges faced by community-based HL schools within the SoBL framework and highlight the need for comprehensive strategies and collaborations to overcome these challenges. It is important for stakeholders to come together to address these challenges because of the large impact that community-based HL schools can have on equitable SoBL implementa-

tion by paving the path for speakers of less commonly taught and tested languages to earn a SoBL. We offer three suggestions for improvement.

Expand articipation ofommunity-ased HL schools

As a field, we need to work together to increase the number of community-based HL schools that implement the SoBL as well as increase students' access to these schools. The present study found two major barriers to SoBL implemenation, including a lack of information about how to participate and the lack of assessments. Regarding the former, there are several excellent resources available to support implementation (see Table 3).

Table 3

Resources to support SoBL implementation

Resources	Access links	Features
Book published by ACTFL and co-authored by Davin & Heineke (2022)	*Promoting Multilingualism in Schools: A Framework for Implementing the Seal of Biliteracy*	Outlines a five P framework for equitable implementation of the Seal of Biliteracy that includes: Purpose, Proficiency Assessment, Programs, Partners, and Promotion
Website sponsored by Minnesota Department of Education, the Center for Advanced Research on Language Acquisition, and the University of Minnesota	https://www.minnesotabilingualseals.com/	Provides resources for students, educators, and families in a variety of languages
PDF available freely online called *Guidelines for Implementing the Seal of Biliteracy* created through collaboration of various language and advocacy organizations	https://sealofbiliteracy.org/doc/sobl-guidelines-2020-final.pdf	Describes advocacy, pathways to proficiency, and implementation guidelines with a focus on fostering equity and access

Regarding assessments, we recommend that organizations like Language Testing International or Avant Assessment offer workshops or institutes designed to help HL communities create their own assessments. Because testing companies must sell a minimum quantity of assessments to justify the expense of their creation (Borowczyk, 2020), we recognize that their investment in various languages might not be a viable option. But by offering an online institute for communities across the nation to come together and learn to design assignments, we could make great strides in increasing equity and accessibility.

A third barrier that was beyond the scope of the present study but deserves mention is the fact that access to community-based HL schools is often limited to those living in large cities. Speakers of less commonly taught and tested languages who live in rural areas are less likely than their peers in urban areas to have pathways to obtain a SoBL. However, the Tamil school in the present study had begun to offer online coursework and other schools might consider a similar model. Moreover, even if access to coursework was not available, community-based HL schools might consider making their assessments available online. For example, if

all speakers of Tamil could attempt and apply for the SoBL in Tamil by going through the Tamil school in Minnesota, other Tamil communities would not have to create their own assessments. A website that lists the primary community-based HL school offering an assessment in each language could allow others to pay a nominal fee to perhaps take their assessment. Finding trained scorers to score all of these assessments would certainly present a challenge, but perhaps some fee structure could be arranged to make it worth scorers' time.

A barrier to ensuring that students earned the state SoBL after passing the required assessments was that students and their parents had to go back to their public schools and request a SoBL. In some cases, their schools might have chosen not to participate or might not have had the structures in place to award the recognition. For that reason, states should consider following a model similar to that of Nebraska. In Nebraska, students can go to Nebraska Department of Education website and complete an application for the SoBL without having to go through their public schools (Nebraska Department of Education, 2023). The application requires them to input their information, their school's information, and their assessment results. It seems possible that community-based HL schools could also gather these data on behalf of their students and directly input the information themselves. In this way, HL schools can ensure that all students who have qualified for a SoBL have access.

We conclude with a recommendation made by Borowyzck (2020) for an up-to-date directory of community-based HL schools. In the present study, we reached out to all schools listed in the Consortium for Language Teaching and Learning's language directory (https://webapp.cal.org/ConsortiumDB/) which was last updated in 2017. Twenty-seven percent of the emails were returned with "address not found" and we received only six responses. Currently, the Coalition of Community-Based Heritage Language Schools is working on a map of community-based schools that shows their location, name, language, and website (Coalition of Community-Based Heritage Language Schools, 2019). We encourage readers interested in appearing on the map to complete the survey on their website. This type of directory would support public school districts and state departments of education in locating potential partners in their communities to support more equitable SoBL implementation. Involving community HL schools in SoBL implementation can not only legitimize these schools within the U.S. educational context but also promote multilingual, proficiency-based instruction and enhance the visibility of these valuable linguistic communities within the broader American society (Borowczyk, 2020).

Conclusion

This investigation provided valuable insights into the nuanced landscape of SoBL implementation, shedding light on both its potential and the obstacles faced by community-based HL schools. However, a lack of uniformity and comprehensive information about the SoBL within these schools complicates the process of ensuring equal opportunities for students. By understanding these challenges, educators, policymakers, and stakeholders can work collaboratively to bridge gaps, enhance as-

sessment practices, and ensure more equitable access to the SoBL for all students, regardless of the languages they speak or the communities to which they belong.

Note

1. Legislation does not require the University of Minnesota to offer college credit to SoBL recipients because it is not part of the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system.

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