

# NECTFL Review

**A Journal for PK – 16+ World Language  
Educators & Researchers**



# Our Butterfly Effect: Creating a Lasting Impact

70<sup>th</sup> Annual Northeast Conference

February 22-24, 2024  
New York Hilton Midtown



**James Wildman**  
2024 Conference Chair



**NORTHEAST  
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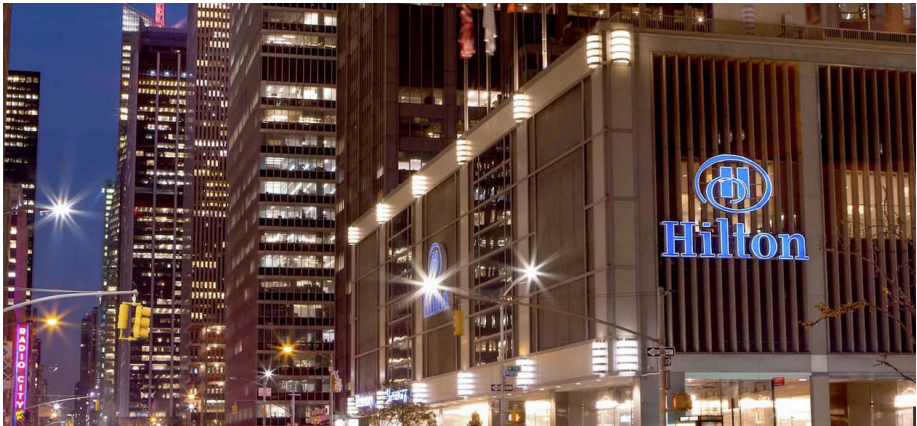


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The NECTFL *Review* is pleased to announce a new section in the journal! This new Language Classroom section is edited by Catherine Ritz ([maflacatherine@gmail.com](mailto:maflacatherine@gmail.com)) and features shorter articles (8+ pages/1,500–2,500 word) focused on classroom practices and experiences. We invite submissions from language educators at all levels that address topics such as: classroom instruction, curriculum design, assessment & feedback, leadership and advocacy, planning and program design, technology integration, student experiences, or other similar topics. These articles should focus on the language classroom and are not intended to present research findings. We are looking for focused and concise articles that share research-based classroom practices and experiences in the language classroom.

To submit an article to this section, use this link:

<https://forms.gle/Fi9YTV3qAcmpZBT8A>



## 2024 NECTFL CONFERENCE

*Our Butterfly Effect: Creating a  
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*Jimmy Wildman, Chair*

**February 22-24, 2024**

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Dear Colleagues and Friends,

The NECTFL Board of Directors is pleased to present the 90th issue of the *NECTFL Review*, an academic journal for PK–16+ world languages educators, researchers, and administrators. We are confident that the articles selected and approved by our committee of experts will spur your thinking and impact your professional growth. Many thanks to Dr. Robert Terry, the editor of the *Review*, for his continuing efforts in guaranteeing the relevance and quality of the publication and to Catherine Ritz, editor of our new Language Classroom section, which features articles focused on classroom practices and experiences. If you haven't discovered these articles, please take a look and get inspired!

On March 2<sup>nd</sup> – 4<sup>th</sup> we welcomed over 1,000 teachers, supervisors, student teachers and award recipients at the New York City Hilton Midtown to our annual conference, “Reimagining the World Language Classroom: The Future Starts Today.” We were moved and inspired by our keynote speaker, Jessica Haxhi. There were sold out pre-conference workshops and learning sessions plus a very robust exhibit hall. We celebrated our award winners, our scholarship winners, our Teacher of the Year finalists, and our Teacher of the Year, Claudia Decker from New Hampshire. The Mead Fellow was Traci Dougherty, Sandy Run Middle School, Dresher, PA; the Steven A. Freeman Award for Best Research Article was awarded to Dr. Tasha Austin, University of Buffalo, and the Nelson H. Brooks Award for a Leader in the Field was posthumously awarded to our beloved John Carlino.

Two new experiences were added this year. The Standing Room Only or SRO sessions located in the exhibition hall were thirty minute interactive, technology-free and chair-free sessions with the presenter(s) behind a high-top table and a crowd gathered around engaging in important topics. We wanted to champion the state associations so we set up an area adjacent to the registration desk for the state associations to connect with their members. It was a great opportunity for state leaders to showcase their exciting programs and events that support their teachers.

I would like to thank the entire Board of Directors for their dedication and professionalism. Everyone worked extremely hard to make this year's Conference the success it was. The only way we were able to accomplish this was with Executive Director Chris Gwin's incredible stewardship, work ethic, and commitment to NECTFL. I am so proud to be a member of this amazing group of professionals! On behalf of Vice-Chair Jimmy Wildman, I would like to invite you to our 70<sup>th</sup> conference, February 22–24, 2024, “Our Butterfly Effect: Creating a Lasting Impact.” Please be on the lookout for our Call for Proposals.

I sincerely hope you will be able to join us in 2024 to celebrate 70 years of NECTFL!

Best Regards,

Margarita Boyatzis Dempsey  
NECTFL 2023 Conference Chair



## JNCL-NCLIS Appoints Amanda Seewald as New Executive Director

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WASHINGTON, D.C., December 1, 2022 - The Joint National Committee for Languages and the National Council for Languages and International Studies, the leading advocacy coalition uniting language educators and professionals to advocate for equitable language opportunities, announced the appointment of Amanda Seewald as its new Executive Director. Seewald will serve in the role of Executive Director on a part-time basis effective January 1st, 2023 immediately following the completion of her term as President. In this role, she will work with relevant partners and stakeholders, including the JNCL-NCLIS Board, Executive Committee, member organizations, and non-member constituencies (legislative, corporate, academic, community, etc.), to advance the mission, vision, and goals of JNCL-NCLIS.



Seewald, owner of MARACAS Language Programs and Learning Kaleidoscope Educational Consulting and author of MARACAS *La Clase del Mundo* publications, has served as a member of the JNCL-NCLIS Board of Directors for over 10 years, most recently as President. During her term as the organization's President, Seewald has also supported the organization as a volunteer interim Executive Director. During her presidential term, Seewald has deftly navigated JNCL-NCLIS through the COVID-19 pandemic, organizing two highly successful virtual Language Advocacy Days events, as well as served as a strong spokesperson for language equity and access, and led a new strategic planning process--all while working to improve the organization's long-term financial health.

"The JNCL-NCLIS Executive Committee and Board of Directors is pleased to honor Amanda's tremendous efforts with the appointment of this role," said President-Elect Linda Engatz. "The organization has benefited greatly from her passionate and visionary leadership to expand our reach and fulfill our commitment to our mission, as well as ensure JNCL-NCLIS's sustainability to provide representation for our members for years to come."

Seewald's appointment comes as the organization continues to implement strategic growth planning to bolster programming, membership, and outreach, all building on the success and accomplishments of JNCL-NCLIS staff and Board of Directors over the past 2 years. Seewald will serve in a part-time capacity to allow her to continue in her role as owner of MARACAS Language Programs.

"JNCL-NCLIS holds a special significance in my life and my work. As a language educator, small business owner, multilingual citizen, and parent I have worked as an advocate with this important organization for the last 12 years. I know that all students have the right to equitable language learning opportunities and that the need for multilingualism to be

seen and treated as an asset in our nation will directly impact our ability to address and solve the challenges we face globally as well as domestically. It has always been clear to me that JNCL-NCLIS holds an essential role in moving this work forward successfully,” said Seewald. “I am grateful for the opportunity to have served as President and worked with such a dedicated and supportive Board of Directors and staff during my term, and I am looking forward to building on that momentum to achieve legislative progress and support the development of advocates across the country.”

Seewald has been teaching children, coaching educators, and developing curricula for 25 years. Her expertise is in multilingual/multicultural curriculum and instruction, focused on PK-12 language learning as well as dual language immersion education. She works with educators and schools across the country as well as in Europe to develop meaningful language programs founded in globally engaged curricula and strong interactive instruction. Seewald is also a Past President of the Foreign Language Educators of New Jersey (FLENJ). She has served as the N.J. State Representative for the National Network for Early Language Learning (NNELL) for many years and also as a member of the Board of Directors of the Northeast Conference for the Teaching of Foreign Languages (NECTFL). Seewald was the 2020 recipient of the NECTFL Nelson H. Brooks Award for Outstanding Leadership in the Profession.

*Established in 1972, the Joint National Committee for Languages (JNCL) and the National Council for Languages and International Studies (NCLIS) unites a national network of leading organizations and businesses comprised of over 300,000 language professionals to advocate for equitable language learning opportunities. Our mission is to ensure that Americans have the opportunity to learn English and at least one other language.*



The Northeast Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Languages serves educators in all languages (including classical, less commonly taught, and ESL), at all levels from kindergarten through university, in both public and private settings. In existence since the late 1940s, NECTFL is the largest of five regional associations of its kind in the United States, representing educators from Maine to Virginia but exercising leadership nation-wide.

NECTFL has expanded its outreach, professional development and advocacy efforts through publications, workshops, research projects and other initiatives. Its prestige has been reflected in its singular ability to bring together the profession's most prestigious leaders for world-class and ground-breaking programs while sustaining an organizational culture that is interactive, welcoming, and responsive.

Through representation on its Board of Directors, through its Advisory Council, through conference offerings and refereed journal articles, NECTFL maintains a commitment to the individual foreign language teacher, to collaborative endeavors, to innovation and to inclusionary politics and policies.

### **What We Do:**

**We serve world language teachers by**

- **listening to them**
- **representing their diverse views**
- **bringing them together**
- **nurturing their growth as newcomers and veterans treating them as caring friends and respected professionals**



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# Representations of Diversity in a Novice-Level Language Classroom and Beyond: An Engaging Semester Project

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Lucian Rothe, *University of Louisville*

## Abstract

Teacher-scholars have called upon fellow language educators to redevelop curricula at all proficiency levels to portray the lived experiences of target language (TL) speakers. This article presents a semester-long project that contributes to developing diverse teaching materials for college-level learners at the novice level. Via an ePortfolio with 10 tasks (virtual and in-person), 20 learners of a second-semester German course explored connections with the TL locally and broadened their understanding of language-community membership beyond stereotypical notions of native speakers. Participants' feedback demonstrated how this project positively impacted students' learning experiences and reflected learners' strong desire for similar assignments in future courses. The findings speak to strategies of how educators can help beginning learners find connections to the TL in local contexts and investigate the diverse lived experiences of TL speakers abroad. The project's approaches, flexible format, and outcomes are easily implemented across various proficiency levels, world languages, and institutional contexts.

## Introduction

Many German language curricula and instructional materials still associate authentic German “voices with *White personae*” (Bryant et al., 2019, p. 6) from Germany, Austria, and Switzerland (Gallagher & Zenker, 2020; Randall, 2020). Moreover, German programs tend to emphasize representations of native speakers (NSs) from these countries in their promotional efforts (Chavez, 2020a). Such practices, however, have an exclusionary potential because they might discourage some students—those who may not see themselves in the stereotypical image of German speakers—from seeing themselves as plausible members of the language community in question (Chavez, 2020b). Language instructors should therefore explore how they can engage all students in seeing themselves as genuine members of the respective target language (TL) group (Anyà, 2011, 2020).

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The semester-long project for novice learners presented here responds to that goal. It shows how educators can help students find TL connections in their local surroundings and broaden their understanding of language-community membership that goes beyond stereotypical notions of NSs and includes learners. The article illustrates the assignment's 10 virtual and in-person ePortfolio tasks and discusses its outcomes based on student feedback. The materials can be applied across various proficiency levels, world languages (WLs), and institutional contexts. The project is grounded in frameworks that call upon educators to diversify WL education.

### **Review of Previous Research**

#### **On the Need to Diversify World Language Education**

Matters of diversity, equity, and inclusivity (DEI) must be an integral part of every WL course and program (Glynn et al., 2018; Kubota, 2004). Criser and Knott (2019) urge German educators to take a “critical look at the discipline and to prepare for an undoing of oppressive structures that have shaped pedagogies, theories, and curricula at the core of our field” (pp. 151-152). This process requires an ongoing commitment from teachers, including continuous self-reflection, an openness to unlearn and relearn socialization in cultures dominated by inequities and exclusiveness, and a willingness to collaborate and update teaching practices critically (Kishimoto, 2018).

The redevelopment of curricula is a fundamental step toward making the study of German more equitable and inclusive (Cooper, 2020). Specifically, students need to explore “the full range of diverse lived experiences in a German-language context” and “understand a diverse German-speaking world” while utilizing the tools learned in their German courses to critically reflect on their local environments (Criser & Knott, 2019, p. 152). Recent scholarship has demonstrated how educators may pursue these objectives. Strategies speak to matters of inclusivity (Watzke, 2020), Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Plus (LGBTQ+) communities (Cahnmann-Taylor & Coda, 2018; Rothe et al., 2023), a gender-diverse language instruction (Djavadghazaryans, 2020), critical approaches to race and colonialism (Gallagher & Zenker, 2020; Layne, 2020; Manthripragada & Mušanović, 2020; Rothe et al., 2023; Torner, 2020), social justice (Glynn et al., 2018; Tarnawska Senel, 2020), revisions of the literary canon (Cooper, 2020), and teachers’ instructional practices (Dion, 2020). Many of the listed suggestions and instructional units addressing the diverse lived experiences of speakers and learners, however, have focused on intermediate- and advanced-level German classes. Much less attention has been given to these topics in introductory levels, i.e., the courses that build the foundation for language programs and comprise the majority of German learners.

Students must encounter diverse instructional materials at the beginning of their language-learning process (Brunow & Newman, 2020; Criser & Knott, 2019; Merritt, 2020). Far too often, learners (especially at the novice level) bring a variety of stereotypical notions about the German language, its associated cultural practices, and speakers—including learners and teachers—to campus (Chavez, 2020b; Rothe, 2022). The teaching units at this level, however, are often not “adequate to accomplish the goals of fostering intercultural competence and inclusion in our curricula and classrooms” (Ilett, 2009, p. 57). Additionally, historically underrepresented groups in German and other WL programs have not seen themselves and their experiences reflected in instructional materials that persist in focusing on *White*, Eurocentric communities (Anya, 2020; Criser & Knott, 2019; Ilett, 2009). German language instructors should therefore develop engagement strategies and teaching materials that reflect the diversity among TL speakers and help all students feel connected to

the respective language communities. In fact, many U.S. language learners express a desire to connect with and belong to the community of speakers whose languages they learn. Yet, as discussed in the following section, both students and teachers often perceive themselves incapable of achieving that goal in WL classrooms (Glisan, 2012).

### **Establishing Connections between Communities Near and Far**

Research into learners' perceptions of the importance of ACTFL's five goal areas (The National Standards Collaborative Board, 2015), often referred to as the five C's (Communication, Cultures, Connections, Comparisons, Communities)—has indicated that language students highly value the notions related to the Communities standards (Magnan et al., 2014). This goal area encompasses “school and globalized communities” that inspire students to “use the language both within and beyond the classroom to interact and collaborate in their community and the globalized world” (The National Standards Collaborative Board, 2015). In the WL classroom, however, Communities-oriented goals can seem elusive to both instructors and learners (Glisan, 2012; Magnan et al., 2014). For example, learners of German often associate the idea of a TL community primarily with *White* NSs who live in a different geographical location than the learners (Chavez, 2020b; White, 2016). Understanding language communities as a population whose inhabitants are exclusively (*White*) NSs excludes local groups (language learners and teachers) from group membership. It also disqualifies local settings (classrooms) as representatives of the respective language community.

Moreover, some students may not be aware of the possibilities of fitting in with certain communities of TL speakers. Consequently, these learners may not desire to be part of a language community based on their (stereotypical) notions of that group. Chavez (2020b), who introduced the concept of the “plausible and implausible foreign language selves,” explored perceptions held by college-level learners of various WLs about German, particularly its NSs, its affiliated cultures, and its learners. She concluded that “learners who do not already have [a] personal connection [heritage] or who do not possess specific ethnic [*White*; European descendants], socio-economic [wealthy], gender [male], and first-language attributes [English as first language]” are less likely to study German (Chavez, 2020b, p. 12). In other words, students without the (perceived) described personal qualities or personal connections to the group in question may simply not see themselves as plausible learners of that language.

Curricular activities can help students reflect on their understanding of language communities in a way that goes beyond stereotypical notions of NSs afar and includes learners in their immediate environments. Previous scholarship has demonstrated how educators may assist learners in seeing connections between their lived experiences and those of TL speakers abroad (Boovy, 2016; Brunow & Newman, 2020; Fang & Yingqin, 2017). At the beginning of that process, learners should develop a sense of cultural self-awareness and self-identity through reflective activities (Brunow & Newman, 2020). Students may then investigate and reflect on “how people in other cultures have been conditioned in terms of their actions or values or how they make meaning of their cultural identities” (Brunow & Newman, 2020, p. 150). Researchers such as Brunow and Newman (2020) stressed the importance of learners' continuous reflections at all proficiency levels. Reflection topics may include learners' own identities and belief systems, including preconceived notions of the TL, its people, cultures, and students' relationships with others. According to Drewelow (2013), the goal of reflecting on one's own cultural and linguistic situatedness and exploring other people's cultural and linguistic circumstances is critical for novice learners to understand the interconnection between language, its speakers, and cultures.

Exploring this interconnection may be accomplished through research projects comparing similarities and differences between learners' immediate communities and the target groups (Fang & Yingqin, 2017). In the context of studying German, the target groups or, more likely, historical traces of them, may be found in learners' immediate surroundings, given the spread of German heritage across the United States. Boovy (2016), for instance, showed how upper-level students of German could interrogate, analyze, and critically reflect on German-speaking communities in the United States and their members' identities through a visit to a German-American heritage site. The visit was embedded in a course, titled "*Was ist eigentlich 'deutsch'?*" ["What is considered 'German?'"'] (Boovy, 2016, p. 143). Activities included readings about German immigrant experiences in the United States, introductions to new vocabulary, and an excursion to the open-air museum where students were "challenged to think like anthropologists, ethnographers, linguists, and geographers" (Boovy, 2016, p. 143). Ultimately, class discussions, written assignments, and presentations showed how the course contributed to students' critical reflections on what counts as German, a "heightened awareness of the ways differences are constructed" between groups, and an ability to "recognize important cultural differences between Germans and U.S. Americans" (Boovy, 2016, p. 145). Most importantly, by exploring concepts of Germanness locally and the "histories of exclusion that such a concept rests on," students expanded their knowledge of the diversity among German speakers and acquired the tools to reflect critically on their immediate surroundings, learning experiences, and cultural assumptions (Boovy, 2016, p. 145). Having acquired these tools for use in learners' local contexts seems particularly critical because stereotypes about respective target groups often develop in learners' native cultures, through indirect sources, such as family, friends, and media (Drewelow, 2013; Heinzmann, 2014).

However, not all language instructors and learners have access to nearby heritage sites or open-air museums. Therefore, they need other activities that engage learners in their language communities locally and help them explore the diverse lived experiences of TL members afar. Guidelines of how educators may develop engaging tasks that can address those goals are presented below. These guidelines formed the basis of the presented semester project's setup.

### **Creating engaging tasks for all learners through ePortfolios**

According to Dörnyei (2019), the following six guidelines characterize engaging tasks in language classrooms. (1) The task presentation or prompt includes clearly stated learning outcomes and the work's purpose. It also reflects how the task and its outcomes connect to students' daily lives and how the project may benefit students' "real-life agendas" (Dörnyei, 2019, p. 62). (2) The task goals are meaningful and of value to students and their learning. Additionally, the work may be linked "to a finished product or a tangible outcome," such as posters or presentations (Dörnyei, 2019, p. 62). (3) The task content is relevant and real to students and provides authentic experiences. It may also include "elements of challenge, competition, novelty, intrigue, fantasy or exotic interest" (Dörnyei, 2019, p. 63). (4) The task allows for ownership, which is the "degree of control [learners] perceive to be able to exercise over every aspect of the activity" (Dörnyei, 2019, p. 63). Additionally, it finds a balance between challenges and learners' skill levels. (5) The task structure is clear and provides information on where to start, the involved activities, and the outcome. An effective task structure also comprises "distinct subphases, whose completion provides students with a clear sense of their progress as they approach the target" (Dörnyei, 2019, p. 63). (6) Finally, an engaging task concludes with positive emotions upon completion. Specifically, the engaging element of such tasks comes from the "'social wellbeing' experienced in a cooper-



ative group [..., which] requires healthy group dynamics in the class with a general sense of acceptance and cohesiveness amongst the students” (Dörnyei, 2019, p. 63). Ultimately, instructors may design and implement engaging tasks for their learners through a variety of strategies and tools.

I used ePortfolios to present engaging tasks to students and to offer a way for learners to share and reflect on their responses over the course of a semester. EPortfolios provide a flexible and versatile pedagogical learning and assessment tool for language educators. They are digital and include “evidence of the author’s experiences and accomplishments” as well as reflection components (Reynolds & Patton, 2014, p. 8). Formats and the software used vary widely. Most ePortfolios contain artifacts created over time that students “collect, select, reflect [on], share or publish, [and] get feedback [on]” (Reynolds & Patton, 2014, p. 11). Working with the ePortfolio’s artifacts facilitates the “connection between [...] students’ course work and the world” (Reynolds & Patton, 2014, p. 9). One key component of ePortfolios is reflection. Reflective tasks allow students to deepen their learning and question assumptions, connect various aspects of their learning experience, take responsibility for their learning, and develop their identity as learners (Landis et al., 2015, p. 113). Reflections also help instructors improve “their understanding of student learning, engagement, and/or development” (Landis et al., 2015, p. 113). Given the importance of reflections in the language-learning context (Brunow & Newman, 2020), the ePortfolio tasks used in this project include two rounds of reflections in the L1, as presented in the next sections.

In sum, previous scholarship has suggested that WL educators need to develop classroom materials and tasks that engage diverse learners in their language communities locally and help them investigate the multifaceted experiences of TL members afar. These suggestions inspired the current semester-long project for novice language learners. To analyze students’ reactions to the semester project, this study asked the following two research questions (RQs):

1. How did the participating novice learners perceive the semester project’s assignments?
2. Which learning outcomes were most salient after participants completed the project?

Before reviewing the answers to these questions, the following sections describe the project’s learning objectives, components, participants, the context of the study, the data collection, and analysis process.

## **The Project**

### **Learning Objectives**

The project’s overarching goals were to help students reflect on their relationship with Germanness and discover a more diverse picture of German-speaking regions. The learning outcomes were inspired by the NCSSFL-ACTFL Can-Do Statements, precisely the Intercultural Competence guidelines at the Novice level (National Council of State Supervisors for Languages (NCSSFL) & ACTFL, 2017). These standards include learners’ ability to “chart their progress toward language and intercultural proficiency.” The statements also ask students to “identify” and “compare” “products and practices” in their “own and other cultures to help [them] understand perspectives” (National Council of State Supervisors for Languages (NCSSFL) & ACTFL, 2017, p. 1). Grounded in the skills outlined, this project included the following three learning objectives. As a result of this project, students will be able to

1. identify and make comparisons between products and practices of their own cultures and the target culture locally and abroad to help them understand multifaceted perspectives, using basic German vocabulary and English.

2. analyze authentic materials portraying a diverse socio-political image of German-speaking countries by using basic vocabulary of the TL.
3. reflect on their learning regarding this project by collecting, selecting, and connecting artifacts regularly in an ePortfolio, using basic German vocabulary and English.

It is important to emphasize that improving students’ vocabulary, grammar, and syntax proficiency was not a specific objective of this project. Instead, the use of the TL was a means for students to engage with authentic resources, practice basic words and phrases, and work toward achieving the three learning objectives stated above. As suggested by previous scholarship (Brunon & Newman, 2020; Drewelow, 2013), novice-level learners were allowed to use English when they had to express complex thoughts, which would have exceeded their German proficiency, or when answering questions about a TL text to show their understanding of the materials.

### Components

The project consisted of 10 artifacts, i.e., weekly tasks students completed over a 15-week semester. Figure 1 (next pages) provides an overview of all artifacts, including their prompts. The project was incorporated into the course section’s semester schedule with the goal to expand on required course topics presented in the textbook, such as talking about oneself (Artifacts 2 and 3), exploring everyday life and daily routines of German speakers (Artifacts 5, 6, 7, and 9), or living and studying in Germany and Austria (Artifacts 8 and 9). The course also required learners to complete vocabulary and grammar quizzes and oral and writing projects. Therefore, some of the artifacts were thematically connected to other assignments, particularly oral and written projects. The right-hand column in Figure 1 lists these assignments—which had separate grading rubrics and did not count toward the semester project’s overall grading breakdown and points—to show that other student submissions can be linked to the project. They are, however, not part of this study.

**Figure 1.** Overview of artifacts and their prompts

#	Artifact	Description/Instructions of semester project	Other related course assignment ideas (optional)
1	Setup	Set up your ePortfolio.	
2	What does Germanness mean to you?	A – Answer questions 1-3 in English and 4-5 in German: 1) <i>What comes to mind when you hear “German”?</i> 2) <i>What comes to mind when you hear “Germany”?</i> 3) <i>What do you think is the reputation of German speakers in the following countries: United States, China, and Kenya (i.e., students’ home countries)?</i> 4) <i>What 3 German words come to mind when you hear “Deutsch” [“German”]?</i> 5) <i>What 3 German words come to mind when you hear “Deutschland” [“Germany”]?</i>	Writing project: Write an <i>About me</i> page for the ePortfolio.
		B – Explore your surroundings carefully and take pictures of at least two items that somehow represent ‘Germanness’ to you.	
3	Germanness in your life	A – Same instructions as 2B.	Writing project: Reflect on your German learning experience and write a convincing advertisement for studying German.
		B – Explain in English (up to 250 words) why the items photographed represent Germanness to you.	
4	Initial reflection	Reflect on this project and complete the following statements in English: 1) One aspect I’ve really liked about the semester project was... 2) One aspect I’ve not liked about the semester project was ... 3) How, if at all, has the semester project affected your view of German/Germanness/German-speaking countries? 4) How, if at all, has the semester project affected your own role/stance related to German/Germanness/German-speaking countries?	Oral presentation: Present one item that represents Germanness to you and answer your classmates’ questions.

REPRESENTATIONS OF DIVERSITY IN A NOVICE-LEVEL CLASSROOM AND BEYOND

5	Diverse German-speaking societies I	<p>A – Translate these key words from a newspaper article that you will read for this artifact from German to English:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) <i>die Menschen mit Migrationshintergrund</i> [people with a migration background]</li> <li>2) <i>der Flüchtling, der/die Geflüchtete</i> [refugee/displaced person]</li> <li>3) <i>der Asylant/die Asylantin</i> [asylum seeker]</li> <li>4) <i>der Staatsbürger/die Staatsbürgerin</i> [citizen]</li> <li>5) <i>die Staatsbürgerschaft</i> [citizenship]</li> <li>6) <i>das Ausland</i> [foreign country]</li> <li>7) <i>das Inland</i> [interior of a country/domestic]</li> <li>8) <i>die Herkunft</i> [origin]</li> <li>9) <i>die Bevölkerung</i> [population]</li> <li>10) <i>der Anteil</i> [amount, proportion]</li> <li>11) <i>der Höchststand</i> [maximum]</li> <li>12) <i>gesamt</i> [in total]</li> <li>13) <i>steigen (simple past form: stieg)</i> [increase]</li> <li>14) <i>der Grund</i> [reason]</li> <li>15) <i>an Bedeutung gewinnen</i> [to gain in importance]</li> <li>16) <i>wichtig</i> [important]</li> <li>17) <i>die Bildung</i> [education]</li> <li>18) <i>der Unterschied</i> [difference]</li> <li>19) <i>der Schulabschluss (z.B. Abitur)</i> [degree, e.g., general qualification for university entrance]</li> <li>20) <i>höher</i> [higher]</li> </ol>	
		<p>B – Read the ZEIT article on „Every fifth person in Germany has a migration background“ and answer the following questions about the text in English:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) How many people with a migration background live in Germany?</li> <li>2) What is the percentage of people with a migration background compared to the total population of Germany?</li> <li>3) Why has this number increased in the past years?</li> <li>4) What percentage of people with a migration background are German citizens?</li> <li>5) What is the region that most people with a migration background living in Germany originally come from?</li> <li>6) What is the region that more and more people come from?</li> <li>7) What is the most important country of origin that people with a migration background originally came from?</li> </ol>	
		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>8) What do you learn about educational differences between people with a migration background and people without?</li> <li>9) How surprising was this newspaper article to you? Please give your response on a scale between 0 [not surprising at all] and 10 [could not have been more surprising].</li> <li>10) What did you consider most surprising and/or interesting about this article? (link: <a href="https://www.zeit.de/gesellschaft/zeitgeschehen/2017-08/statistisches-bundesamt-migrationshintergrund-einwohner-deutschland">https://www.zeit.de/gesellschaft/zeitgeschehen/2017-08/statistisches-bundesamt-migrationshintergrund-einwohner-deutschland</a>)</li> </ol>	
6	Questions for a German speaker I	<p>Prepare the first in-class conversation with a native speaker from Germany by writing <b>three interesting questions about their everyday lives in German that you can ask them. Post your questions to the ePortfolio.</b></p> <p>The goal of this assignment is for you to learn about our guest-speaker’s real-life experiences and to interact with a different native-speaker than your instructor during the meeting. You will not be graded for the conversation.</p>	
7	Diverse German-speaking societies II	<p>Explore the website <a href="https://farbenbekennen.de">farbenbekennen.de</a>. Then, describe in German what you found particularly interesting/surprising/exciting. Then, pick one ‘profile’ of one of the protagonists and answer questions about that person in English.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) What is their name and where are they from?</li> <li>2) How old are they?</li> <li>3) When did they arrive in Germany?</li> <li>4) Why did you choose this profile?</li> <li>5) What was surprising to you about their story?</li> <li>6) Why do you think this website was created?</li> <li>7) Who might be the intended audience?</li> </ol> <p>(link: <a href="https://farbenbekennen.de/award/award-2017">https://farbenbekennen.de/award/award-2017</a>)</p>	<p>Writing project: Imagine you’re moving to a German-speaking region and are in a situation similar to those of the interviewees featured on the website. How would your first six months look?</p>
8	Diverse German-speaking societies III	<p>A – Reflect on your knowledge of Germany and Austria by completing the following two tasks: In five German words/short phrases each, how would you describe</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) <b>Germans and/or Germany</b>, and</li> <li>2) <b>Austrians and/or Austria?</b></li> </ol> <p>B – Read the <i>Kurier</i> article on „Aspects that connect and separate Austrians and Germans.“ Answer the following questions in English to check your understanding of the text.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Name two differences between Austrians and Germans that are mentioned in the text and most interesting to you.</li> <li>2) Name two similarities between Austrians and Germans that are mentioned in the text and most interesting to you.</li> <li>3) What are the words for “Tomato” [“tomato”] and “Brötchen” [“bread rolls”] in Austrian German?</li> <li>4) Germans sometimes call Austrians “Ösis” [derogatory term for an Austrian]; what is the (derogatory) name that Austrians have for Germans?</li> <li>5) How surprising was this newspaper article to you? Please give your response on a scale between 0 [not surprising at all] and 10 [could not have been more surprising].</li> </ol>	

		6) What did you consider most surprising and/or interesting about this article? (link: <a href="https://kurier.at/politik/ausland/liebste-feinde-was-oesterreicher-und-deutsche-trennt-und-was-sie-verbindet/282.797.045">https://kurier.at/politik/ausland/liebste-feinde-was-oesterreicher-und-deutsche-trennt-und-was-sie-verbindet/282.797.045</a> )	
9	Questions for a German speaker II	Prepare the 2 <sup>nd</sup> oral project (a 3-5-minute conversation between you and a person from Marburg at the end of the semester) by writing <b>three</b> questions about life and studying in Marburg that you can ask them. <b>Post your questions to the ePortfolio.</b>	Oral project: Imagine you will live and study in Marburg. Before you go, you have so many questions about life there. This is your chance to talk to someone from Marburg.
10	Final reflection	<p><i>Reflect on the entire project and complete the following statements in English:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) One aspect I really liked about the semester project was...</li> <li>2) One aspect I really did not like about the semester project was ...</li> <li>3) Name at least one aspect related to the semester project that you found particularly surprising or interesting.</li> <li>4) Name at least one aspect related to the semester project that you would have liked to learn more about.</li> <li>5) Name one aspect that you would suggest changing in future projects.</li> <li>6) How, if at all, has the semester project affected your view of German/Germanness/German-speaking countries?</li> <li>7) On a scale from 0 [the learning experience was not enriched at all] to 10 [the learning experience could not have been enriched more] would you say that the semester project has enriched your learning experience in this class.</li> <li>8) How strongly would you suggest that the instructor should implement this project (or a very similar project) in future language classes again. Rate your response on a scale from 0 [not at all] to 10 [most definitely].</li> </ol>	

Learners reported their responses in individual ePortfolios that they set up via the university’s learning management system (Canvas) at the beginning of the project. Only I, as the instructor, and the respective student had access to his/her own ePortfolio. The semester project counted 10% of a student’s final grade.

All artifacts—except the first one, which required students to set up their ePortfolio—fell into three categories that broadly reflect the learning outcomes. The first category encourages learners to explore and reflect on Germanness in their local environments and lives (Artifacts 2 and 3). These artifacts were inspired by an ACTFL presentation by White (2015) illustrating a photo diary project on learners’ perceptions of Germanness in America. The presenter asked her students to create a photo diary by taking three to 10 pictures of anything in their “local city/on campus, surrounding areas, or hometown”—“as long as [students] can justify its Germanness.” Like White’s project, the current study required students to take four pictures overall and justify their decisions.

The second category of artifacts requires students to investigate the diverse lived experiences of people in German-speaking countries, specifically Germany and Austria (Artifacts 5 through 9). These tasks work with a newspaper article on the German population with a migrant background (Artifact 5), a website featuring success stories by refugees who came to Germany around 2015 (Artifact 7), a blog post on cultural and linguistic differences between Austria and Germany (Artifact 8), as well as the preparation of in-class interviews with people living in Germany (Artifacts 6 and 9).

The third category (Artifacts 4 and 10) includes learners’ feedback and reflections on the artifacts. Students describe which aspects of the project they enjoyed or did not enjoy and how the respective tasks might have affected their view of “German/Germanness/Germany/German-speaking countries,” and how these perceptions might have impacted learners’ own identity or role as a learner of German.

### Assessment

All artifacts were assessed using three categories: completion, creativity, and language (Figures 2 A–C). For all artifacts, students received up to three points for completing an assignment (Figure 2 A). The points for the other two categories, creativity and language, varied depending on the assignment. Every point assigned to these categories represent-

ed about 5 minutes of work required to complete the instructions. Learners were able to receive full points, half points, or no points for these two categories based on their performance (Tables 2 B and C). Furthermore, the possible points for creativity and language also varied across artifacts based on an artifact’s scope. Specifically, when learners were asked to complete (parts of) an artifact in English, they received creativity points (Figure 2 B). However, if (parts of) an artifact required students to answer in German or to use their German language skills (e.g., reading a text in German), they were given language points (Figure 2 C). For example, Artifacts 2 and 3 may look similar at first as both assignments ask students to engage with the concept of Germanness. For Artifact 2, however, learners can receive up to 7 points for creativity and 3 points for language, and for Artifact 3, they only receive 7 points for creativity. This is because both artifacts require students to engage with the concept of Germanness via questions they can answer in English, i.e., creativity points. Only Artifact 2, however, asks them to use their TL skills by providing German words or phrases they associate with German and Germany, i.e., language points.

**Figure 2A: Overview of grading categories: Completion rubric**

	0 points	1 point	2 points	3 points
Completion	No submission	Student missed substantial parts of the assignment.	Student completed the artifact but did not submit it on time.	Student completed the artifact and submitted it on time.

**Figure 2B: Overview of grading categories: Creativity rubric**

	No points	Half points	Full points
Creativity	The content did not reflect instructions, or the artifact was not submitted.	The artifact either lacked in well-organized content or did not show reflective ideas, questions, and thoughts.	The content was organized well. The artifact showed reflective ideas, questions, and thoughts.

**Figure 2C: Overview of grading categories: Language rubric**

	No Points	Half Points	Full points
Language	The artifact did not reflect any grammatical structures (e.g., word order, conjugation, declination) and vocabulary introduced during the semester and/or the artifact, or the used grammar and vocabulary were overall incorrect.	The artifact reflected grammatical structures (e.g., word order, conjugation, declination) and vocabulary introduced during the semester and/or the artifact. But there are many or frequent grammar and/or vocabulary mistakes.	The artifact reflected grammatical structures (e.g., word order, conjugation, declination) and vocabulary introduced during the semester and/or the artifact. The used grammar and vocabulary was mostly correct.

Figure 3 (next page) provides a summary of the point distribution for the respective artifacts. The maximum overall score one could achieve was 100 points.

**Figure 3: Point distribution for semester project’s 10 artifacts**

#	Artifact	Points for each artifact			Points
		Completion	Creativity	Language	
1	Setup	3	0	0	3
2	What does Germanness mean to you?	3	7	3	13
3	Germanness in your life	3	7	0	10
4	Initial reflection	3	7	0	10
5	Diverse German-speaking societies I	3	0	7	10
6	Questions for a German speaker I	3	0	7	10
7	Diverse German-speaking societies II	3	0	7	10
8	Diverse German-speaking societies III	3	2	5	10
9	Questions for a German speaker II	3	3	5	11
10	Final reflection	3	10	0	13
Overall Points		30	36	34	100

### Methodology

#### Participants

Twenty learners of a second-semester German course section at a large Midwestern university taught by me as the instructor participated in the study. Figures 4 and 5 provide further information on participants’ demographics and the final grade distribution for the project. The institution is located in a state where about 40% of the population claimed German ancestry, one of the highest rates among all U.S. states (United States Census Bureau, 2021). In addition, representations of ‘German culture’ occur regularly in the community, such as at buildings on campus and around the city, at festivals, in advertising, or colloquial expressions.

**Figure 4: Participants’ demographics**

Number of participants	Average age (years/months)	Number of respondents who...			
		described their gender as...		indicated their home country as ...	
		female	male	USA	other
20	19/9	10	10	14	6

**Figure 5: Participants’ final grade distribution for semester project**

Grade (points)	A (92 - 100)	AB (89 - 91.9)	B (82 - 88.9)	BC (79 - 81.9)	C (70 - 78.9)	D (60 - 69.9)	F (0 - 59.9)	Mean
Number of participants	13	2	2	1	0	2	0	91.9 points

#### Data Collection and Analysis

According to the Institutional Review Board’s protocol, I did not know who of the 21 students in the class were part of the study until the final grades were submitted. Every

student's submission was graded as a regular assignment during the semester. After grades were finalized, I learned that 20 students participated in the study. I then reviewed and reanalyzed their materials.

To answer the RQs (see next section), I focused my analysis on responses to Artifact 10, the final reflection. This artifact was chosen for two reasons. First, it included learners' final feedback about the project's setup and scope (RQ 1). And second, participants' responses offered insights into what students learned through the project (RQ 2). From learners' answers, I created quantitative and qualitative data sets.

Regarding students' perceptions of the assignments (RQ 1), descriptive statistics were used to analyze rated items and compute their mean scores, and to illustrate the percentage of participants who liked or disliked certain aspects of the project. Open-ended responses were analyzed using principles of thematic analysis, as described by Fereday and Muir-Cochrane (2006). This method is a form of pattern recognition based on a reflexive and iterative process of careful reading and re-reading of the data to find emerging themes/categories that "are being important to the description of [a] phenomenon" (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006, p. 82). The coding process is guided by both inductive (i.e., recognizing patterns from within the data) and deductive (i.e., comparing the data to previously developed templates, such as desired learning outcomes) approaches to the data.

To analyze learners' responses to two open-ended items inquiring about the aspects of the project they liked and disliked (RQ 1), I copied their ePortfolio entries (sorted by participant) into two spreadsheets—one including all verbatim responses about the features students liked and the other including all verbatim responses about their dislikes. The coding process included reading and rereading of the data, finding similarities and differences between responses, comparing answers to the project's learning objectives, and categorizing responses to organize the data and develop overarching themes. I applied the same approach to participants' responses to two other open-ended items asking learners to comment on what they considered particularly surprising or interesting regarding the assignments and how the project may have affected their views of German, Germanness, Germany, and/or German-speaking countries (RQ 2). The results of these qualitative and quantitative analyses are described in the next sections.

## Results

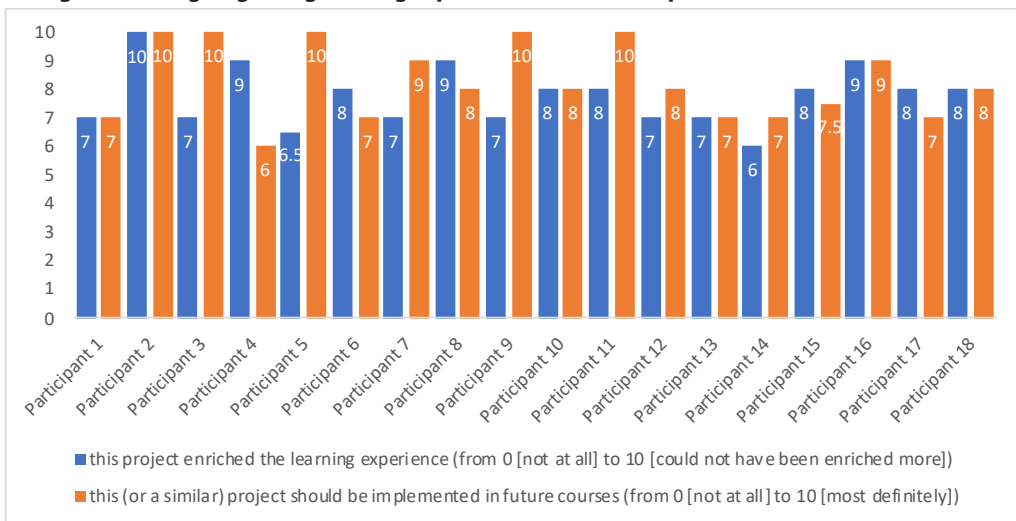
### **RQ 1: How did the participating novice learners perceive the semester project's assignments?**

Two rated items of the final reflection (Artifact 10) provided quantitative insights into (1) how much this project had enriched the participants' learning experience (from 0 "not at all" to 10 "could not have been enriched more") and (2) whether they wanted to see the same or similar assignments implemented in future courses (from 0 "not at all" to 10 "most definitely"). Figure 6 (next page) shows the feedback provided by 18 participants. Responses were overwhelmingly positive, with mean scores of 7.75 (item 1) and 8.25 (item 2), respectively.

To better interpret these ratings, participants also provided feedback on which activities they liked and disliked about the project (Artifact 10). As illustrated in Figure 7, participants primarily enjoyed tasks related to the following topics: the exploration of and reflection on aspects of Germanness in their immediate environments and learning more about the diverse lived experiences of people in German-speaking countries. The former relates to Artifacts 2 and 3, which asked students to find, share, and reflect on four items in their immediate environments that represented Germanness to them. Learners, for in-



Figure 6: Ratings regarding learning experience and future implementation



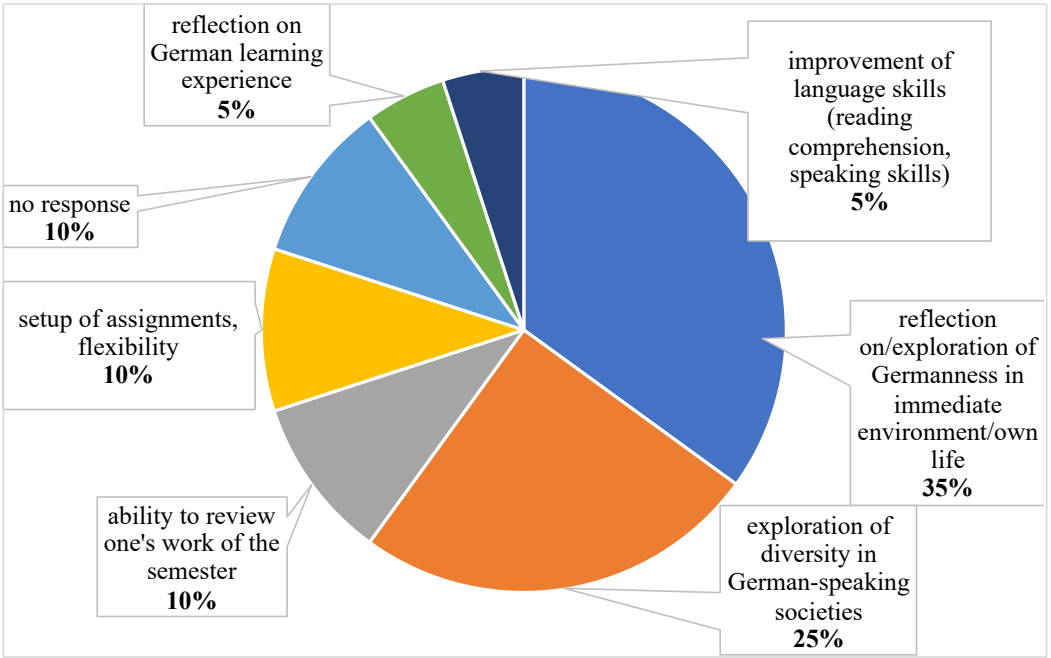
stance, shared pictures and stories regarding chocolate they purchased in Switzerland, their Mercedes car, a German-themed restaurant they like to visit, or their family members with German heritage.

The other aspect of the project students liked most refers to three websites describing the diverse lived experiences of people in German-speaking regions (Artifacts 5, 7, and 8). The newspaper article for Artifact 5 provided demographic information on the immigrant population in Germany. Some students, for example, were surprised about the percentage of people with a migration background (20%) or the fact that there is a large Turkish-German population (“*Statistisches Bundesamt: Jeder Fünfte in Deutschland hat einen Migrationshintergrund* [Federal Statistical Office of Germany: Every fifth person in Germany has a migration background],” 2017). Artifact 7 illustrated success stories of refugees who immigrated to the Berlin area in 2015. Each student had to choose a featured person and answer questions about their personal story. Additionally, learners explained what they found interesting or surprising regarding that person. According to participants’ responses, some learners found it meaningful to read about positive and successful stories of refugees settling in another country. Furthermore, learners liked reading about the differences between Germany and Austria (Artifact 8). Some of them had not known about the linguistic differences, such as different vocabulary or the complex neighborly relations between the two countries. Participants’ verbatim responses analyzed under RQ 2 provide further insights into how these artifacts have affected students’ learning experience and their views of Germanness. (See Figure 7, next page)

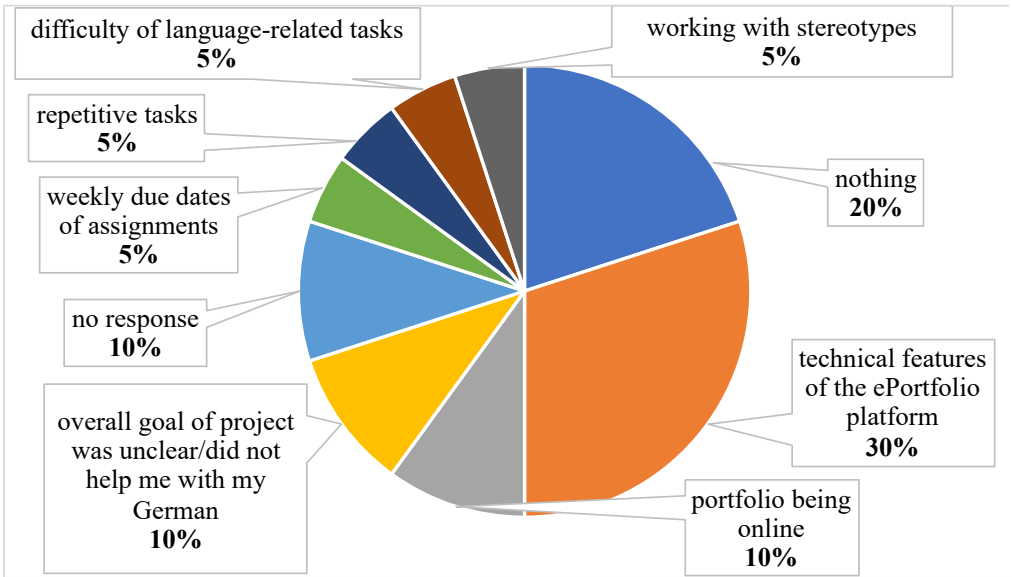
Aside from the aspects that participants liked about the project, there were also some features they did not enjoy (Figure 8, next page). Almost half of the participants described frustrations with the technical side of the ePortfolio platform (which was part of the university’s learning management system, Canvas) or the fact that the portfolio was online. Examples included complaints about the user interface. It made it difficult to create and organize entries, upload images, or share one’s work with the instructor. Twenty percent of the participants stated that they could not think of any specific aspects they disliked.



**Figure 7: Aspects liked by participants**



**Figure 8: Aspects disliked by participants**



**RQ 2: Which learning outcomes were most salient after participants completed the project?**

Two open-ended items of the final Artifact (10) provided valuable insights into participants’ main takeaways from the project. The questions asked learners to describe what they considered particularly surprising or interesting regarding the assignments and how the project may have affected learners’ views of German, Germanness, Germany, and/or German-speaking countries. Participants’ responses to these items were grouped into four categories of learning outcomes. Overall, participants’ responses showed an increased awareness of both Germanness in learners’ local communities and the ethnic diversity among German speakers. Artifacts also helped students to reevaluate their own biases/stereotypes and encouraged them to engage with the TL beyond classroom assignments. Figure 9 illustrates the outcomes, including example verbatim answers.

**Figure 9: Participants’ learning outcomes, including example responses**

Learning outcomes	Verbatim responses (examples)
Increased awareness of Germanness in local communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· [...] they made me more aware of how much “Germaneness” there was in “non-typically German areas.” They forced me to be aware of German words that are around and used in daily life [...]</li> <li>· I liked the assignment where we looked for things that represented Germany in our daily life. It was good to appreciate the cultural presence it has.</li> <li>· This project ‘forced’ me realize the German impact on some of the closest things to me (as an F1 enthusiast and a mechanical engineer). [...] Like my Puma shoes [...] and Mercedes (<i>Silberpfeil</i> [Silver Arrow]). [...]</li> <li>· This project provided the opportunity to talk about my personal connections with German speakers in my family.</li> <li>· [...] Learning so much about Germany excites me a lot and makes me want to explore the Germanness around me a lot more.</li> <li>· [...] I have thought more about the German in my life. I didn’t realize how many things were so German until this course.</li> <li>· It has motivated me to look for Germanness around me, which gave me a better understanding of Germany as well as German-speaking countries.</li> <li>· After this project, I’m more aware of the ‘Germanness’ around me. Gradually, I tend to start permeating the German culture into my life as well as those of people around me. I started to teach my roommate some German sometimes. [...]</li> <li>· I found the <i>farbenbekennen.de</i> assignment the most interesting. This is due to the fact that not only do they have these problems in their culture in Germany we also have them in the United States as well.</li> </ul>
Increased awareness of ethnic diversity among German speakers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· I had no idea that there was so much immigration to Turkey and Germanic speaking countries. Reading biographies from some of the immigrants were quite enlightening.</li> <li>· I think the refugee/migration into Germany is very interesting, especially as someone interested in international relations I’d like to look into that specific cultural divide and assimilation as it occurs. [...]</li> <li>· I guess I never really knew how diverse German culture is. The fact that there are so many different types of people in Germany really makes it diverse. [...]</li> <li>· It allowed me to explore topics which I would not have learned about since they are not in the textbook.</li> <li>· I liked the <i>farbenbekennen.de</i> section because it was neat to learn about real people’s experiences as refugees in Germany.</li> <li>· The assignment that had to do with the refugees was extremely interesting and surprising. The reason I wanted to take German was because I feel like German is a well-known language for many different peoples.</li> <li>· They do teach me more about German cultures compared with my previous personal experience, especially in topics like receiving refugees.</li> </ul>

<p>Re-evaluation of own biases/ stereotypes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· I found it really interesting—almost introspective to a point—to inspect my own biases with regards to the stereotypes related to Germans.</li> <li>· They have informed me on some of the realities of life in Germany. They have broken some of my preconceived notions about stereotypical Germans (Intimidating, constantly getting drunk, etc...)</li> <li>· I don't think it has changed my own identity on the topics, instead, just some of my opinions.</li> <li>· [...] they've given me opportunities to become more knowledgeable and informed as well as making me express opinions [...]</li> </ul>
<p>Self-directed engagement with the TL</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· They have shown me that there is still so much to learn and that likely the best resources for learning about German/Germanness/German-speaking countries lie in German media from these countries themselves, so I should keep exposing myself to these to keep enhancing my view.</li> <li>· I have found myself listening to German songs more and German TV shows. I also say German words in my head whenever I see a noun that I know in German. For example, whenever I see water I say 'Wasser' ['water'] now.</li> <li>· [...] the surprising part was how much of most of the articles I understood. I would be able to get the basic idea of most articles when I read through it and then just look up more complex words to get exact details and it proved I had a much better understanding/comprehension than I had believed.</li> <li>· I enjoyed exploring and trying to navigate German-language websites. It was a good but challenging experience with limited German. I can't wait to do the same when my German is better so it's easier!</li> </ul>

The following sections discuss these results in light of the project's initial objectives and consider pedagogical implications for similar projects in the future.

**Discussion**

**Exploring the diversity of the target language, its cultures, and speakers locally and abroad**

Teacher-scholars have called on fellow WL educators to diversify their curricula and classroom materials at the novice level (Criser & Knott, 2019; Merritt, 2020) and show learners local gateways to the community of TL speakers (Magnan et al., 2014; White, 2016). This project spoke to both objectives. By completing 10 artifact assignments, students were encouraged to (1) identify and make comparisons between products and practices of their own cultures and the target culture locally and abroad to help them understand multifaceted perspectives; (2) analyze authentic materials portraying a diverse socio-political image of German-speaking communities; and (3) and reflect on their learning regarding this project.

As presented under RQ 2, learners' verbatim responses indicated that they were able to work on the skills described in the project's three learning objectives. First, participants were able to identify and compare German-related products and practices found in their immediate environment and connect them to the realities of the German-speaking world (learning objective 1). Many of them had not realized "how much Germanness" there was in "non-typically German areas," which encouraged some to do more research on these items. An engineering student who shared information about his Mercedes, for instance, had started investigating universal principles of engine development grounded in work by Mercedes engineers after completing Artifact 3. Most answers showed excitement about exploring Germanness in learners' local environments. One student even said that it "motivated [him] to look for Germanness around [him]" after completing the task. Such activities help students realize local connections to the TL community, showing how Germanness relates to their daily lives (Anyia, 2011; Boovy, 2016).

Admittedly, for some WL learners it may be more difficult to find traces of the respective language community represented in public spaces, products, or personal heritage. Nevertheless, similar investigations would most likely be possible for students of any WL. Even if those learners cannot find (tangible) traces of the language on their campus or in the city, they probably have some kind of (virtual) item that represents the TL community to them. Students may reflect on a photo they have of/from the target community or a show they watched on television.

The investigations into Germanness in students' immediate environments can build the foundation for critical reflections in future coursework on how European immigrants have shaped life in the United States and the consequences of settler colonialism (Boovy, 2016; Manthripragada & Mušanović, 2020). In order to address those matters, educators must develop activities that go beyond this project's assignments of asking students to find and describe German-related items. Those tasks must delve below the surface of what is visible as a German—or French, Italian, Spanish, et cetera—street name, restaurant, or festival in the United States. Such tasks should discuss European settlement in this country, along with its intended and unintended consequences, which was only possible due to the forced expulsion of Indigenous Peoples (Manthripragada & Mušanović, 2020).

Second, participants developed an increased awareness of ethnic diversity among German speakers (learning objective 2). Some students did not know about the large percentage of Germans with a migration background and were surprised by the difficulties many of them face in the educational system, for instance. Others found it meaningful to read the refugee success stories because they provided insights into “real people's experiences.” One participant stated that “[the artifacts] allowed [her] to explore topics which [she] would not have learned about since they are not in the textbook.” These comments speak to the importance of extending textbook content to present topics about the TL communities that are often not featured in large-scale resources. Instructors may begin this process by having their students reflect on the textbook materials and canonical texts typically used in class and ask questions such as: Who is not portrayed? Whose voices are missing from the narrative? Why are these voices not featured? How could these voices contribute to the story? (Cooper, 2020). Additionally, teachers must employ teaching materials that include examples of the diverse lived experiences of TL speakers. Instructors of German and other WLS wishing to redevelop their curricula should review the instructional guidelines and units developed by the *Creating Safe Spaces* task force of the American Association of Teachers of German (AATG). They created free online materials that span various language levels and thematic units, focusing on Black, Indigenous, and other Persons of Color (BIPOC) and LGBTQ+ communities in the German-speaking world (Rothe et al., 2023). The resources can be accessed by AATG-members and non-members at the GETMAPP platform (<https://aatg.app.box.com/v/GETMAPP-GermanTeaching/folder/131085665439>).

Finally, the novice learners of this study were able to reflect on their preconceived notions about the target culture and their language learning skills and practices. Supporting previous scholarship on the importance of self-reflections in language classes (Brunow & Newman, 2020; Drewelow, 2013), findings demonstrated both learners' interest and ability at the novice level to reflect on topics related to diversity and inclusivity critically. For instance, one participant described how the project informed him on “some of the realities of life in Germany,” which helped break “down some of [his] preconceived notions about stereotypical Germans (e.g., intimidating, constantly drunk).” Another student described a similar experience with the project, which she found “introspective.” It invited her to “inspect [her] own biases [...] related to Germans.” Reflection responses hinted at learners'

self-directed engagement with the TL community beyond the materials presented in class. The comments demonstrated some learners' developed desire and practices to explore authentic and real-life materials and information from the TL community. One learner—recognizing that there is still much more to learn about the diversity of German speakers—realized that “the best resources for learning about German/Germanness/German-speaking countries lie in German-language media from these countries.” That student expressed the desire for more exposure to these resources “to keep enhancing [her] view.” Other participants were surprised by “how much of the articles [they] understood” and felt encouraged to listen to German songs and watch German TV shows more often.

Despite these successful outcomes and the positive feedback, this project should not be misunderstood as a simple solution to systemic issues of social justice. Instead, it contributes to the discussions about what and how we teach (Merritt, 2020). It can serve as *one* tool to embed DEI matters into novice-level classes. As described in the next section, the project provides ample opportunities for adjustment and expansion to create engaging tasks addressing underlying DEI topics.

### **Creating engaging tasks: Implications for WL courses**

The project's setup followed all six of Dörnyei's (2019) guidelines for engaging tasks. In order to discuss suggestions for future implementations of this project, this section focuses on two of the guidelines that were most relevant to this study: (1) The tasks' outcomes connect to and benefit students' daily lives, and (2) the content is relevant and provides authentic experiences.

Findings indicate that the project's learning outcomes were connected to students' daily lives, demonstrated by an increased awareness of Germanness in their local environments. And these tasks benefitted students' language learning practices, visible in participants' practices to engage with diverse real-life materials and information from the TL community beyond materials provided by the instructor. By engaging with these materials, whether through classroom instruction or self-directed learning beyond the course, learners benefit from access to the variety of thoughts and lived experiences that German-speaking communities offer (Criser & Knott, 2019). Future iterations of this project may take learners' ability to understand the diversity in the TL community as a starting point to investigate systemic inequities. For example, learners may analyze the German educational system and the disparities it creates based on social class and ethnic background. In addition, future activities should invite students to transfer the skills they learned in their WL class and apply them to their local contexts. For instance, prompts may ask students to analyze how DEI issues they learned about in German/Spanish/French/Italian-speaking areas compare to those in their communities (Tarnawska Senel, 2020). Consequently, students may be able to describe how social justice issues, such as racism, are deeply embedded in many societies. Critical discussions may address a region's colonial and imperialist past and its consequences, or a country's treatment of people not conforming to governmental and political ideologies (Rosa & Flores, 2017).

Similar to the learning outcomes that relate to students' lives, an engaging task's content must reflect relevant and authentic materials and experiences for learners. Most participants of this study described how the project provided an intriguing experience as they were able to search their campus, hometown surroundings, and family histories to find connections to Germanness locally. Moreover, the tasks offered them an opportunity to work with authentic materials from the target community abroad, such as online newspaper articles and websites. In addition to the content provided in this project, educators may

also include artifacts surrounding (virtual) events by guest speakers that address DEI matters in the TL community. Examples include students' participation in a question-and-answer session with Black German filmmaker Sheri Hagen to learn about her work and the obstacles she faced as a *non-White* filmmaker in Germany. Other ideas include workshops with author Katharina Warda to explore activist efforts by BIPOC groups in East Germany. Instructors may also encourage their students to create a city tour, combining students' individual artifacts into a more comprehensive project that investigates traces of WLS on campus or in the city. Such a tour may also be turned into a social justice city tour that critically reflects on how settlers of European descent have shaped a city and its inhabitants.

### Final Thoughts

In light of this project's findings and previous calls by teacher-scholars to diversify WL education (Anya, 2020; Criser & Knott, 2019; Glynn et al., 2018), the author invites other educators to redevelop their instructional materials to address topics related to DEI in their language classes. Language learners must realize that the TL communities they study—as well as learners' own communities—denote social, cultural, and linguistic pluralism. Students who do not understand this reality because of instructional gaps will be unable to reconcile their classroom learning with the realities they may encounter in the TL regions. Moreover, they will be unable to reflect on biases they encounter locally and abroad. The fact that so many students participating in this study were advocating for the implementation of similar tasks in future courses may inspire other teachers to create their own projects across various WL courses, starting at the novice level.

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# Catch my errors if you can: The relative value of peer editing in the language classroom

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## Abstract

Even though peer review enjoys sound theoretical support, classroom research has not always provided a clear picture of its effectiveness, particularly when it comes to form-focused editing. In addition to yielding conflicting findings with respect to the number of corrections students make based on peer feedback (Connor & Asenavage, 1994; Mendonça & Johnson, 1994; Paulus, 1999; Villamil & de Guerrero, 1998), several gaps in the literature remain unaddressed, particularly in terms of error detection rates. This study sought to determine to what extent learners are able to (a) detect errors during peer editing, (b) provide each other with correct information, and (c) incorporate peer-provided suggestions in subsequent individual writing tasks. Participants were 20 undergraduate students enrolled in an intermediate Spanish course. They individually wrote a story based on pictures, exchanged papers with a partner, and provided each other with feedback on lexical, grammatical, and orthographic issues. The learners' audio-recorded interactions and the narratives produced by the learners during and after the peer-editing session were analyzed. Results indicate that even though learners detect a small proportion of errors, the majority of corrections were accurate and were incorporated in writing tasks completed immediately after the peer editing session, as well as two weeks later.

**Keywords:** peer feedback; second language writing; focus on form; error detection

## Introduction

The importance of writing for language development extends beyond written communication skills. One of the benefits of writing, as Williams (2012) points out, is that it may help enhance the three main cognitive functions of output proposed by Swain (1985): realizing what they do not know or only know partially, experimenting with language and testing hypotheses, and promoting conscious reflection on language use. Research has consistently shown that writing tasks may be more effective at drawing the learners' attention

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to form than purely oral tasks (Adams, 2006; Adams & Ross-Feldman, 2008; Cumming, 1990; Williams, 2008). As originally proposed, Swain's output hypothesis did not state that the benefits of output were exclusive to collaborative settings. However, Swain (2000) underscored the benefits of collaborative dialogue. As learners work together to solve their linguistic quandaries and provide each other with feedback, they are co-constructing knowledge that may in turn "become a tool for their further individual use of their second language" (Swain, 2000, p. 104). Peer collaboration may be implemented at various points during the writing process: in the beginning as pre-task planning or brainstorming, throughout the entire process as collaborative drafting, or toward the end as peer response, which is the focus of this study.

Defined broadly, "peer response is the use of learners as sources of information and interactants for each other in such a way that learners assume roles and responsibilities normally taken on by a formally trained teacher, tutor, or editor in commenting on and critiquing each other's drafts in both written and oral formats" (Hansen & Liu, 2005, p. 1). Although peer feedback can involve comments on several different aspects of writing, such as organization, development of ideas, and cohesion), the objective of the current study is to examine only form-focused peer editing, in which comments are provided with the intent of reducing the number of errors in a classmate's paper (i.e., increasing linguistic accuracy).

## **Review of literature**

### **Benefits and drawbacks of peer review**

Peer editing offers several unique benefits for language development. First, considering that peers of similar proficiency are the ones detecting issues and providing suggestions, the corrections might be at the right level, thus likely to be retained and incorporated in subsequent drafts. Second, it may enhance the learners' ability to evaluate their own work. As students read what their partner wrote, they might turn their attention to form, and as they suggest changes and explain those revisions to their partners, they consolidate their own knowledge. In turn, this heightened awareness may enhance their own writing (Lundstrom & Baker, 2009; Rouhi, Dibah, & Mohebbi, 2020).

Despite these benefits, some educators are hesitant to incorporate form-focused peer feedback in their classes due to some of its drawbacks. Students might not always notice errors, and even if they do, they might be unable to provide corrections, or they might not feel comfortable correcting their peers. Diab (2010) reported, for instance, that both the experimental and control groups "had difficulty noticing and correcting" errors related to the target structures (p. 91). However, given that error detection was not the focus of the study, Diab (2010) did not provide statistical analysis of the proportion of errors that were detected and successfully edited.

Another concern related to peer feedback is that learners might suggest unnecessary revisions or provide each other with inaccurate information. Although inaccurate resolutions do occur, research so far has suggested that the incidence of incorrect feedback provided by peers is relatively low. For instance, Villamil and de Guerrero (1998) found that only 7% of the repairs in students' final papers were inaccurate after exchanging feedback.

### **Incorporation of peer corrections**

One of the main concerns of research on peer review has been its impact on revision (i.e., what proportion of peer comments is incorporated in revised drafts). Some researchers found positive effects for peer revision, as measured by the number of corrections students made based on peer feedback. Mendonça and Johnson (1994) examined the rate of

incorporation of peer feedback among 12 advanced learners of English as a Second Language (ESL) enrolled in a college writing course. Students wrote academic essays on topics of their choice that were related to their fields of study. Overall, 53% of peer-suggested revisions were incorporated, although the authors did not distinguish between content-related and language-related revisions. In Villamil and de Guerrero's (1998) study, on the other hand, revisions were classified by their focus. Participants were 14 ESL college students who wrote a narrative and a persuasive essays as part of the writing course they were taking. The results showed that 74% of revisions could be traced to peer feedback, and most of the revisions revolved around grammar, vocabulary, and mechanics. Although these findings are encouraging, Villamil and de Guerrero (1998) note that "other rhetorical and grammatical problems or errors may have remained unattended in the final drafts" (p. 501). Without data on the proportion of issues that were and were not successfully addressed, the picture of the effectiveness of peer editing remains incomplete.

Other studies have revealed a relatively low proportion of revisions that could be directly attributed to peer comments. Connor and Asenavage (1994) examined the source of revisions made by a group of eight college students enrolled in an ESL writing course. They found that the majority of changes could be traced to teacher comments or self-revision, especially when it came to grammar and mechanics. Only 7% of revisions in the second draft and 2% in the third draft were peer-provided suggestions. Connor and Asenavage (1994) do not dismiss peer feedback entirely. Instead, they caution practitioners from expecting "too much from peer response groups without understanding how effective collaboration works" (p. 267). In a similar study, Paulus (1999) investigated the sources of revisions made among 11 ESL college students enrolled in an academic writing course. Peer feedback accounted for 32% of revisions from the first to the second draft, and only 1% of revisions from the second to the third draft. Out of all the peer-provided suggestions, 38% of them focused on changes that included issues with grammar, spelling and mechanics, as well as paraphrasing suggestions, which do not necessarily involve errors.

In addition to yielding conflicting results, research to date has not yet provided answers to several questions regarding the effectiveness of peer editing. First, no studies to date have investigated to what extent learners are able to detect errors related to linguistic form in the first place. In other words, out of all the errors in a peer's draft, how many of them are addressed and how many go unnoticed? Second, incorporation of feedback has been limited primarily to revised drafts, which learners complete at home. It would be helpful to determine the rate of retention of peer-provided information in subsequent writing tasks without any external assistance. Third, rather than treating language-related issues as one broad category, a more fine-grained look at the linguistic focus of the revisions suggested and incorporated is also warranted. Furthermore, most previous studies have involved ESL students enrolled in composition courses. It is also important to understand the value of peer editing in other instructional contexts.

### Research questions

This study aims to shed light on the effectiveness of form-focused peer editing in the world language classroom guided by the following the research questions:

1. What proportion of errors do second language learners of Spanish detect during peer editing, and what is the linguistic focus of errors detected: lexical, grammatical, or orthographic?
2. What proportion of detected errors is corrected accurately, what proportion of detected errors remains unresolved, and what proportion of suggestions entail inaccurate information?

3. What proportion of peer corrections is retained and incorporated in subsequent individual writing tasks?

## Method

### Participants

A total of 20 undergraduate students participated in all sessions of this study.<sup>1</sup> They were monolingually-raised native speakers of English, born and schooled in the United States. All had started studying Spanish as an additional language after the age of 10 (average age of first exposure: 12). They had taken an average of four years of Spanish in high school, and none of them had spent more than two weeks in a Spanish-speaking country. They were enrolled in a fifth-semester Spanish grammar review course. When the study was conducted, the course was a prerequisite for upper-level content courses (i.e., one of the core language courses required for Spanish majors and minors). During class, students typically engage in pair or group tasks, including editing activities; therefore, participants were familiar with what they were asked to do in the current study, including fictional past narration tasks.<sup>2</sup> Given that it is a multi-section course, participants were not necessarily classmates: they were taking the same course but likely on different days and times. Students may have had different instructors, but all sections of the course use the same book, syllabus, calendar, activities, and assessments. The researcher was not the instructor of any of the participants.

### Data collection procedure

Approximately two weeks before the first session of the study, participants completed the language background questionnaire online from home and signed up for the instructional session (i.e., writing followed by peer editing), which took place outside of class. Students were given 20 minutes to write a story in Spanish in the past, based on the wordless picture story *A boy, a dog, a frog, and a friend* by Mercer Mayer (1971). Using a wordless picture story rather than an open-ended prompt, such as the ones used in other peer feedback studies allows for a more reliable comparison in terms of the content and length of the drafts, as well as the general orientation to form during the peer editing portion.<sup>3</sup>

After writing individually, students engaged in the peer editing portion of the session, which was not timed. First, they were paired up randomly and told to exchange papers with their partner. Then, they were provided with a red pen to make it easier to distinguish the original draft from suggested revisions, and they were given the following instructions:

Underline or circle anything you think your partner should revise. You can also underline things you're not sure about (maybe you don't know if something is wrong, but you don't understand it). Don't provide corrections in writing. You will have a chance to talk to your partner about the things you marked. As you read your partner's draft, be sure to check for the following things:

- **Vocab:** Is everything in Spanish? Any words that should be changed?
1. Students participated voluntarily in exchange for extra credit. Students who wanted the extra credit but did not want to participate in the study were given an alternative assignment.
  2. A reviewer pointed out that past narration is a function associated with the advanced level according to the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines. The course is not proficiency-based, and therefore the activities done in class do not necessarily correspond to functions associated with ACTFL proficiency levels.
  3. If students are telling the same story, they will likely be producing very similar language, although some variation is inevitable. With an open-ended prompt, the content is less predictable: students might express very different ideas.

- Grammar: Are verbs conjugated correctly? Do nouns agree in number and gender with adjectives and articles?
- Spelling: Any words misspelled? Any accents missing?

Once they were finished reading and marking their partner's draft, participants were told to return the paper to the original author and explain what changes they thought were necessary or ask questions to gain clarity. Students were free to choose whether to communicate in English or Spanish as they discussed the feedback. Each student made changes on their own draft, using red ink, as needed. Once all revisions had been made, the researcher collected all the written narratives, provided learners with more paper, and instructed them to write the same story again, but without assistance from their partners and without access to their first draft. The same procedure was done two weeks later, when participants were given copies of the same wordless picture story and were asked to write the story once again, individually and without access to previously written drafts.

### Data coding and analysis

Research questions were addressed by analyzing the texts and the audio-recorded interactions during the peer editing session. First, all the errors within each original draft were identified, tallied, and coded according to linguistic focus:

- Morphosyntactic errors were those related to inflectional and derivational morphology, as well as other grammatical structures such as determiners, prepositions, and pronouns.
- Lexical errors involved issues regarding word choice, word meaning, and semantic distinctions (e.g., *ser/estar*).
- Orthographic errors revolved around spelling and accent placement.

Then, using information from the interaction between learners, the issues discussed were coded first by detection (whether an error was properly identified or not). When the issue discussed was indeed an error in the original draft, and thus coded as detected, the suggestion provided by the editor was coded by resolution: correct, incorrect, or unresolved. An example of a case in which a morphosyntactic error was identified and correctly resolved occurred when one student had written *nadie no quiso* [nobody didn't want], their partner circled the word *no*, and explained that they should just say *nadie quiso* [nobody wanted]. In the case of inaccurate resolutions, the editor was able to detect a problem, but the information provided was not correct. For example, a student circled the words *fue debajo* (literally he went underneath, where the student was trying to say he fell) and told their partner that the word for it in Spanish was *casar*, which actually means to marry. Therefore, it was coded as a detected lexical error with an incorrect resolution. In some cases, learners detected an issue but did not know how to resolve it. For instance, a student wrote the word "tail" in English, their partner circled it and told them it should be changed but was not sure how. Given that no changes were made, it was coded as a detected lexical error that was unresolved.

When the peer editor suggested changing accurate forms in an inaccurate way, it was coded as a miscorrection. For example, one student had originally written *inmediatamente* [immediately], and their partner told them that the word *inmediatamente* was misspelled, even though it was not, and told them to change it to *enmediatamente*. In another instance, a learner suggested changing *sentado* [sitting - adjective], which was correct, to *sentando* [sitting - gerund], which introduced a new error in their partner's draft.

To answer the third research question about incorporation of corrections in subsequent individual drafts, each accurate resolution was traced in the texts written immediately after and two weeks later, and the following coding scheme was applied:

- If a learner had correctly used the form provided by their editing partner, it was coded as incorporated (INC).
- If a learner had demonstrated the need to use the form but had not used it accurately, it was coded as not incorporated (NI).
- If a learner had circumvented the need to use the form, it was coded as not attempted (NA). Most of these were cases of omission or rewording of certain parts of the story.

For example, during peer editing, one learner suggested that their partner change the word “frog” in English to *rana*, which was correct. In the immediate posttest, the learner did, but in the delayed posttest, they wrote *rata* (in English, rat). Therefore, it was coded as INC for the immediate posttest, and NI for the delayed posttest.

The author and a research assistant independently coded the randomly selected drafts and audio-recorded interactions from 2 students. Overall, inter-rater agreement was high: over 85% in all of the coding categories. Initial inter-rater reliability was high; nevertheless, for the cases in which the independent coding decisions did not match, both raters discussed them until they arrived at 100% agreement for all of the coding categories.

## Results

### Detection rate and focus of errors

There were a total of 766 errors in the 20 original drafts. Out of those, 156 (20.4%) were detected and 610 (79.6%) went undetected. There was considerable variation in the rate of detection: the maximum was 40.9% and the minimum was 5.6%. In other words, some students detected a much greater proportion of errors than others. With respect to the linguistic focus of errors detected, 66 of the 156 corrections (42.3%) focused on morphosyntactic issues, 68 (43.6%) revolved around lexical issues, and 22 (14.1%) were orthographic in nature.

### Resolution of detected errors and miscorrections

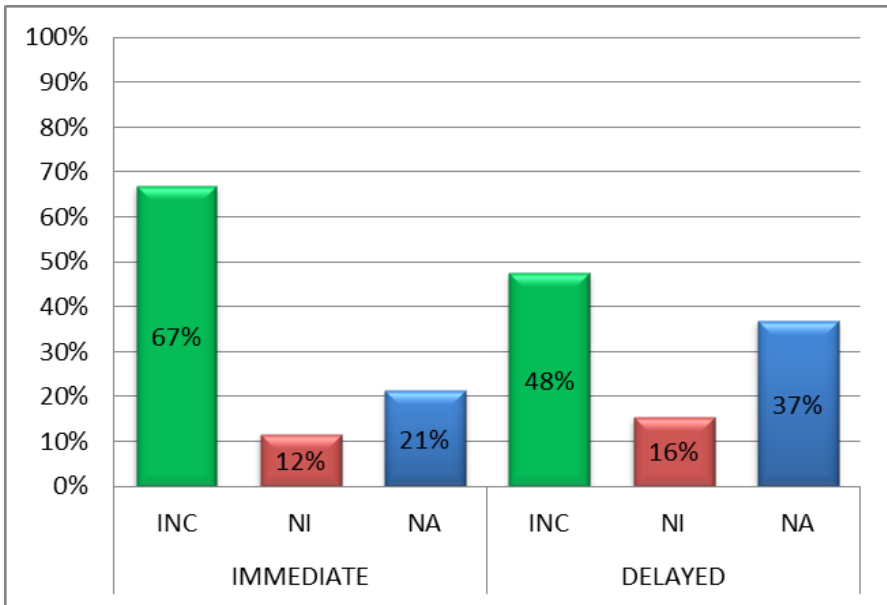
The 156 detected errors were coded by resolution and tallied: 103 (66%) were correctly resolved, 9 (5.8%) were resolved in an inaccurate way, and 44 (28.2%) were left unresolved. Cases of miscorrections were tallied separately given that they did not involve a properly detected error in the first place. There were only a total of 10 instances in which the peer editor suggested changing something that was correct into an inaccurate form.

### Incorporation of information in posttests

The 103 correct resolutions were traced into the drafts written immediately after the peer editing session (immediate posttest) and the one written two weeks later (delayed posttest). They were tallied according to the three categories in the coding scheme outlined above: incorporated (INC), not incorporated (NI), or not attempted (NA). The graph on the next page (Figure 1) summarizes the rate of incorporation of peer-provided information in each of the two posttests.

Overall, the rate of incorporation was high: 67% in the immediate posttest and 48% in the delayed posttest. The decline over time was to be expected, particularly considering the greater number of “NA” cases: it would have been impossible for learners to recreate verbatim what they had written two weeks earlier from memory alone, so the wording of a few parts of the story naturally changed.

Incorporation of information from the 10 cases of miscorrections and the 9 inaccurate resolutions was analyzed separately. Results showed that most were either not incorporated (36.8%) or not attempted (47.3%) in the immediate posttest, and even less frequently in the delayed posttest, with only 2 out of 19 (10.5%) cases of incorrect information retained after two weeks.



**Figure 1.** Proportion of peer-provided corrections that were incorporated, not incorporated, or not attempted in each of the two posttests

Incorporation of information from the 10 cases of miscorrections and the 9 inaccurate resolutions was analyzed separately. Results showed that most were either not incorporated (36.8%) or not attempted (47.3%) in the immediate posttest, and even less frequently in the delayed posttest, with only 2 out of 19 (10.5%) cases of incorrect information retained after two weeks.

### Discussion

This study aimed to shed light on error detection during peer editing and the subsequent incorporation of those corrections, revealing some negative and positive aspects of this practice. First, a small proportion of errors was detected by learners. The average was 20%, and although some students detected more errors than others, none of the participants detected more than half of the errors within their partner's draft. To a certain extent, these results parallel some of the findings in learner-learner interaction studies, Fujii and Mackey (2009) reported that learners provided feedback to their partners in less than 13% of instances of inaccurate utterances. It also confirms the concerns expressed by Diab (2010): participants in this study also appeared to struggle to notice errors in their partners' drafts.

With respect to the linguistic focus of the errors detected, results showed that the majority were morphosyntactic and lexical issues, as opposed to matters related to spelling. The proportion of grammar and vocabulary errors detected was almost identical: 42% and 44% respectively. Although previous studies on learner-learner interaction have claimed that learner-initiated attention to form is largely limited to lexical issues (Fujii & Mackey, 2009; Williams, 1999; Zhao & Bitchener, 2007), this finding is in line with several other studies that reported high proportions of both lexical and grammatical issues when learners are engaged in a writing task (Adams, 2007; Leaser, 2004; Ross-Feldman, 2007; Swain & Lapkin, 2001). Furthermore, in this study, they were explicitly instructed to focus on grammar structures, and they were also enrolled in a grammar review course. The fact



that spelling was not the focus of most corrections is also in line with previous interaction studies, even those involving a written task. For example, Henshaw and Hetrovicz (2021) found that only 8% of language-related issues discussed as learners wrote a story together revolved around orthography.

Although it is perhaps unsurprising that the error detection rate was fairly low, it is important not to rush to the conclusion that learners were unable to detect errors. It is indeed possible that some errors were not marked because the reviewer did not notice anything inaccurate that needed revision. However, another plausible explanation may lie in how confident they felt in being able to suggest a targetlike correction. In other words, is the low detection rate due to their inability to *notice* an issue, or rather to their ability to *correct* it? Students may have noticed other errors but did not point them out knowing they would not be able to help their partner in successfully resolving them. The high rate of targetlike corrections (66%) provides support for this possibility. Only less than a third of issues were left unresolved, and the occurrence of incorrect information in the form of either non-targetlike resolutions or miscorrections was extremely low and similar to Villamil and de Guerrero's (1998) findings. Of course, another possible explanation for the low detection rates may have to do with the affective side of peer editing. It is possible that some students did not feel comfortable pointing out too many errors on their partner's draft, and therefore were careful in selecting only a few to discuss. Future research should explore this possibility through think alouds, for instance, where students verbalize their thought process as they edit a classmate's paper.

A large proportion of targetlike corrections provided by peers was incorporated in the immediate and delayed post-treatment writing tasks (67% and 48% respectively), which once again echoes what Villamil and de Guerrero (1998) found. High retention rates may be attributed to the types of corrections and help provided. As noted before, peer feedback may be more readily accepted and understood by learners, given that it is coming from someone of similar proficiency. In fact, in several instances, learners engaged in co-constructing resolutions, as in the example below. In this instance, the peer editor points out an issue with the verb *fue* (preterit form of the verb *ser* in Spanish), and then the pair engages in a discussion of the contrast between *ser* and *estar* (two verbs that mean "to be" in Spanish), as well as preterit versus imperfect:

Peer editor: *fue bien* is a feeling, so... you need *era*

Author: *pero era es ser* [but *era* is *ser*]

Peer editor: Oh, you're right. So...

Author: *Estuve?* [was - preterit]

Peer editor: *Estaba? Estaba! Porque es no pretérito, imperfecto... porque es un tiempo más largo* [Was? Was! Because it's not preterite, imperfect... because it's a longer time]

Author: Oh, yeah.

### Pedagogical Implications

The main pedagogical implication of the current study is that educators need to have realistic expectations when it comes to the effectiveness of peer editing. The results showed that students were very selective in which issues they pointed out. When editing a classmate's paper, it is possible that learners only react to an error when they know what the target form is, and it could also be the case that they may want to avoid making their partner feel bad by circling every error they notice. Therefore, the seemingly low rate of error detec-



tion might not actually be a drawback of peer editing, but rather a natural way of providing feedback. After all, when it comes to instructor-provided feedback on form, it would not be considered effective or appropriate to mark every single error on a student's paper. In other words, both students and instructors intentionally choose not to point out some errors, and that does not diminish the value of the feedback provided. In fact, this study confirmed many positive aspects of peer editing: learners assume an active role in their learning by providing each other with feedback that is not only correct but also at the right level, as evidenced by the high rates of retention of peer-provided information, even two weeks after.

With respect to the other common pedagogical concern surrounding peer editing, namely that students will provide each other with incorrect information, this study confirmed that it happens very infrequently (19 cases out of 156), and the rate of retention of inaccurate information is very low. The fact that most miscorrections and non-targetlike resolutions were either not incorporated or not attempted suggests that students are quite judicious in accepting peer feedback. One might argue that these instances could help students solidify their own knowledge about the target language. That being said, the findings presented here do not imply that peer feedback is an adequate "substitute" for teacher feedback. Instructor guidance is still paramount, both in terms of fostering growth by supplementing peer comments, as well as in reassuring learners of the accuracy of peer feedback, which would in turn foster trust and self-confidence.

### **Limitations and directions for further research**

This small-scale study has contributed to expanding our understanding of certain aspects of peer editing, but more research is certainly warranted given some of its limitations. First, learners were instructed to mark any and all errors related to vocabulary, morphosyntax, and spelling, as opposed to focusing only on certain features (e.g., gender agreement). Previous studies have suggested that corrections targeting just a few structures may be more effective than "a scattershot approach" (Polio, 2012, p. 384). Furthermore, students received no training with respect to how they should provide feedback, and as Chang (2016) points out, "training is believed to be essential in the success of peer review" (p. 89). Future studies should investigate whether error detection increases when students are first trained to focus on specific linguistic forms. It would also be useful to see whether error detection rates change after multiple peer editing sessions.

A factor that was not explored in the current study but which is certainly important to consider is the proficiency level of the students. The writing proficiency level of the participants in this study was not documented. On the one hand, the fact that pairs were formed without controlling for proficiency differences gives the study ecological validity (i.e., in many classrooms, teachers do not use proficiency test data to form pairs). On the other hand, it would be worthwhile to explore if there is a correlation between error detection rates and the proficiency level of the peer editor. It is also possible that the proficiency level of the student receiving the feedback could affect retention rates. Another factor that may have influenced both the number of corrections provided as well as the willingness to accept peer feedback is the relationship between students. Another limitation of the current research design is that there is no way of knowing whether any of the students who served as each other's peer editors knew each other or had had any prior experiences collaborating outside of this study. Future research should shed light on the extent to which familiarity or friendship between students affects the effectiveness of peer editing.

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# Teacher Perceptions of Inclusion in Online Instructional Practices

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## Abstract

The purpose of this study is to explore world language teacher perceptions of inclusion in online instructional practices. Data were collected from semi-structured interviews conducted with six world language teachers in one large public school district during the 2020-2021 academic year. Four of six teachers described practices that incorporate racial and ethnic diversity in curricula, and five teachers expressed uncertainty about how to integrate diverse gender and sexual identities in their practices. Teachers found the support of world language colleagues instrumental in adapting their online practices to be inclusive. Findings hold practical implications for teachers and teacher educators who aim to develop inclusive instructional practices in online settings.

## Introduction

Recent studies call for inclusion in world language instructional practices (Cashman & Trujillo, 2018; Freeman & Li, 2019; Knisely, 2020; Knisely & Paiz, 2021). Nevertheless, little research has investigated how world language teachers adapt their practices to be inclusive in online formats. Inclusion in this context can be defined as teaching methodologies and instructional practices that address and welcome variation in student identities, abilities, and experiences. The development of inclusive instructional practices directly aligns with the ACTFL proficiency-based, communicative principles of instruction (2020a, 2020b). Further, the proficiency benchmarks outlined in the “Can-Do Statements” (National Council of State Supervisors for Foreign Languages and ACTFL [NCSSFL-ACTFL], 2017) clarify students’ capacity to interpret and negotiate meaning across global contexts and to engage with complexities in pluricultural identities.

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The purpose of this study was to examine world language teachers' perceptions of inclusion in their online instructional practices during the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic, including how their practices were different from face-to-face instruction. Six world language teachers in one large public K-12 district each participated in one semi-structured interview during the 2020-2021 academic year (AY). The overarching concern of this qualitative research study is to explore how world language teachers establish inclusive pedagogies. The following research question guided this inquiry: How are teachers' online instructional practices and methodologies inclusive of diversity in race, ethnicity, gender, and sexual identities?

### **Conceptual framework**

This research was conducted through the lens of critical consciousness, defined as the willingness and capacity to see how power and privilege work to systematically advantage some while simultaneously disadvantaging others (Radd & Kramer, 2016). As teachers' ability to enact pedagogical change assumes their capacity to develop a critical consciousness about their own identities and those of the languages and cultures they teach (Glynn, 2012), the development of critical consciousness is important in its relation to inequities and oppression that can stem from socially constructed ideologies.

World language instructional practices that address the development of critical consciousness can foster critical reflection on and engagement with inclusion in curricula. Broadly, inclusion can be interpreted as a universal human right, as it assumes more than representation in materials and instructional practices. Inclusion can also signify socio-cultural value systems, equal access, the eradication of discrimination, and the removal of structural barriers. Complex conceptions of inclusion in world language curricula may stimulate interrogations of language and power, which involve how teachers critically reflect on inequities, how they are sustained, and how they may be perpetuated in social settings (Collins, 2019). Recognizing that the development of critically conscious practices is a complex process, an extended goal of this study is to attend to how race, ethnicity, gender, and sexuality are addressed. An additional goal is to examine areas where educators may decide to remain silent and why.

### **Review of the literature**

World language scholars reiterate the importance of adopting practices in language pedagogy that are inclusive and that develop teachers' critical consciousness (Baggett, 2020; Prieto-Bay, 2007). Recent scholarship suggests that to establish inclusive pedagogies, teachers ought to reconceptualize certain pedagogical choices about language education, such as materials and instructional approaches in teachers' practices (Anya, 2020; Cashman & Trujillo, 2018; Knisely, 2020; Knisely, 2021; Knisely & Paiz, 2021; Scott & Edwards, 2019).

As they develop inclusive pedagogies, educators may benefit from critical reflection on their own identities, power, and privilege, including the roles they can assume for diverse student populations (Baggett & Simmons, 2017). Recent studies emphasize a need for sustained attention toward fostering inclusive, supportive teaching environments that actively challenge coercive power relations and support student identities (Liao & Maddamsetti, 2019; Wedin, 2020). Teachers may aim to affirm student identities and offer spaces for identity negotiation, which are aspects that are particularly important for students who are at risk of marginalization (Baggett, 2018; Wassell et al., 2019).

Related to teachers' adoption of critical perspectives, studies (Abreu, 2016; Watson, 2013) suggest that Afro-Hispanic diversity is often missing from world language pedagogy.

gies. Abreu (2106) investigated perspectives of 241 students and nine instructors of Spanish as the language of instruction through surveys with both closed and open-ended questions. Results indicated that Spanish students had relatively narrow perceptions of cultural, ethnic, and racial diversity among Spanish-speaking populations. Although teachers communicated knowledge of diversity within the Spanish-speaking world, their knowledge did not appear to be communicated with students (Abreu, 2016). This finding suggests that world language educators may benefit from making sustained efforts in their instructional practices to help students develop critical consciousness and an awareness of diversity.

Next, research in language education advocate for a critical interrogation of the role of gender and sexual identities in world language education, where trans, non-binary, gender non-conforming (TGNC), bisexual, and queer identities tend to be invisible and erased (Cashman & Trujillo, 2018; Coda, 2017; Knisely, 2020, 2021; Knisely & Paiz, 2021; Paiz, 2020). World language materials often depict normative views, specifically heteronormativity, or privileging heterosexual identities (Cahnmann-Taylor & Coda 2018), and cisnormativity, which assumes that individuals identify with the gender they were assigned at birth (Knisely, 2021). To this point, materials ought to be carefully selected with the goal of equitable and inclusive representation of LGBTQ+ individuals and communities in World Language curriculum and instructional practices. Alongside practices that adequately represent queer identities, teachers and teacher educators should also demonstrate a commitment to challenging and eliminating harmful discourse (Cashman and Trujillo, 2018).

In practices designed to reflect ACTFL's (2020a, 2020b) proficiency-based, communicative principles of instruction and the "Can-Do Statements" (NCCSFL-ACTFL, 2017) for intercultural competence, teachers may also derive value from weighing the nature and meaning of inclusive pedagogies in their instructional practices. Recent research advances the imperative of a critical approach to world language education that develops students' critical consciousness by incorporating social justice issues and different historical and political perspectives (Glynn & Spenader, 2020; Randolph & Johnson, 2017; Wassell et al., 2019). Examples that can promote an awareness of differences and inequities include critical content-based instruction that interweaves content, language, and critical thinking (Glynn & Spenader, 2020) and professional support to the development of social justice approaches for teachers and teacher educators (Wassell et al., 2019). Teachers' decisions about the components they include involve developing strategies, working in collaboration with other teachers and communities, and reflecting further on critical approaches to world language education (Randolph & Johnson, 2017).

Further, the growth in online world language programs and the shift to online instruction during the COVID-19 pandemic have resulted in the need for teachers to reassess their practices across the curriculum (Jin et al., 2021; King Ramirez, 2021). In turn, a resulting greater need for online learning fosters opportunities for world language teachers to continue to build virtual skills and to adapt their practices. Research that examines various strategies that world language educators may employ in online settings suggests that creative collaboration on projects, shared knowledge, and a nurturing space for professional reflection and growth can sustain growth in instructional practices (Gregersen et al., 2021; Knight, 2020; Wesely, 2013).

## Methods

### *Participants*

Teachers of any world language who were teaching at the middle or high school level in one large public school district in the northeastern United States were invited to partic-



ipate. Six teachers from three schools in the district expressed an interest in participating and were included in the study. World language instructor participants had an average of 20 years of teaching experience. All teachers reported learning the languages they instruct at least in part during their K-16 educational experiences. Five teachers had one or more experiences living abroad where the languages taught are spoken, from one semester to greater than a decade. Two teachers regularly visit immediate and extended family members living in French and Spanish-speaking countries, and two instructors were raised speaking the languages taught in their households. Pseudonyms are employed for each participant. Table 1 presents a summary of participant characteristics, degrees, and number of years teaching.

**Table 1**

*Summary of teacher characteristics by institution, roles, and experience (n = 6)*

Participant	School type	Language taught	Highest degree	# of years teaching
June	High school	French	Bachelors	30
Kathryn	High school	French	Masters	17
Genevieve	Middle school	French	Masters	23
Rachel	High school	Spanish	Bachelors	27
Jason	High School	Latin	Bachelors	7
Olivia	High School	French	Masters	20

June holds a bachelor’s degree and has been teaching French for over 30 years. She began taking French courses in junior high and “just loved it.” June is a teacher who believes that her students’ identities are central to her instructional approach. She offers, “I don’t want any of them feeling that their identity is something to be covered up and hidden.” Viewing language teaching as deeply embedded in cultures and the rich histories of local and global communities, she puts her beliefs into practice by designing student conversational opportunities to discuss experiences living in other countries, family traditions, holidays, and inviting Francophone speakers to her classes, both in person and online.

Kathryn always loved French classes as a student, but she did not set out to become a French teacher. She explains, “Originally, I thought I would do international business.” After her first undergraduate economics class, however, she decided, “This is not for me.” She holds a master’s degree and has been teaching for 17 years. In her instructional practices, Kathryn describes the importance of student options to select from reading materials provided where they can “see themselves” and she finds it important “to incorporate a variety of authors and perspectives, [so that] the materials are not all representing just one nationality or one group.”

Genevieve has taught French for 23 years. She has also extensively studied Spanish and German. She holds a master's degree and has a field experience partnership with a local university that hosts international teaching scholars from the Fulbright Program (Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, n.d.). In the four years prior to the pandemic, Genevieve has hosted Fulbright teacher scholars for six weeks each, with participants from the Ivory Coast, Egypt, and the West Bank. She and her students enjoy hearing the scholars "talk about their languages, their own lives, and definitely the global communities."

Rachel began learning Spanish as an elementary school student while living in Venezuela with her family for over a year. Her parents lived and worked in Caracas while she attended a private school for international students. She found the Venezuelan schools "very, very challenging" where speaking Spanish was "about learning but also survival." She holds a bachelor's degree and has been teaching Spanish for 27 years. In her online classes, she has created a virtual library for her students that integrates diverse identities, interests, and backgrounds. Rachel continued to use the virtual library when online instruction ended.

Jason began taking Latin classes in high school and holds a bachelor's degree in Classics. He has been teaching for seven years and discussed how he likes to "give students some sort of freedom, whether artistically or about a topic." He keeps his students at the forefront of his curriculum design and often includes modern perspectives on Greek mythology as part of his instructional repertoire.

Olivia began taking French classes in middle school, holds a master's degree, and has been teaching French for more than 20 years. In addition to French, Olivia also teaches English to high school students who have recently immigrated to the U.S. In her instructional practices, she aims to personalize student activities with the support of curricular materials and individual journals that she was able to purchase as a grant recipient during the pandemic. She guides her students to further development of critical consciousness through student reflection on their cultural and linguistic identities and follow-up activities during which students discuss their identities with their classmates.

### ***Research design and data sources***

This study employs semi-structured participant interviews to address the research question: How are teachers' online instructional practices and methodologies inclusive of diversity in race, ethnicity, gender, and sexual identities? Data were collected during teachers' online instruction between December 2020 and April 2021. Interviews were conducted virtually and were audio recorded, transcribed, and stored in a password protected folder. The semi-structured interview guide is included in the Appendix, see pp. 23-24. Transcripts and resulting themes were shared with participants to determine accuracy and afforded opportunities to weigh in qualitative interpretations of findings (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Teachers at the three institutions taught their classes remotely from March 2020 to April 2021. Six interviews were conducted virtually for a total of 260 minutes, with an average of roughly 43 minutes per interview.

To address the research question, participants were asked about their teaching experiences, how inclusive pedagogies are integrated in their online teaching practices and methodology, and how they draw upon students' identities and experiences in their instructional practices. Participants were also asked to bring curriculum artifacts to their interviews and told the stories of the artifacts from a pedagogical perspective. This study was supported and approved by the author's home institutional review board (IRB) and administrators at each institution.

**Research setting**

Participants in this study teach world language classes in a large, public school district located in the northeastern United States that is situated in a community that serves as an international refugee resettlement area. In the 2020-21 academic year (AY), the high school where Kathryn and Jason teach had a student body of approximately 1,650 students. Thirty-five percent of students identified as non-White, and greater than 40% of students are economically disadvantaged, based on measures of free and reduced-price lunch (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2021). June, Rachel, and Olivia teach at a high school with approximately 1,800 students enrolled, a 41% non-White student body, and over 34% of students who qualify for free and reduced-price lunch (NCES, 2021). Genevieve teaches at a middle school (Grades 6-8) where roughly 1,100 students are enrolled, 45% of students are non-White, and 45.5% of students are economically disadvantaged (NCES, 2021).

In the adapted online teaching format, teachers delivered online instruction Monday through Thursday mornings from 7:20 am to 11:44 am, and Friday mornings were exclusively dedicated to meeting virtually as a department. Within the Friday morning collaborative space, teachers shared ideas about curriculum, instructional practices, and how their practices could be adapted in online settings. Teachers used this time to engage in discussions of how they understand and incorporate cultural diversity, how their online practices could be inclusive, and in what ways they might address challenges within this process.

A rather unique aspect of world language curricula at these public institutions is teachers' self-selection of all materials for their courses. Teachers do not adopt textbooks in their instructional practices and are afforded the curricular freedom to select their own materials, based on availability and teacher preferences. June described this feature as an opportunity to form a curriculum that is "as current as it can be," and as Jason states, he is "always sort of trying new things." Teachers' approach to selecting materials is varied. For example, Jason adopted an online text for his course and integrates additional readings, resources, and projects based on his students' preferences. Olivia develops all of her own materials, and Rachel uses the Somos Curriculum (2019) for her Spanish classes, which she supplements with projects, an online library, and media resources.

**Data analysis**

Data analysis began with the transcription of data and coding processes that occurred in three phases. First-round initial coding placed an emphasis on the actual spoken words of participants and was used to explore initial relevant themes (Saldaña, 2016). Second-round focused coding consisted of re-coding the transcript to develop guiding themes and involved searching for the most frequent codes to develop the most prominent categories (Saldaña, 2016). Third-round axial coding was used to thematically organize dominant and less-dominant codes and to identify different dimensions in constructs (Saldaña, 2016), including their relevance to the guiding question. The first round of coding resulted in 26 identified themes, which were organized thematically, narrowed to five themes in the second round, and resulted in three themes in the third round.

Photographs of curricular artifacts added depth to participants' descriptions of their practices and methodologies. Artifacts were analyzed for the context in which they were created, the audience for which they are intended, their purpose, their historical significance, and their connection(s) with the guiding question. Throughout the analytic phase, a dual focus was placed on the language teachers' descriptions of practices themselves and the

resources drawn upon in language instruction. Multiple strategies such as analytic memos, member checks, and interview transcripts shared with participants were used to mitigate researcher biases.

## Findings

Three major themes resulted from the coding process: teachers' instructional practices that address racial and ethnic diversity, uncertainty about how to integrate diversity in gender and sexuality in curricula, and the support of world language colleagues in inclusive online practices. Teachers' autonomy to select and develop the curricular materials they preferred appeared to engender engagement with a range of sociodemographic characteristics, current events, and social identities in teachers' instructional practices.

### *Racial and ethnic diversity in teachers' instructional practices*

There is evidence that four teacher participants incorporate materials in their online instructional practices that present diverse racial and ethnic identities and espouse beliefs of critical consciousness. For example, three teachers developed online literary and media resource libraries that incorporate diversity in race and ethnicity. Prior to remote learning, teachers' online libraries did not exist. Resources include discussions of Black Lives Matter, immigration in domestic and international contexts, human rights, and race-based discrimination. In her practices, Rachel draws upon over 100 books and articles organized around specific topics and themes. She creates units organized around guiding questions such as, "What does it feel like to be an immigrant, being pulled in multiple ways?" She describes one story from Spanish IV: "It is about a girl from the Dominican Republic who not only is she from D.R., but she's also experiencing mental issues as a teenager. And it goes through her issues with anxiety and emotional distress."

Kathryn believes that her online bookshelf is one of the best tools that can foster awareness of diversity and support the development of critical consciousness. She emphasizes the importance of "continuing to build [awareness] and being conscious about the choices of books that we're offering our students, making sure they are representing diverse voices and diverse subjects." At least twice a week, students in her French classes select an online text and read for 10-15 minutes from any text based upon their preference. Students then bookmark the text and fill out a reading log once they have completed the weekly task. This activity, as Kathryn describes, "involves the roots of where [students] came from and the experiences they've had."

In addition to online libraries, teachers draw upon several literary sources to interweave discussions of colonialism, language, culture, and identity in their practices. For example, participants incorporate films based upon stories of im/migration, such as *Under the Same Moon* (Riggen, 2007). Students in Rachel's Spanish IV classes read the novel *The House on Mango Street* (Cisneros, 1984), engage in debates, and write essays on poverty, gender, and immigration. At the Spanish III level, Rachel introduces a television series that was produced in Argentina called *Go! Live Your Way* (Mellino, 2019) as one way to address equitable representation of sexual identities. Kathryn's French classes explore recycled art created by Ivorian artist Koffi (Brignoli, 2019) to engage in conversation about sustainability, health effects, and social class. June draws upon Prévert's poem, "Le Cancre" (1945) in her French IV classes to explore themes of rebellion against oppression, humiliation, and individual freedom.

Olivia describes how racial and ethnic representation in her curriculum relies, in part, upon the diverse sociodemographic characteristics of her world language students. Olivia states, "There are very few students who have one race or ethnicity. More likely there are

three or four backgrounds based on their parents having two ethnicities or races. So we have this long list when they say, *'Je suis'* [I am]." June offers, "Race definitely comes up in a lot of ways," such as with the incorporation of Francophone literature featuring African and Vietnamese writers, global news articles used to discuss current events, and the study of art. While engagement in local communities and cross-curricular connections were primarily restricted by the pandemic, participants had good intentions of maintaining institutional and local collaborations to integrate diversity and develop critical consciousness once in person instruction resumed.

### ***Uncertainty about diverse gender and sexual identities***

A second theme that resulted from data analysis was teachers' uncertainty about how to integrate diversity in gender and sexual identities in their instructional practices. When asked to describe how diversity in gender and sexual identities was represented in their practices, teachers were pressed to articulate a curricular example. Five of six teachers expressed an interest in greater engagement with diverse gender and sexual identities in their instructional practices. As Genevieve describes, "Sexuality does not come up very often." Although evidence was limited, Jason offered an example of a senior Latin student who designed a graphic novel project to illustrate variation in gender and sexual identities in Greek mythology as part of an independent study.

The integration of diverse gender and sexual identities as periphery in world language curricula was consistent across teacher participants in this study. Rachel describes how a student contacted her via email at the beginning of the year, stating "This is what I was born as. This is what I go by, and that was it. There was no big deal, nothing after that." Olivia offers an example of how uncertainty manifests in her classes: "I do have students that I figure out don't want to be *'il'* or *'elle'* [he or she], so I just call them by their name." June communicates her desire for increased engagement with gender and sexual identities: "There have been times when I've wanted to get more heavily into certain issues, using certain pieces of literature to really talk about homosexual unions and that sort of thing, [but] I just haven't gone there."

To the point of uncertainty, there were many reasons teachers articulated as underlying factors that sustained a hesitancy towards a more proactive approach to integrating diversity in gender and sexual identities. Olivia suggests that at the introductory levels, world language curriculum is already overloaded. She states, "I don't tend to reach out and look for anything that would have that information because I'm in, well, about a third grade level." On the other hand, June was confident in her students' interest in exploring gender and sexual identities at any level. While she wanted to use literary pieces to "get more heavily into certain issues," she feared having to answer to parents. June states, "I wish that I felt more comfortable doing that, but I don't feel safe doing it, which is sad."

As Kathryn describes, "We need to be more cognizant of the use of gender identity and the French pronouns, [and] to me, it should be a natural introduction of, these are other options in terms of language use." Genevieve and Rachel prefer to offer non-binary and gender-neutral pronoun options to students in their French and Spanish classes and lead their students through discussions of pronoun development in non-U.S. countries. This is what Genevieve describes as "a work in progress." Recognizing that inclusive pronouns differ by languages and cultures and that many languages have binary gender grammatical structures, scholars recommend creating and implementing materials that were created by TGNC individuals and communities, using circumlocution to avoid binary structures, and careful attention to the use of pronouns (e.g., they) to avoid specifying gender (Knisely, 2020; Knisely & Paiz, 2021).

***Support of World Language colleagues around inclusive, online practices***

A relatively unique aspect of the virtual schedules that were adopted during 2020-21 AY was the space the district created for teachers to consistently collaborate virtually on Friday mornings to share ideas about online instructional practices and inclusion. As Department Chairs, Kathryn and June encouraged their World Language colleagues to have thoughtful conversations within the collaborative space about how diversity and inclusion could be understood and addressed in online instructional practices, including how they can guide students in the development of critical consciousness.

Olivia spoke further about how her ability to develop inclusive online practices was supported by the added professional learning community (PLC) time during the pandemic. As she describes, “Every Friday in PLCs, we would share our trials, tribulations, and our successes.” Olivia found these conversations useful to her development of performance assessments based upon authentic materials, which she used to address diversity in brochures, blogs, websites, and magazines that she designed for her remote classes during the pandemic. Since the transition to online teaching, Jason developed online newsletters and discussed how to address inclusion in student projects with Latin colleagues in the district.

As part of this professional time, teachers discussed useful strategies for inclusive teaching across online platforms. For example, June, Kathryn, and Rachel shared their experiences drawing upon a broader range of racial and ethnic identities with the support of online libraries and authentic news and media resources. Teachers reflected on weekly discussion topics such as, “What does it mean to be culturally sensitive in online teaching?” (and) “How can we help students develop cultural awareness?” Genevieve shared how she invited former students located in non-U.S. countries to visit her classes virtually. Over the course of year, she hosted three virtual visitors from France, the Ivory Coast, and Canada. Her students asked questions about the school communities and what learning was like in different educational contexts.

Reflecting upon these experiences, Olivia states, “It’s been magical.” June offers, “Working with each other, that’s not time that we’ve ever really had before.” In broader online professional communities, teachers engaged with other world language educators in social media groups. For example, Rachel is an active member of several social media communities, such as Spanish Teachers in the U.S. (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/stitus/about/>), Tech for World Language Teachers (<https://www.facebook.com/tech4worldlanguageteachers/>), and Diversify your Bookshelf (<https://m.facebook.com/groups/diversifyyourbookshelf/>). For each of these resources, diversity and inclusion are prominent topics.

**Discussion**

Findings from this study suggest that several participants ( $n=4$ ) critically engage with racial and ethnic diversity in world language curricula. Four of six participants offer examples of engagement with Black and other non-White identities in world language materials. To the topic of normalizing heterosexuality and the invisibility of queer people in language materials and curricula (Cashman & Trujillo, 2018; Knisely, 2021; Knisely & Paiz, 2021), there was limited evidence of diversity in gender and sexual identities in the data beyond discussions of personal pronouns, an Argentine television series depicting non-heteronormative identities, and a senior graphic novel project on Greek mythology.

However, there is a growing body of research related to gender and sexual diversity among queer scholars, applied linguists, and world language educators. To address how teachers explore inclusive practices that engage with identities and communities in mate-



rials and instructional practices, Knisely and Paiz (2021) recommend queer-inquiry based pedagogies (QIBPs). QIBPs aim to help students “trouble all forms of normativity and to engage with LGBTQ+ identities and topics in linguistically, culturally, and rhetorically appropriate ways” (Knisely & Paiz, 2021, p. 29). To help support teachers, resources have been developed to support critical reflection, including a toolkit with a self-inventory to examine instructional practices, positionality, and knowledge (Knisely, 2020; Knisely & Paiz, 2021).

Five of the six teacher participants expressed a sense of uncertainty about how to approach diversity in gender and sexual identities in their practices, even though they were interested in integrating diverse identities in their curricula. Teachers in this study recognized that TGNC students who participate in world language courses may find it difficult to connect with curricula that depict gender-binary and heteronormative patterns in materials and practices (Cashman & Trujillo, 2018; Knisely, 2021; Knisely & Paiz, 2021). To this end, world language educators ought to critically consider how their instructional approaches may, or may not, serve to sustain normative views of gender, sexuality, and race (Cahnmann-Taylor & Coda, 2018).

This study offers evidence of world language teacher collaboration during weekly meetings was a virtual space that nurtured professional growth, reflection, and engagement with colleagues (Gregersen et al., 2021; Knight, 2020; Wesely, 2013). Additionally, the Friday PLC time was unique to virtual teaching during the 2020-2021 academic year; it did not exist prior to or after that timeline in this district. Teachers’ weekly time served to develop online libraries with colleagues and to engage in conversations about cultural awareness. This finding also suggests that teachers in this study were interested in elevating their own and students’ critical consciousness about the languages and cultures that were taught (Glynn, 2012).

Given that culturally diverse content is of great interest to developing engaging questions about issues in the world and developing critical consciousness (Tedick & Cammarado, 2012), findings offer evidence that teachers’ online instructional practices can engage with racial and ethnic diversity in products, practices, and perspectives (ACTFL, 2016) while also connecting with student identities and interests. Moreover, an intentional focus on the interrogation of issues such as social inequities in world language teachers’ pedagogies may further support the development of critical consciousness among both students and educators.

Regarding the development of critical consciousness, world language teachers might focus on nurturing students’ critical reflection on developing their own voices and providing space to celebrate in their diverse experiences and identities. As examples, June and Kathryn described their efforts to develop students’ critical consciousness with discussions of colonialism and international oppression in their French classes. Teachers may encourage students to write about their own linguistic and cultural histories (Lippi-Green, 2012) and to share their experiences learning languages among students and fellow educators.

### **Significance of Research**

This research advances two practical implications for world language teaching and teacher education. First, this study is important for teachers and educational stakeholders as they consider diversified approaches to inclusive pedagogies in online learning formats. Teachers unanimously described their weekly online meetings as unequivocal professional time that promoted individual and collective reflection on how their practices could be inclusive in online settings. To this point, they described their curricular freedom and the ability to select or develop the materials they preferred as a considerable benefit to inclu-



sive instructional practices. Future studies that explore professional collaboration in online spaces and teachers' curricular freedom to select course materials are highly recommended.

Finally, teachers' uncertainty about diversity in gender and sexual identities and interest in affirming and integrating all students' identities in their practices point to a need for more professional opportunities for educators. These opportunities ought to help teachers develop strategies that are sensitive to difference in student identities, experiences, and abilities in their practices. With respect to teachers' uncertainty of how to address diversity in gender and sexual identities, schools and districts ought to provide resources to help teachers adapt curricula, design and select materials that affirm student identities, and offer ongoing professional support, such as workshops in virtual and in-person settings. In closing, these findings will inform and support educators and teacher educators as they engage with inclusion in language education.

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## Appendix

### Interview guide for teacher participants

1. I have a few biographical questions to start:
  - (a) Which languages do you teach (and speak)?
  - (b) How did you learn this/these language(s)?
  - (c) What is a typical remote instruction day in this school?
  - (d) Have you taught in remote settings prior to the COVID-19 pandemic?

#### Module 1: Inclusion in Curriculum and Communities

2. How do you integrate various forms of student diversity into your curriculum?
  - (a) In what ways do your assignments draw upon students' unique backgrounds?
  - (b) How is diversity integrated in readings or other curricular materials (films, texts, and online sources)?
3. Do you draw on activities in the local community as resources in your teaching (e.g., events, guest speakers, plays, films, etc.)?
  - (a) In what ways has teaching online altered your engagement with local communities?

- (b) Has remote teaching fostered any cross-curricular connections within the school community?

**Module 2: Gender, Race, and Inclusive Classrooms**

- 4. Students seem interested in discussing is (a) race and ethnicity and (b) gender and sexual identities. How are these identities woven into your classes?
- 5. (a) Is there a memorable example of differences in race and ethnicity that has occurred in your classes?
  - (b) Can you tell me about a time when diversity in gender and sexual identities was integrated in materials?
  - (c) Are there any connections with race or gender that students make to media or literature that you discuss in your classes?
  - (d) Are there current or community events that relate to these questions?
  - (e) None of us have the time to do all that we want to do. Is there anything you have thought about modifying in your teaching that would make your materials or practices inclusive of a range of race, ethnicity, and non-heteronormative views?

**Module 3: Student Identity**

- 6. Can you tell me about a time when a character in a book or film helped a student articulate who they were?
- 7. Is there anything you look for when selecting materials that may give students' voices?
- 8. Participants are asked in advance to bring a curriculum artifact that relates to diversity to their interviews. The following series directly addresses the artifact:
  - (a) What is the story of this artifact from a teaching perspective?
  - (b) What is the purpose of this artifact from a pedagogical standpoint?

**Biographical questions**

- 9. I am going to wrap up with a few questions:
  - (a) How many years have you been teaching?
  - (b) What is your highest level of education?
  - (c) Do you have teaching or professional certifications?
  - (d) Are you from the area originally?

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# Creating Safe Spaces: Diverse Instructional Materials for World Language Learners

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## Abstract

Stereotypical notions and depictions of the German language, its speakers, and cultural practices are more persistent in instructional materials, language program advertisements, and people's minds than one might presume (Bryant et al., 2019; Chavez, 2020a, 2020b; Rothe, 2022). Overcoming such misconceptions requires educators to reconsider curricula and promotional efforts so that they reflect the diverse lived experiences of German speakers and learners (Criser & Malakaj, 2020). To diversify German curricula in the United States, the American Association of Teachers of German (AATG) established a task force in 2020, Creating Safe Spaces (CSS). Its members have developed instructional materials focusing on diversity and inclusion, especially regarding Black, Indigenous, and other Persons of Color (BIPOC) and Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Plus (LGBTQ+) communities in the German-speaking world. The materials span various thematic units and language levels and serve as a model for other world language (WL) instructors desirous of making diversity a critical component in their respective curricula. Available free of charge both to AATG members and non-members on the AATG's GETMAPP platform, the instructional activities align with the NCSSFL-ACTFL Can-Do Statements (2017) and the World-Readiness Standards for Learning Languages (2015). This article introduces CSS and showcases sample materials that cover topics commonly found in WL courses—introducing oneself and others, family structures, and living. Considerations regarding the imperative for language professionals' commitment to inclusivity, diversity, and social justice form the framework of this article.

**Keywords:** world languages, German, curriculum, diversity, leadership, teaching materials

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## Introduction

This article draws on the work developed by the 2020/2021 *Creating Safe Spaces (CSS)* task force of the American Association of Teachers of German (AATG). It is a praxis-oriented report that introduces the CSS project, outlines its guidelines, and showcases created lesson activities. CSS provides ready-to-use classroom materials that cover various topics featuring German-speaking Black, Indigenous, and other Persons of Color (BIPOC) and Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer, Plus (LGBTQ+) communities. By presenting the CSS resources, the authors seek to support language instructors—not only German teachers, but also other world language (WL) educators—interested in redeveloping curricula and teaching materials.

The article begins with an apologia as to why it is critical to transform WL education, followed by a review of previous research about curricular diversity efforts. The main section describes the developmental process used by the CSS task force members and features sample unit activities that illustrate instructional materials created for commonly covered topics in WL classes: introducing oneself and others, family structures, and living. The paper concludes with describing experiences of implementing selected materials and providing possible next steps for the profession to ensure inclusivity in language curricula.

### **Apologia: On the Need to Transform World Language Study Into an Inclusive and Diverse Experience**

Matters of diversity, inclusivity, and social justice should be an integral part of every WL course and program (Glynn et al., 2018; Kubota, 2004). These concepts require a sustained and ongoing commitment from all language educators that includes continuous self-reflection, an openness to unlearn and relearn our socialization in cultures dominated by inequities, and a willingness to collaborate and update teaching practices critically (Kishimoto, 2018). Scholars have also underscored the need to revise WL curricula to reflect the lived experiences of target language (TL) members (Anyá, 2020; Bouamer et al.; Merritt, 2020; Zhang, 2021).

In the case of German Studies in the United States, initiatives to diversify curricula are not new. This is evident when one reviews the 1992 special issue, *Focus on Diversity*, in *Die Unterrichtspraxis/ Teaching German* (Peters, 1992). The primary goal of many initiatives in the past had been to increase enrollments and save the field (Bryant et al., 2019). Rather than justifying diversity as a means to counteract dwindling enrollments (Goldberg et al., 2015; Looney & Lusin, 2019), today's language educators, and not just teachers of German, have come to realize that it is a moral obligation to assist in furthering social justice and dismantling White supremacy (Bryant et al., 2019; DDGC, 2019). Instructors and administrators must ask such questions as: Whom are we serving? How are our classrooms and programs uninviting—and to whom? Which ideas and practices are we perpetuating? Ultimately, the answers challenge current curricula, advertisement and recruitment practices, graduate studies, and professional development (Byrd, 2020; Criser & Malakaj, 2020). Additionally, many WLs taught in the United States—such as German, French, Japanese, Portuguese, Russian, or Spanish—are closely linked to a global expansionist and/or settler colonial history. Therefore, WL educators should acknowledge their fields' positionality in the context of the present-day United States and beyond (Byrd, 2020; Criser & Malakaj, 2020).

In recent years, there has been an increasing number of educators and researchers who have worked toward finding and building sustainable ways to nurture diverse, equitable, and inclusive spaces in U.S. WL programs. Examples include groups of scholars addressing these matters collaboratively, such as in French (Bouamer et al.), German (Bryant et al.,



2019; Criser & Malakaj, 2020), and Italian (Zhang et al., 2021). For instance, the 2016-founded scholarly collective Diversity, Decolonization, and German Curriculum (DDGC) seeks “allies and dialogue partners across disciplines in the pursuit of a just, antiracist, and truly affirmative language and culture curriculum, in and beyond German Studies” (Bryant et al., 2019, p. 6). They urge educators to “prepare for an undoing of oppressive structures that have shaped pedagogies, theories, and curricula at the core of our field” (Criser & Knott, 2019, pp. 151-152). Re-formulated and re-envisioned WL curricula and teaching materials at all language proficiency levels is a fundamental step toward that goal (Cooper, 2020; Criser & Malakaj, 2020; Merritt, 2020). Throughout their coursework, students must be able to explore “the full range of diverse lived experiences” found in the respective TL contexts (Criser & Knott, 2019, p. 152).

Studies have indicated that post-secondary learners have encountered a variety of stereotypes about German speakers—native speakers (NSs) (Abrams, 2002; Chavez, 2020b; Schulz & Haerle, 1995), learners (Chavez, 2020b), and teachers (Rothe, 2022). Chavez (2020b) and Rothe (2022), for example, demonstrated that students associate traditional views (e.g., people wearing traditional clothing, such as *Lederhosen* [traditional leather pants], and enjoying yodeling) and racialized notions (e.g., White people with blue eyes and blond hair) with NSs of German, as well as with the language’s non-native learners and teachers. Moreover and still too frequently, instructional materials and curricula for German and other languages, as well as promotional materials for language programs center around White, Eurocentric, and heteronormative communities of NSs (Chavez, 2020a; Coda, 2017; Criser & Knott, 2019; Ilett, 2009). BIPOC and LGBTQ+ experiences and communities are often not adequately represented or discussed in WLs (Anya, 2020; Cahnmann-Taylor & Coda, 2018). Such instructional practices, especially in teaching materials and promotional strategies, have an exclusionary potential: they might discourage some students—those who may not see themselves in the stereotypical image of a (native) language speaker—from imagining themselves as plausible members of the language community in question (Chavez, 2020b).

### **Selected Curricular Interventions Pertaining to Race, Sexuality, and Gender: Prior Scholarship**

Prior scholarship has shown how educators can embed topics related to LGBTQ+ communities, critical approaches to race, and gender-diverse language instruction across the curriculum. Coda (2017), for example, discussed how language educators should offer students opportunities to investigate not only linguistic and cultural identities of the TL communities but also attend to more critical issues, such as the “diverse sexual identities found within the target cultures and of the language learners themselves” (2017, p. 74). He urged instructors to reflect on and discuss the “role and production of heteronormativity,” its power and knowledge structures, and its effects on our “questioning techniques and classroom practices” to foster “a more democratic and socially just environment for our students” (Coda, 2017, p. 86). García’s work (2020) provided a useful resource that includes an overview of terms, legal, and health aspects for LGBTQ+ students. His presentation also illustrated the missing representation of LGBTQ+ matters in WL classes and offered examples of teaching materials representing LGBTQ+ communities.

Curricula must reflect that German-speaking and other languages’ communities consist of more than White personae. For German, Cooper (2020) and Layne (2020) explained how instructors may adjust the literary canon by including underrepresented, non-White voices in courses taught in English and German. In her first-year seminar on *Germany and*



*the Black Diaspora*, Layne (2020), for instance, discussed poetry by May Ayim, historical texts, such as W.E.B. DuBois' (2007) autobiography, the novel *Slumberland* by Paul Beatty (2008), the musical *Passing Strange* by Mark Stewart (2009), a play by Sibbles Drury (2012) about the Herero of Namibia and Germany's colonial past, as well as "several films and autobiographies" (Layne, 2020, pp. 86, 97). The primary goal of the course was to recover "marginalized narratives, de-center Whiteness, and offer students multiple perspectives on Germany and on Black cultures" (pp. 84, 86). The reactions she gathered from students demonstrated that by integrating these materials across the curriculum, students did not perceive such texts as "some kind of required diversity component" but instead "as belonging to the canon of German literature" (Layne, 2020, p. 98).

Instructors looking for additional resources on how to embed experiences of BIPOC, LGBTQ+, and other often marginalized communities into their teaching may review the following materials: A scholarly collective of authors in Germany compiled a list of teaching strategies and methods to redesign existing instructional units and develop curricular and extra-curricular materials focusing on BIPOC and the African diaspora (*Autor\*innenKollektiv Rassismuskritischer Leitfaden* [Authors' Collective of Anti-Racist Guidelines], 2015). Tsui (2021) described opportunities to inform oneself about diverse German-speaking perspectives highlighting BIPOC, LGBTQ+, and disability rights issues from authentic primary sources via podcasts, social media, and streaming video platforms. Other scholars demonstrated how instructors of grammatically-gendered languages, such as German (Djavadghazaryans, 2020), French (Knisely, 2020), or Spanish (Di Stefano et al., 2021), could modify their classroom practices and materials to illustrate gender variety. Their articles considered the close relationship between grammatical gender and social gender and provided suggestions for syllabi, classroom methods, and lists of diverse and gender-neutral pronouns, for instance.

Inspired by the outlined curricular interventions and grounded in the previously discussed need to reconsider WL education, the CSS task force embarked on creating diverse and inclusive classroom activities and units for German courses. The next section offers a summary of how the task force developed these units.

### **The 2020/21 Creating Safe Spaces Project and Development of Resources**

The inaugural membership of the CSS task force, consisting of 24 U.S. professionals from differing German educational contexts, proceeded to develop guidelines and instructional materials in 2020/2021. During the second year of the task force (2021/2022), new and returning members produced additional materials that continued to focus on matters of diversity. Participants were selected by the AATG based on their demonstrated pedagogical commitment to diverse and inclusive teaching materials.

The present authors served as members during the first year. They recognize their positionalities in their work; one as a White male German national who immigrated to the United States to receive a Ph.D. in German and Second Language Acquisition and teach at the university level. The others are U.S.-born and raised. One is a female Asian American Ph.D. in German who teaches at a private K-12 institution, another Latino male Ph.D. in German who is a retired teacher educator and a teacher of both German and Spanish. The fourth author—a White male—teaches German at a public middle school, having earned a B.A. in German and an M.Sc. in Learning Design and Technology. They acknowledge that in specific instances during their respective careers, the teaching of German, often in regions with German heritage, is clearly related to settler colonialism and the forced expulsion of Indigenous Peoples.

The 2020/2021 task force discussed the scope and rationale of the project and formed eight subgroups to devise guiding principles based on the literature previously presented, review existing resources from the *German is for Everybody (Alle Lernen Deutsch)* project (American Association of Teachers of German, 1989-2010), and develop curricular materials for novice, intermediate, and advanced language learners. The units cover the following titles: (1) Guidelines and Resources; (2) Living, Traveling, Racism (*Wohnen, Reisen, Rassismus*); (3) Food (*Essen*); (4) Poems, Music, and Short Films (*Gedichte, Musik, Kurzfilme*); (5) Introducing Oneself and Others, Profiles, Bios (*Sich und andere vorstellen, Steckbriefe, Bios*); (6) Family Structures (*Familienstrukturen*); (7) Clothing, Gender Expressions and Identities, Pronouns (*Kleider, Gender Ausdrücke und Identitäten, Pronomen*); and (8) Migration, Museums (*Mi-gration, Museen*). The instructional units developed under the previously listed titles were added to AATG's GETMAPP at <https://bit.ly/AATG-GETMAPP-SafeSpaces>.

The task force devised “10 Guiding Principles” (listed below) as well as “10 Common Pitfalls to Avoid When Changing Curriculum.” Both lists (uploaded under the GETMAPP entry [1] Guidelines and Resources) should first be read by interested users, in order that the instructors understand the context of how to use the materials in a way that furthers the users’ own goals to create inclusive and equitable curricula. The “10 Guiding Principles” are

1. All students (including LGBTQ+ and BIPOC students) should see themselves reflected in classroom materials. This representation goes beyond simply diversifying materials and centers the voices and perspectives of traditionally marginalized and excluded students.
2. Instructors should select texts written by members of underrepresented and historically marginalized communities (‘own voices’ principle).
3. Instructors should include materials that represent LGBTQ+ and BIPOC communities in positive, normalized ways—emphasizing agency and resistance, not just stories of oppression.
4. Representation should begin from day #1 and inclusive materials should be a part of all instructional units, not added on in stand-alone units, i.e., on diversity in Germany.
5. Reflect on the difference between comfortable discussions and safe ones: If you are avoiding conflict, think about which students you are protecting, and which students are being harmed.
6. Language matters. Instructors need to educate themselves on appropriate terminology and, when necessary, practice to gain comfort with unfamiliar terms.
7. Instructors can model for students what it means to do critical work, pointing out limits of texts and having students also recognize a text’s shortfalls.
8. Instructors should be conscious of the way Whiteness has shaped textbooks.
9. Historical accounts should include counter-histories and voices from underrepresented groups.
10. Instructors should approach this work from a place of humility and continually reflect on areas where they have room for growth, be willing to be corrected, and practice deep listening.

The units created were consequently grounded in these principles, as well as in the NCSSFL-ACTFL Can-Do Statements for Intercultural Communication (2017) and the World-Readiness Standards for Learning Languages (2015). The developed materials contribute to discussions about “methods that foster inclusivity rather than perpetuate stigmas and stereotypes” in WL education (Merritt, 2020, p. 178). They should not be construed as a simple solution to systemic injustices and inequalities.

## Highlighted Materials and Practical Applications

The authors present selected materials from three topics—all commonly covered at the beginner and intermediate levels—as examples of CSS task force contributions: (1) introducing oneself and others, (2) family structures, and (3) living. While the project provides materials for various topics and language proficiency levels, the authors selected these topics as they emphasize themes and activities for novice and intermediate learners who build the foundation for many language programs and comprise most students. These instructional units, therefore, are broadly applicable across different WL contexts. More resources and detailed lesson plans with instructions can be found on GETMAPP.

### (1) Introducing Oneself and Others

As a means of providing comprehensible, accurate, and authentic biographical information, one CSS workgroup created two resources: first, a master spreadsheet with over 100 well-known contemporaries from Germany, Austria, and Switzerland and second, virtual profiles (*Steckbriefe*) of selected figures drawn from the master list. The spreadsheet features celebrities from various contexts, such as design, film, journalism, media, music, politics and activism, sports, theater, visual arts, and writing. Each entry includes the individual's full name, links to reference materials, and brief notes detailing why that person was added to the database. The personalities are listed by profession and country. The list is not intended to be definitive; rather, it serves as a springboard for educators wishing to insert contemporary and inclusive German-speaking celebrities into their own materials. The downloadable and editable nature of the Excel spreadsheet encourages teachers to continue adding other important people to the database. In so doing, educators can maintain and regularly update a customized list of diverse figures that best fits their needs and those of their students.

As mentioned above, the CSS workgroup also developed virtual profiles of 45 figures listed in the master spreadsheet. Each profile included approximately five to seven pieces of information, such as name, birthdate or year, birthplace or place of residence, language(s), hobbies, profession, or achievements. While the group strove to include a uniform set of information across profiles, the authors of this unit only included information which could be fact-checked by cross-referencing multiple sources for each figure. Thus, the information varies slightly from one individual to the next. For all profiles, however, the biographical information was placed on the right of the profile card with a color photograph of the person on the left. Figures 1 and 2 illustrate the profile card concept, showing the first and last profiles in the set, which is ordered alphabetically by last name. The first profile card features Fatih Akin, a Turkish German filmmaker; the last represents Raffa Zollo, a transgender Swiss German YouTube content creator.



Name	Fatih Akin
Geburtsdag	25. August 1973
Geburtsort	Hamburg, Deutschland
Sprachen	Deutsch, Türkisch, Englisch
Beruf	Filmregisseur
Bekannt für:	Im Juli, Seul Kitchen: Aus dem Nichts (In the Fade), Golden Globe 2018 für besten fremdsprachigen Film



Name	Raffa Zollo
Geburtsdag	8. September 1992
Geburtsort	Poschiamo, Schweiz
Wohnort	Zürich, Schweiz
Sprachen	Deutsch, Italienisch, Englisch
Beruf	YouTuberin, Moderatorin, Komikerin, Geschäftsfrau
Bekannt für:	Raffas Plastic Life

Figures 1 and 2: Fatih Akin Profile (1) and Raffa Zollo Profile (2).

The subjects in the profiles were chosen to reflect a variety of professional contexts and to highlight biographies of present-day German-speaking BIPOC with, but not limited to

those with African, Asian, Central Asian, North African, Middle Eastern, South American, and South Asian heritage, members of the LGBTQ+ community, and people with disabilities of all different ages and interests. They expose learners to cultural, ethnic, and disability diversity in German-speaking regions from their earliest language studies. They also assist instructors who would like to redevelop a common activity of assigning ‘alter egos’ to their students because the profiles introduce learners to diverse and non-European naming conventions found in modern-day German-speaking areas (Criser & Knott, 2019). As with the editable nature of the spreadsheet, the included biographies serve as a template for the creation of additional profiles, as befitting the needs and interests of the instructor and students.

The materials come with suggested instructions, sample prompts, and simple dialogues demonstrating how instructors can employ the profiles across a variety of language learning levels, as illustrated by the examples that follow.

### **#1: The Use of the Celebrity Profiles**

Novice-level learners can use the profiles to practice formulating and answering basic questions, which corresponds with the three modes of communication (The National Standards Collaborative Board, 2015). Students utilize the portraits to create dialogues and practice formal address in written and spoken modes. Other recommended communicative activities include implementing the profiles to introduce professions and practicing numbers in various formats, including age, calendar dates, and years. Lastly, two biographies placed side-by-side aid in the introduction of comparative and superlative forms. For example, one could compare two individuals in the same profession and conclude that one is older or younger than the other.

At the intermediate and advanced levels, these same profiles are a starting point for additional research about the depicted people and their contributions. Class members may introduce a personality to their peers in an oral presentation. This could be done as a quick formative assessment to check students’ understanding of the presented information and their ability to rephrase the information in sentence-level constructions. After additional research during class time or outside of class, students might write brief letters to a featured person using the formal voice, including formulating longer, more complex, and indirect questions in the formal voice, and elaborating on their personal interests and how those interests might connect them to the letter recipient. Alternatively, teachers may instruct students to write more detailed biographies, for example, by incorporating complex grammatical structures such as relative clauses or passive voice.

Such activities are directly related to the spirit of the World-Readiness Standards—the nature of language and the broadening of language learning into content-related knowledge (National Council of State Supervisors for Languages (NCSSFL) & ACTFL, 2017; The National Standards Collaborative Board, 2015). Using Fatih Akin and Rafa Zollo (Figures 1 and 2) as examples, students gain additional insights into Film Studies by examining how Akin presents a nuanced and intersectional notion of German identity through cinematography and music in his work (Lee, 2011). Students may also deepen their understanding of gender norms by investigating how Zollo crafts her own narrative as a transgender woman across multiple media formats (Djavadghazaryans, 2020; Omercajic & Martino, 2020).

As extension, CSS members also devised teaching materials that focus on stories, experiences, and initiatives of refugees living in Germany, as presented in the next section.

### **#2: The Use of Success Stories by Globally Displaced People**

The success stories by people featured on a campaign by Berlin’s Commissioner for Engagement, Promotion of Democracy, and International Relations (Bevollmächtigte des

Landes Berlin, 2017), *Typically German. The #farbenbekennen [#recognize color/show your colors] campaign* (*Typisch deutsch. Die #farbenbekennen-Kampagne*), form the basis for instructional activities that go beyond people in the public sphere. The #farbenbekennen campaign and award celebrate the achievements of globally displaced persons and their commitment to their new communities in Berlin.

The workgroup's materials focus on critical engagement and self-reflection regarding the everyday achievements of immigrant communities. The assignments emphasize the many important contributions of BIPOC people—regardless of celebrity status—in present-day Germany. In one activity, students may create new profile cards using the templates to summarize information about the people featured on the #farbenbekennen website. Learners could also ask additional questions for featured individuals or develop short reflections, either in the TL or English, based on the success stories. Rothe (2023), for instance, demonstrated how analyzing the featured stories increased learners' awareness of ethnic diversity among German speakers. Students found it meaningful to gain insights into the lives of displaced persons and appreciated learning about inclusionary topics that were not covered by their textbook. Rothe's findings speak to the importance of extending traditional content to contemporary topics about TL communities.

Additionally, students could write short pieces in the subjunctive mood, and imagine themselves in situations similar to those in which the interviewees would find themselves immediately upon their arrival in Berlin (Rothe, 2023). For example, a student could write about the sights and sounds they might encounter after stepping off a train at the central station, or the struggle to communicate with others in a new language. A student could also write about homesickness or the excitement and wonder of trying a new food item. These activities can be concluded with students' reflections that explore connections to and comparisons with their own lives (Drewelow, 2013; Fang & Yingqin, 2017).

As demonstrated, the *Introducing Oneself and Others* unit emphasizes the diversity of contemporary German-speaking individuals and offers assignments that allow learners to consider profiles and biographies in multiple contexts. Similarly, the following sections introduce activities that represent various family constellations in present-day German-speaking regions.

## (2) Family Structures

Many reasons, among them political and sales considerations, have resulted in WL textbooks that fall short in portraying diverse family configurations commonly found in the United States and the German-speaking world (Ilett, 2009). From pedagogical and emotional growth perspectives, all learners must see their family's existence reflected in curricular materials (Anya, 2020; Cahnmann-Taylor & Coda, 2018). Depicting only a stereotypical or conventional family circle is inappropriate for an avowedly democratic, pluralistic society. *Family Structures (Familienstrukturen)* is an inclusive thematic unit that highlights the lives of families beyond heteronormative conventions.

For instructors wanting to help students understand family diversity, the unit contains two essential features. First, because the reconceptualization of the term "family" is necessarily broad and thus requires familiarity with a new lexicon, this unit offers authentic vocabulary describing contemporary life and language usage. Single-parent families (*Einelternfamilien*), Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans or Intersex (*lesbisch, schwul, bisexuell, trans- oder intergeschlechtlich*), or rainbow families (*Regenbogenfamilien*) are among the 60+ terms included for the teacher to supplement the customary terms, such as mother, father, children (*Mutter, Vater, Kinder*), learned in novice-level classes. The expectation is not for students to learn all these terms. Instead, the instructor should introduce these words and phrases to raise cultural and linguistic awareness for these



concepts. Additionally, some students may choose the phrases to reflect the realities of their own or fictional families. The subsequent sections ## 1, 2, and 3 describe possible teaching strategies and classroom activities of how teachers can introduce and utilize the new vocabulary.

The second component of this unit reaffirms the fact that theme-relevant pictorial resources are mandatory features when listening comprehension strategies and communicative activities are the foremost modes of instructional delivery. Finding such images for classroom display can be time-consuming for the instructor. Consequently, the authors of *Family Structures* created two uncaptioned posters—each includes a duplicate with captions—that depict diverse family types and can be used for other languages (Figures 3 and 4). These posters may serve as components of a classroom picture wall that language teachers have long employed in their praxis. Both poster formats are useful for multiple instructional activities at different levels, as explained below.



**Figures 3 and 4: Instructional posters of the Family Structures unit with (3) and without vocabulary (4).**

The authors acknowledge that the concepts presented in the posters cannot represent the full spectrum of human experiences and may not be mutually exclusive or entirely conceptually discrete. A nuclear family, for instance, can also be a rainbow family. Teachers should therefore remind their students of the fluidity of the terminology as well as of the fact that the posters' terms and illustrations serve as examples to foster learners' sensibility to the varieties of family structures that exist and possible vocabulary for them.

Promoting language achievement in all communicative modes is provided by the 30+ exercises designed for this family unit. They provide a starting point for instructors to devise additional lesson scenarios that align with relevant topics and structure-oriented language objectives (modal auxiliary usage, tense differentiations, adjective ending work, and word order). The posters can serve as a visual and presentational avenue for vocabulary introduction, comprehension, review, and extended conversational gambits, as described in the following three sample activities.

**#1: Introduction of New Vocabulary through Listening Comprehension**

To begin the process of putting new vocabulary into deeper, long-term storage, the instructor should rely on the uncaptioned posters and auditory learning strategies. Prior research has shown that the use of listening comprehension activities in connection with caption-free images enforces active, comprehended usage of vocabulary and limits errors

grounded in first-language interference (García, 2014; García et al., 1985; Winitz & Reeds, 1975, 2019). At this first stage of vocabulary introduction, the instructor also intentionally delays speaking and reading related to the new terms to avoid the acquisition of too many disparate linguistic items simultaneously (Nord, 1981; Postovsky, 1981; Winitz, 2020). For short-term memory purposes, the teacher should not introduce more than five to nine new unambiguous terms during the entire activity (Miller, 1956), which may last around 10 minutes (García, 1981).

During the first part of this listening comprehension exercise, the teacher displays the uncaptioned posters on a permanent picture wall in the classroom or via a projector. The visual stimuli (the photos) receive sustained student attention through the teacher's purposeful quick and random repetition of vocabulary items, such as rainbow family (*Regenbogenfamilie*), while simultaneously pointing at the corresponding image on the poster. The instructor repeats this process multiple times for each new item. Next, the instructor consciously employs a slightly longer recasting of the featured lexical items to be acquired. An example may be, "Stefanie has two mothers—a rainbow family" (*Stefanie hat 2 Mütter—eine Regenbogenfamilie*). Again, the teacher produces multiple sentences related to the new vocabulary.

Concentrating on the images and their interior contents (colors, number of individuals, objects) and the intentional delay of speaking and reading assists students' learning of new vocabulary (Miller, 1956; Winitz, 1981). For the learner, the instructional routine of repetitiveness and guided expansion is the classroom equivalent of both the 'silent period' during first-language acquisition and 'verbal parentese'—the term child development specialists use for defining what was traditionally called 'baby talk' (Nord, 1981; Winitz, 2020). Such auditory parenting for students by the instructor highlights beginner-level appropriate language formulations—simplifications, truncated sentences, and sound repetitions. Beginning students who learn vocabulary through intensive listening exercises as described here evade the typical mispronunciation errors of English-speaking German learners (Nord, 1981; Postovsky, 1981; Winitz, 1981). Examples in the family semantic field include, father (*Vater*), same-sex families (*gleichgeschlechtliche Familien*), or foster family (*Pflegefamilie*). Specifically, the f/v, ie/ei, or pfl graphic representations can lead to linguistic overload and first-language interference.

At the end of this listening comprehension exercise, the image-meaning combinations of the newly introduced vocabulary have moved into learners' intermediate-range memory (García, 2014; Winitz, 2020). During the next phase, the instructor will ask simple questions to which the students respond.

## #2: Questions and Answers

Asking a rapid series of questions (beginning with forced-choice queries), the instructor directs learners' attention to the posters' images. Simple questions, such as "Where is the grandma in the garden?" (*Wo im Garten ist die Oma?*) or "Where is the family sitting?" (*Wo sitzt die Familie?*), are asked with conscious disregard of any pre-formulated pattern either in picture or interrogative choice. Students neither discern which of the family photos is the next subject of inquiry nor predict which interrogative will next be heard.

At the novice level, this interpretive exercise does not initiate much creativity in learner rejoinders. It does however develop their listening and beginning speaking skills. Asking random questions quickly voids the practice of students presuming that only where-questions (*Wo-Fragen*) are heard before a string of what-interrogatives (*Was-Fragen*) begin, thereupon followed by who-questions (*Wer-Fragen*), and then another query. Students' attention to the questions as they relate to individuals, places, and objects in the photos assists



in their overcoming mistaking, for example, *wer* for “where” and *wo* for “who.” Learners will have heard these interrogatives over 75 times in 2-3 sessions. They will have thus embedded the questions in long-term storage before the first in-print appearance (Reeds et al., 1977).

Student spontaneity is improved through routine. The speed, variety, length of utterance, and frequency of asking questions is critical, because language learning is fundamentally nonlinear (Dörnyei, 2009; García, 1981; Hohenberger & Pelzer-Karpf, 2009; Winitz, 1981, 2020; Winitz & Reeds, 1975, 2019). Automatic recognition of the photos’ content increases the ease or fluidity of student response. That facility subsequently aids in improving speaking skills. Instructors’ questions are consciously expanded to contain numerical or other clues. Colors, time of day, the number of people in the photo, their proximity to one another, clothing, a body part all are utilized in random—nonlinear—fashion. All levels can pose similar questions (as above noted), create improvisational dialogues, narrate a past event concerning a photo, and write questions about an image. Sample questions from the unit illustrate this:

What kind of blouse is the woman in the second picture wearing? A blue blouse?

A green one?

Is the family in the eighth photo in the living room? In the garden?

How many children are there in the patchwork family?

In which picture are there no children? Is it in the picture above or in the picture below?

*Was für eine Bluse hat die Dame im zweiten Bild an? Eine blaue Bluse? Eine Grüne?*

*Ist die Familie im 8. Foto im Wohnzimmer? Im Garten?*

*Wie viele Kinder gibt es in der Patchworkfamilie?*

*In welchem Bild gibt es keine Kinder? Ist das Bild oben oder unten?*

Toward the end of this exercise, the instructor can introduce the written representations of the introduced vocabulary. Students may then use the terms to describe their own families or a group of self-selected family members, as described below.

### #3: My Self-Selected Family

In this activity, students create their own self-selected family (*Wahlfamilie*), itself a variation of a dream family. Using four to five famous individuals, for instance from the list of profiles described earlier, students create family portraits using pictures from the profiles or the Internet. Students may take notes, rehearse, and give a brief presentation to a partner, the instructor, or the class—or make a podcast as a homework assignment. Classmates may ask questions. The difficulty of the presentation depends upon the students’ language abilities, as this example suggests:

My chosen family is a family of singers. We are four singers. Justin (Bieber) is 26 years old. He was born in Canada. He sings okay, but Clara Luzia sings best of all! She is from Austria and sings wonderful songs. She was born in Lower Austria and has a wife, Catharina Priemer-Humpel. Catharina is the drummer for the band “Clara Luzia.” Ammar114 is a rapper and Muslim. He is from Frankfurt, but he was born in Ethiopia. He often raps about Islam. And me? My name is [students’ inserted self-representation]....

*Meine Wahlfamilie ist eine Sängerfamilie. Wir sind vier Sänger\*innen. Justin (Bieber) ist 26 Jahre alt. Er ist in Kanada geboren. Er singt okay, aber Clara Luzia singt am besten! Sie kommt aus Österreich und singt wunderbare Songs. Sie ist in Niederösterreich geboren und hat eine Ehefrau, Catharina Priemer-Humpel. Catharina ist Schlagzeugin*

*der Band „Clara Luzia.“ Ammar114 ist ein Rapper und Muslim. Er kommt aus Frankfurt, aber er ist in Äthiopien geboren. Er rappt oft über Islam. Und ich? Ich heiße [Selbstrepräsentation Studierende]....*

Variations on the topic of diverse families with children are encouraged. Class members, for reasons of cultural comparison, could represent same-sex families from different areas (Munich, Klagenfurt, Bremen, etc.), multiethnic, and/or biracial families (e.g., Black German, Italian German, Turkish German, Vietnamese German). Rubrics for the activity can be generated in reference to the ACTFL Performance Descriptors (2015): communicative strategies, vocabulary usage, language control, and cultural awareness.

In summary, the above examples from the *Family Structures* unit demonstrate more than the methodological importance of listening comprehension strategies. They are active exercises that promote effective language acquisition. In this instance, the activities described also affirm German-speaking regions as diverse and dynamic. The materials serve as a gateway to changing perceptions of the varieties of human experience: where and how people live, the challenges they face, and how to situate historical and present-day questions of race and identity. The next section *Living* explores these issues.

### (1) Living

The concepts of home, residency, and belonging intersect with issues of race, identity, and discrimination. By addressing how racism and its consequences for marginalized individuals manifest themselves in topics like finding an apartment, instructors can foster a more transparent understanding of minority communities (Merritt, 2020). With primary materials drawn from Austria and Germany, CSS members created a thematic progression over five modules, each focusing on a distinct topic and following the World-Readiness Standards (The National Standards Collaborative Board, 2015). The initial module introduces students to the topic of *Living (Wohnen)*. The second module investigates recent name changes to streets in German cities. The third module focuses on discrimination as it manifests itself in housing searches. The fourth explores the German concept of homeland and the feelings associated with one's sense of home. The final module discusses themes of identity and belonging. In the following sections, the authors provide more details about the respective module's materials and activities.

#### #1: An Introduction to the Topic of Living

The initial module introduces novice and intermediate learners to the topic of *Living* by briefly visiting the unit *Family Structures*. The teacher assists students in learning about or reviewing family models and corresponding vocabulary reflecting diverse lived experiences. After determining the diversity of family constellations, this module then leads into an examination of the concept of a larger societal family. Specifically, students investigate concepts such as neighborliness, community support, and feeling at home where you live, for example, by joining sports groups, and how these matters may intersect with racism.

For one activity, students examine an incident surrounding German national soccer player Jerome Boateng. A deputy chair of Germany's right-wing populist party *Alternative for Germany (Alternative für Deutschland)* had stated that Boateng—the son of a Ghanaian father and a German mother—remained alien, and people would not want “someone like Boateng as their neighbor” (TJ/SMS, 2016). The materials include short, primary source materials in German consisting of tweets and photos with brief captions and clearly visible handmade posters; a longer English-language news article providing additional context for the tweets and photos; and a guided analysis of the materials written in German. The guided analysis also provides notes to the instructor and possible student responses in English, and

thus can be employed in either the TL or in English, depending on the students' proficiency level. The inclusion and analysis of this case and the ensuing reaction in Germany introduces students to various forms of authentic written discourse in the TL, while simultaneously addressing underlying institutional and systemic forms of racism. The lesson materials also show how everyday online activities such as tweeting and using hashtags including #boatengsnachbar (Boateng's neighbor) can be undertaken as an effective way to challenge racism on an individual level (Kishimoto, 2018).

The first module in the progression expands the concept of living to include the idea of inhabiting one's skin. This is done by analyzing the short poem *Apartment-Viewing Appointment* (*Wohnungsbesichtigung*) by contemporary Black German poet and activist Stefanie-Lahya Aukongo (2018). Regrettably, Black German contributions to German literature and culture have often been neglected in German curricula, despite their long presence in Germany (Schenker & Munro, 2016). The activity provides textual analysis, comprehension questions, and instructions for readers to create their own poem, and demonstrates how instructors can introduce concepts of race and belonging in the German classroom through focusing on marginalized narratives, decentering Whiteness, and offering various perspectives on Germany and Black cultures (Layne, 2020).

## #2: Street Name Changes

The second module in *Living* offers a complete lesson plan regarding recent name changes to streets in German cities, such as the newly renamed Anton-Wilhelm-Amo-Street in Berlin. This lesson plan, which spans seven contact hours, is suitable for intermediate-level learners. It contains resources on the historical context of the former street names, implications and controversies surrounding their renaming, and contributions of Black Germans for whom the streets have been renamed, including philosopher Anton Wilhelm Amo (1703-1759) and poet May Ayim (1960-1996). As Kishimoto (2018) argues, it is necessary to ensure that course content is relevant and applicable to students' everyday experiences, and thereby bolster student engagement with course materials. Thus, learners are prompted to think of corresponding issues about naming conventions in their own communities, such as the recent national attention given to the renaming of the Washington Football Team from their former name (retired in July 2020) to their current name, the Washington Commanders (announced in February 2022).

Additional teaching strategies include providing questions for partner and small group discussions for the following topics: incidents of local, national, or international name changes, and a summary of important dates and events in Germany's colonialist history—a framework that can be adapted to investigate the colonialist and imperialist past of any country or region in the context of the WL classroom. Additionally, this module provides instructions and materials for proposing a simulated street or organizational name change. The resources include prompts for written and spoken reflections, as well as role plays which support and oppose name changes based on students' local, regional, or national surroundings, for example, high school mascots or university buildings.

## #3: Housing Searches

The third module focuses on discrimination as it manifests itself in housing searches. Most resources for this module are tailored toward intermediate to advanced-level language learners. The lesson materials (see Appendix) include instructions and suggestions for presentational and interpersonal tasks such as crafting persuasive essays and conducting interviews with landlords or potential housemates. Interpretive materials in this module span a variety of primary sources, such as articles, videos, advertisements, and radio broadcasts.

In both *Street Name Changes* and *Housing Searches*, students in U.S. institutions may be more willing to engage critically with their own culture after examining the historical roots of racism and the contemporary treatment of minorities in the German context. By focusing first on issues of discrimination as they manifest in a region outside their own, students may feel more emboldened to highlight similarities and differences in local or national incidents (Layne, 2020). Using the other culture as the primary focal point, classroom members might avoid expressing what could otherwise be viewed as overt personal or political opinions and discussions of topics which may not be welcome in all classrooms, especially in K-12 settings. The transposition of issues such as inequality into contemporary North American contexts may also encourage learners to enact social change in their own communities (Cooper, 2020).

#### **#4: A Sense of Home**

The fourth module explores the German concept of homeland and the feelings associated with one's sense of home (*Heimat*) as experienced by German-speaking BIPOC in Austria and Germany. The resources in this module are for older secondary or collegiate students at the advanced level. The instructional materials are based on two authentic sources: an excerpt from an autobiographical account by Stefanie-Lahya Aukongo (2014) and an interview with Clara Akinyosoye (2014), a Black Austrian journalist and founder of *fresh*, the first Black Austrian lifestyle magazine for young people. The activities examine how *Heimat* and its nuances have been experienced by Black German speakers in primarily White spaces. These texts contribute to the "multiplicity of ... (Black) German experience" (Layne, 2020, p. 98) and demonstrate the shifting nature of self-identity in conjunction with race, culture, and national identity.

#### **#5: Identity and Belonging**

The final module addresses themes of identity and belonging through the perspective of Black German women. The resources of this unit are suitable for novice and intermediate learners. Through a series of guided readings and comparisons, students develop and strengthen their critical interpretive reading skills while becoming more aware of power dynamics involved in knowledge inclusion and omission.

The activities are based on two sources: the posthumously published 1997 poem *Information (Auskunft)* by May Ayim and a biographical excerpt written by Peter Hilliges about Stefanie-Lahya Aukongo in her aforementioned autobiography (2014), titled *Kalunga's Child (Kalungas Kind)*. Ayim's poem redefines the term *Heimat* in temporal, linguistic, and spatial contexts. Many of her poems are well-suited for introductory German classes due to their topics (e.g., identity), their brevity, and incorporation of repetition as a characteristic (Schenker & Munro, 2016). The second source, the biographical excerpt written by Hilliges about Aukongo, illustrates issues of structural exclusion when writing about Individuals of Color, especially when composed by non-BIPOC writers. Considered from a broader anti-racist approach to teaching, this text allows readers to examine power relations in knowledge production and to consider why certain stories and experiences have been excluded from official accounts (Kishimoto, 2018).

*Living* and the other two thematic areas, *Introducing Oneself and Others* and *Family Structures*, are illustrative of materials that instructors can utilize to teach language and the diversity that exists in the national and regional culture(s) under study. The authors of this article encourage educators to explore the complete set of resources available on the GET-MAPP site for inspiration and expansion into German and other WLs. The following section outlines experiences from implementing some of the resources described previously.

### Classroom Experience: The Use of Diverse Celebrity Profiles

One of the article's authors utilized the profiles (*Steckbriefe*) in an in-person intermediate German class with high school sophomores. The objective of the assignment was to give learners additional practice in formal writing while connecting students' interests with those of the diverse array of German-speaking individuals in related fields. The assignment was grounded in language-learning motivation research. Scholars have shown that a principal motivating factor for language students to achieve higher proficiency is the desire to connect with members of the TL community who mirror their ideal, projected TL self, and their previous or present ethno-racial persona (Anya, 2011; Magnan et al., 2014).

For the assignment, students wrote a formal letter and requested a fictional summer internship with a renowned German-speaking person. The task was structured as an unsolicited cover letter divided into three parts: (1) a brief autobiographical introduction; (2) a main portion comprised of sentences on the recipient's notable achievements, reasons for why the addressee should choose the respective student for an internship, and the letter writer's potential internship duties; (3) followed by a formulaic closing paragraph. The length of the text was approximately twenty complex sentences. Students received in-class time to conduct research and draft their letters in fifteen to twenty-minute periods over approximately five class days. The instructor introduced the *Steckbriefe* to students as examples of individuals they could contact. Students were certainly free to write to any living or deceased German-speaking individual of their choice. The teacher also provided phrases and formulations for formal letter-writing conventions in German.

Many students selected individuals from the *Steckbriefe* based on a close alignment of personal affinities, as demonstrated by the content of their letters. For instance, one student wrote to wheelchair athlete Manuela Schär. She cited Schär's record-breaking achievements in marathons, connecting those accomplishments with her and her father's shared interest in competitive long-distance running. Another student wrote a letter to model Tamy Glauser, referencing Glauser's many photo shoots as a gender-non-conforming model. The student cited her own love of art and photography as reasons for being interested in working with Glauser in a proposed internship. Another student, an avid watcher of the German streaming series *Pressure (Druck)* and an aspiring director themselves, wrote to Faraz Shariat, who had directed some of the episodes. The student explained how some of their recent personal experiences had corresponded closely to those of a character in the series, and how watching the series had helped the student feel less alone.

All learners wrote meaningful letters that connected the personal facets of students' own lives with those of the famous individuals they pretended to contact. The detailed nature of the letters also demonstrated the extent of research the students had conducted independently regarding their letter recipients and highlighted learners' formal written interpersonal skills. Students at the intermediate-advanced level utilized rich vocabulary and complex grammatical constructions including transitional words and phrases, relative clauses, the subjunctive case, and infinitive clauses. Learners at the intermediate-low to intermediate-mid levels also met the expectations for written content at these levels (The National Standards Collaborative Board, 2015). Moreover, the letter-writing project acknowledged the diversity within the classroom and in the contemporary German-speaking world.

Activities such as this allowed students to discover more diversity in contemporary German speakers and to connect their own present and future selves to a German-speaking community. During informal oral reflections with the instructor, the students indicated that such activities maintained, sometimes even strengthened, their motivation to continue studying German. Although it cannot be directly linked to the previously described assign-

ment, it is worth mentioning that two thirds of the class participants went on to elect an optional advanced German course during their junior year.

### **Final Considerations**

Learners benefit from access to the variety of thoughts and experiences that language studies offer. They need not only rely on the language and cultural representations presented in textbooks, possibly outdated curricula, or traditional community-sponsored events. By presenting research on diversity, equity, and inclusion in language programming in the United States for different WLs such as German and providing sample teaching materials created by the authors of this report, the goal of creating a broader horizon for language students is attainable.

Today's students of German, or any other WL for that matter, must learn by dint both of their instructors' preparation and the curricular materials employed that they are learners of language varieties and cultures, plural. This formulation—not only for German Studies—explicitly denotes social, cultural, and linguistic pluralism within one language community, one whose meaning connotes something greater than the term 'German' or 'Spanish.' Otherwise, they will be unable to reconcile their classroom learning about German-speaking areas and other language communities with the realities they encounter in many of those regions. Furthermore, they will be unable to reflect on biases they encounter locally or they themselves may have.

Two arguments for reconceptualizing our professional endeavors have been presented in these pages. First, the authors reject the notion that German or other language programs and their content—and thereby the perceived target culture—continue to be manipulated into a monochromatic environment that is White, heteronormative, cisgendered, and abled. It is an ethical responsibility of WL educators to develop programs that create and disseminate instructional materials exploring the topic of diversity. The instructional units created for German by AATG's CSS task force contribute to this goal. Their compilation assists instructors of German through framing the materials as part of a larger, more complex challenge, and that is the second argument for reconceptualizing the work of the profession. It must be part of a movement liberating instruction from prejudice and bias and assisting in creating social justice and dismantling White supremacy. Therefore, the authors—grounded in their experiences from working in the inaugural CSS task force—urge WL organizations and their individual members to undertake the following initiatives:

WL organizations, such as the AATG, and institutional language programs must fund and promote seminars and workshops for educators on diversity and equity in curriculum and society (in-person and virtual) so that instructors understand the principles of creating socially just curricula and receive the tools to redevelop their classroom materials.

WL organizations must fund materials creation workshops, similar to the CSS project, by 'hard' money, and not by relying solely on time-constrained or soft-money grants.

Support for curricular change is but one component of the larger societal movement toward equity. Equity ensures visibility and affirms difference. It acknowledges moral responsibility to reflect critically on past practices to transform the future, especially now, when conscious efforts are being made to silence differences in personhood. All language organizations must actively reject legislation restricting inalienable rights. To silence the rights of one is to curtail the rights of all. Visibility of the so-called "Other," be they BI-POC, LGBTQ+, or persons with disabilities is a prerequisite for societal change, as Audre Lorde pointed out. A frequent visitor to Germany from 1984 until 1992, Lorde, a Black lesbian activist credited with the birth of the Black German women's movement, said to the



Modern Language Association in 1977, “That visibility which makes us most vulnerable is that which also is the source of our greatest strength” (2007, p. 42). In the face of attempts to silence the full range of human experiences and produce invisibility, WL organizations cannot be silent. Instead, they—and we—can lead the call to action for social justice in the classroom.

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## Appendix

### Example of an Abridged Unit Plan for *Living: Module 3 (Housing Searches)*

Theme/Topic	Housing Searches and Challenges
Anticipated Time	1-2 contact hours (50 minutes) per task model; 10-12 contact hours total
Audience	intermediate, 9-12, higher education
Description	Module 3 offers various tasks that introduce different housing arrangements for young people in Germany, asks students to consider their preferences in housing arrangements in college and as young working professionals, and then shows some of the difficulties experienced in the housing search in Germany, including scarcity, expense, and racial discrimination.
How does this resource or activity focus on diversity and inclusion of BIPOC and LGBTQ+ communities?	The materials in this unit focus primarily on the difficulties that BIPOC face on the housing market, for instance, racial discrimination against candidates with foreign-sounding names. Students reflect upon and address those difficulties from the perspective of non-German young people looking for housing in Germany through interpretive, interpersonal, and presentational means of communication.
Materials & Prompts	Materials: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>newspaper articles, videos, audio reports, open letters, statistical research, survey results</li> </ul> Detailed prompts and lesson breakdowns: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="https://docs.google.com/document/d/1yRGocaOxinPnCCQ0jED29LJzS3KhoceTBmpt7e0Chr4E/edit">https://docs.google.com/document/d/1yRGocaOxinPnCCQ0jED29LJzS3KhoceTBmpt7e0Chr4E/edit</a></li> </ul>
Targeted Textual Features	Vocabulary: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>family and society: housing-specific terminology and societal issues, particularly related to discrimination and bias</li> </ul> Grammar: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>paragraph-level discourse, narration in past, present and future indicative tenses, subjunctive mood, formal writing conventions.</li> </ul>
Learning Objectives/ World-Readiness Standards	Communication: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1.1, 1.2, 1.3 (students will be able to speak about their own preferences for living accommodations as university students and young professionals while primarily using the TL)</li> </ul> Cultures: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2.1, 2.2 (understand the concept of a <i>Wohngemeinschaft/WG</i> [shared apartment/living community] and the process of searching for and applying for a WG-room)</li> </ul> Connections: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3.1, 3.2 (students will be able to write simulated applications for housing in Germany and write advertisements for rooms to rent)</li> </ul> Comparisons: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4.2 (students will be able to make comparisons between the perspectives of young people and their experiences in Germany and their own communities)</li> </ul> Communities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5.1 (students will be able to search and apply for housing in Germany, and recognize the factors that go into the application and selection process of a living arrangement in Germany, including those that are inside and outside of one's control)</li> </ul>

<p>Communicative Modes &amp; Summary of Activities</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Interpretive Mode:</p> <p>Task Model I:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>introduces and discusses a number of different living situations available to students, including the perspective of a German Student of Color</li> </ul> <p>Task Model II:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>analyzes ads for different WGs, including inclusive WGs for people with disabilities, LGBTQ+ friendly WGs, WGs established by people with roots outside of Germany, WGs geared toward non-Germans</li> </ul> <p>Task Model III:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>investigates difficulties for finding housing in Germany, for students as well as for foreigners (a young professional from Spain) staying in Germany</li> </ul> <p>Task Model IV:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>works with a video documentary examining racism in the housing market, especially against those with Turkish- or Arabic-sounding names and BIPOC more generally with links to the research and statistical results from which the reportage cites</li> </ul> <p>Task Model V:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>reviews reactions from politicians and other leaders regarding the results of discrimination in the housing market and how to address the issue</li> </ul>
	<p style="text-align: center;">Interpersonal Mode:</p> <p>Email:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>asks students to write an email application for housing from the perspective of a non-German outsider after considering the difficulties for people with non-German names to find housing</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;">Presentational</p> <p>Cultural Presentation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>students summarize and present difficulties in the housing market</li> </ul> <p>Essay:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>students argue for or against the idea of anonymous applications in the housing search</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;">Summative Options</p> <p>Option 1:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>students reflect on what they learned regarding discrimination and other difficulties on the housing market in a seminar, discussion, or reflection paper</li> </ul> <p>Option 2:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>students write a WG ad from the perspective of a non-German exchange student with a room to rent. Students consider the difficulties for non-Germans and those with foreign-sounding last names to find an apartment in Germany and write an ad in a way that is explicit in being inclusive and welcoming to all potential WG candidates.</li> </ul>

**Lucian Rothe** (Ph.D., U. of Wisconsin—Madison) is an assistant professor of German at the University of Louisville. His scholarship explores learners' stereotypical perceptions of teachers and native speakers and strategies to make the study of German a more diverse, inclusive, and socially just teaching, research, and learning endeavor. He has published articles in *Die Unterrichtspraxis/Teaching German*, the *Journal of Language, Identity & Education*, and *NECTFL Review*. He has taught in Germany and the United States and worked as mentor for world-language teaching assistants. He currently serves as book and software review editor of *Die Unterrichtspraxis/Teaching German*.

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In this spring edition, Beth Wassell and Julia Koch's article, *DEI in World Language Education: Are We Really Committed to Advocacy and Action?* discusses areas of inequity in world language programs and classrooms that are systemic and widespread. They then present specific actions steps that we, as world language educators, can take to dismantle these inequities and advocate for *all* learners to have access to and participate successfully in high quality world language programming.

Timothy Eagan's article, *Unlocking Student Success: The Power of Success Criteria, Relationships, and Clarity*, examines the impact that clear expectations, careful instructional planning, and warm and supportive student-teacher relationships can have on learner outcomes in a world language classroom. By asking ourselves three key questions, we can design learning that embeds success criteria and makes learning expectations clear to all learners.

## NECTFL *Review* 90

Ryan Casey's article, *Body/Language: Incorporating Movement and Dance Into World Language Classes*, presents a continuum for building a world language classroom that integrates movement and dance and aligns the standards of both the World-Readiness Standards for Learning Languages and the National Core Arts Standards. This continuum includes numerous specific examples and draws from the author's own experience as a professional dancer and Spanish teacher.

Each article in **The Language Classroom** undergoes a double-blind review process, and we are indebted to the reviewers of the above articles for their careful consideration and detailed feedback, an invaluable service to the authors and to the NECTFL *Review*.

We hope you enjoy the articles in **The Language Classroom**!

Happy reading!

*Catherine Ritz*

*Editor, The Language Classroom*



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Our sincere gratitude to the following individuals who have agreed to serve as reviewers of manuscripts submitted for publication in the NECTFL *Review*. We cannot fulfill our mission without them!

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# DEI in World Language Education: Are We Really Committed to Advocacy *and* Action?

Beth Wassell, *Rowan University (NJ)*

Julia Koch, *Bernards Township Schools (NJ)*

## ABSTRACT

The terms diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice have become ubiquitous in schools, institutions, and professional organizations. Yet the extent to which the ideals behind these words are realities in today's world language classrooms is less clear. Are our world language classrooms equitable and accessible to diverse learners, particularly given the new social, emotional, and academic needs of students in our post-pandemic society? In this article, we seek to engage leaders and educators, both within and beyond NECTFL, to think critically about policies and practices in their schools, districts, communities, and states. Using two composite vignettes, broad understandings from recent literature, and findings from a recent study that examined the perspectives of world language educators, we describe and interpret key issues that currently impact world language programs, teachers, classes, and students. These issues include a lack of access to world language study related to students' race, socioeconomic status, and disability; world language teacher shortages; and a need for a more culturally relevant, engaging world language curriculum. The article concludes with recommendations to actualize language educators' support for diversity, equity, and inclusion specific to world language education contexts.

*Keywords: leadership & advocacy; student experiences; planning & program design*

## Introduction

DEI. JEDI. EDI. DEIB. These acronyms, which refer to the words diversity, equity, inclusion, justice, and belonging, have become ubiquitous in PK-12 and higher education contexts. Schools, institutions, and organizations, including our national and regional world language education associations (e.g., ACTFL, 2023), have made explicit commit-

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ments to the core ideas behind these acronyms. These commitments resonate with language educators, many of whom entered the field because of their passion for content and classrooms that are multilingual and multicultural. As language educators, we have read, attended sessions, listened to podcasts, and tuned into virtual meetings to learn about how we should strive to create and sustain spaces for students to learn in diverse, equitable, and inclusive settings.

What do we actually mean by diversity, equity, inclusion, and privilege? *Diversity* refers to the characteristics that make an individual or a group different and unique, and includes a variety of elements, such as race, ethnicity, language, gender, age, socioeconomic status, disability, etc. We draw on Skrla, McKenzie and Scheurich's (2009) definition of *equity*:

the educational policies, practices, and programs necessary to (a) eliminate educational barriers based on gender, race/ethnicity, national origin, color, disability, age, or other protected group status; and (b) provide equal educational opportunities and ensure that historically underserved or underrepresented populations meet the same rigorous standards for academic performance expected of all children and youth (p. 3-4).

Our definition of inclusion is informed by ACTFL's *Core Values* statement on inclusivity, which is ensuring that "all people feel welcomed, engaged, and valued, to champion diversity, equity, and inclusion, and to increase transparency in our processes. [It also includes fostering] a culture of mutual respect and understanding" (2023). This is a broad definition of inclusion that comprises students with disabilities, students with different racial or ethnic identities, students with diverse gender identities, and beyond. We draw on McIntosh's (2020) definition of privilege, that some individuals and groups in society benefit from unearned, and often unacknowledged benefits or advantages as a result of their identities. Although McIntosh initially wrote about white privilege and male privilege, others have expanded the concept to consider other domains, such as sexual orientation, age, religion, socioeconomic status (SES), and disability (Black & Stone, 2005). Privilege related to SES and whiteness in schools has had a bearing on resources; schools in primarily white communities with higher family incomes typically have more resources than schools in communities with larger numbers of students of color and/or communities with lower family incomes (Calarco, 2020; Epstein, 2011).

Questions related to DEI in world language education have inspired top scholars in our field to call for further research on access, opportunity, representation, and community engagement (Anya & Randolph, 2019). In this article, we seek to engage leaders and educators, both within and beyond NECTFL, to think critically about our own schools, districts, communities, and states, and to commit to advocating for deliberate changes in policies and practices to make world language education contexts more diverse, equitable, and inclusive.

### **Using New Jersey as an Example**

Both of us—Beth and Julia—are educators in New Jersey (NJ). Julia teaches high school French, Beth teaches the world language methods course in a teacher preparation program. NJ has the advantage of being one of the most culturally and linguistically diverse states in the U.S. As of 2022, NJ had the fourth highest diversity index<sup>1</sup> with a population that is almost 50% Hispanic/Latino, Black, and Asian, and was designated the second most

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1. The US Census Diversity Index <https://www.census.gov/library/visualizations/2021/dec/racial-and-ethnic-diversity-index.html> shows the probability that two people chosen at random will be from different race and ethnic groups.

linguistically diverse state in the US (Insider NJ, 2022). Despite its racial and linguistic diversity, many NJ students experience gaps in equity, access, and opportunity (Weber & Baker, 2020). Although the examples we share stem from NJ world language educators and contexts, they are representative of issues that impact the field of world language education in the U.S. more broadly. To illustrate these issues, we begin with two composite vignettes that demonstrate how diversity, equity, inclusion, and privilege have the potential to play out in different contexts. The vignettes are not descriptions of actual districts in NJ. They are fictional composites that were written to illustrate a wide-range of issues that we have observed in different contexts. We then draw on the vignettes to discuss the equity issues that they illustrate in connection to the extant literature and to a recent study that highlighted the voices of PK-12 NJ world language educators.<sup>2</sup>

### **Illustrations of DEI in World Language Education: Two Vignettes**

School A is situated in a large district with over 20 schools in a racially, ethnically, and linguistically diverse urban community in NJ. The city is rich in cultural and language diversity with speakers of languages from almost every part of the globe. Neighborhoods in the city are home to families that have lived in the area for generations as well as families who are recent arrivals to the U.S. The most recent Census figures indicate that about 90% of the population is Black, Latinx, or biracial while the remaining residents identify as white, Asian, or American Indian. The school district has a mix of newer and older school buildings and other new physical resources, such as technology and playgrounds, but it faces consistent challenges due to a lack of resources among all schools, high teacher turnover, and a significant percentage of the population living in poverty. Approximately 10% of students have a documented disability and IEP (Individualized Education Program), which is lower than the national average of 15%. Some educators observe families within their school that lack food, clothing, housing, or other basic needs. In a few schools, teaching positions have gone unfilled due to a dearth of qualified candidates, particularly in world languages, despite the fact that there are many native speakers of other languages who were educated in their home country. A revolving door of educators makes for a lack of continuity and connection for the large student body. Because of teacher shortages and other challenges related to scheduling, the district offers only two language options at the high school level. Some years, they are unable to staff upper-level sections, such as levels III, IV, or AP (Advanced Placement). Despite the fact that the majority of students in the district speak or are exposed to another language in their home or community, only a handful of students apply for the *Seal of Biliteracy*.

School B is situated in a smaller PK-12 district in a suburban area outside a major metropolitan area and is home to six schools. The community is composed of mostly monolingual, English-speaking students and the majority of the population is white. The median income of the town it serves is significantly higher than the state average. The district is often able to lure talented teachers away from other schools because of the smaller class sizes and other resources accessible to educators there. For example, teachers receive financial support from the schools' active Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs) to pursue professional development and to create learning opportunities outside of the classroom for their students. However, some teachers have left the district because of the culture of "helicopter parent" family involvement in which parents question teachers' decision-making or their children's grades. High test scores and a rhetoric of the community having the "top" public schools make the community desirable to families. This is particularly salient for families

2. Supported by the ACTFL Research Priorities Grant program.



with children with disabilities because of the perception that classrooms are inclusive and there are adequate resources to support students' IEPs. Property taxes are high in the town the district serves, and there are few affordable housing options available. Students begin a world language in kindergarten and can continue through 12th grade. The high school offers four different world languages through the AP level, language-specific honor societies, and annual trips abroad that are partly sponsored by local businesses and non-profit organizations.

These two vignettes demonstrate the complexity of diversity, equity, inclusion and privilege in world language programs, and within their surrounding school and community contexts. They also suggest different challenges and opportunities. In the section that follows, we situate these issues in the current empirical and conceptual research literature.

### **Access, Resources, and Privilege**

Access and opportunity for world language instruction is not inherent in all NJ schools. In the vignettes above, School A does not offer a wide variety of language courses and levels. In a recent study that examined equity in world language education (Wassell, Glynn, Baroudi, & Sevinc, 2022), NJ educators indicated that a lack of representation of Black and/or African American students in upper-level language classes was a key local issue. In schools that did offer higher level courses, the racial and ethnic diversity of the classes was not representative of the diversity of the community's population.

A number of participants in the same study (Wassell, et al., 2022) also suggested that the type and number of world language offerings in a district was a function of the socio-economic status and demographics of the community it served. The educators perceived that more world language resources were available in districts with larger populations of affluent or white students. Even within districts—particularly those with multiple schools—participants noted differences among the schools and for different groups of students, depending on their location (e.g., urban, suburban, rural) and racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic demographics. This included access to different types of world language programs, such as early language learning and dual language programs. While some schools offer world language education as early as preschool or kindergarten, others do not begin until middle or high school.

The current teacher shortage was also identified by study participants as a major issue impacting world language offerings. According to the U.S. Department of Education's report of teacher shortage areas, NJ has had a world language teacher shortage each year since 2004, a trend that has been similarly sustained and significant for world language education across the U.S. (Swanson & Mason, 2018). A search on NJ's hiring website for public schools in early October 2022 revealed that there were more than 25 open world language teaching positions for either permanent or long-term substitute positions, meaning that many schools had begun the year without qualified teachers.

Vignette B, on the other hand, demonstrates the resources and privileges that are common in some school communities. Students can choose from various language offerings and can work toward advanced proficiency at upper levels, and in some cases, can earn college credit. However, for districts like the one in vignette B, a perceived virtue in the form of financial resources and community affluence has the potential to mask inequities that exist within them; the schools may suffer from insidious structural racism or other forms of discrimination (Hagerman, 2020; Sánchez Loza, 2020). Tacit or taken-for-granted policies or practices may be the result of complacency, past precedent, or tradition. As Sánchez Loza (2020) suggests, schools get categorized as "bad" or "good" based on student popula-

tion and resources—schools with more students of color or with limited resources are seen as bad, while schools with predominantly white students and higher traditional measures of academic achievement are categorized as good. “This not only positions some students in ‘bad’ schools and as continually and perpetually lacking and . . . it conversely results in positioning other schools as ‘good,’ as superior and successful spaces and whose academic achievement serves as a model and the standard to which all must strive” (Sánchez Loza, 2020, p. 380-381).

Gatekeeping—or controlling access to particular courses or academic tracks—often masquerades as academic rigor; as Smith (2011) suggests, school counselors have the potential to serve as “mediators of opportunity” (p. 792). As a result, minoritized students, emergent bilingual students<sup>3</sup>, and students with disabilities may be discouraged from taking advanced courses by teachers, counselors, or school tracking or policies (e.g., pre-requisite class requirements). In some cases, certain students, such as students with disabilities, may not be excluded from world language study. For example, in a recent analysis of the Civil Rights Data Collection (CRDC) from the 2017-2018 school year, Gage and van Dijk (2022) found that students who identified as Black and or Hispanic were significantly less likely to take AP courses, which is typically a marker of advanced, rigorous study of a particular content area. In addition, they found that enrollment was essentially non-existent for students with disabilities.

Gatekeeping for world language study may be particularly salient in the case of Black students (Anya, 2020; Glynn, 2012). For example, Anya (2020) described Black students’ experience in immersion programs and the perceptions around students’ home language: African American English. She explains:

Unfortunately, deficit ideas that African American students will not do well in immersion programs because they have “enough difficulty already speaking English” still persist.... They are one of the reasons teachers, administrators, and other institutional gatekeepers—couched in a concern for not burdening black children with educational challenges they supposedly cannot meet—use to justify racist beliefs and practices that exclude them from equitable participation in language immersion programs. (p. 107)

In a recent study of NJ educators (Wassell et al., 2022), participants confirmed that Black students were often “missing” in their upper level world language classes. Ebony<sup>4</sup>, a world language supervisor in an urban school district, explained, “We had offered AP Spanish, and I don’t know whether that might have been a breakdown in the program itself or they’re just not interested in going to the higher levels...we haven’t had any African American students in our AP course or in our higher-level classes.” Another participant linked the issue to representation within the teachers at the school: “We have 2 Latinx teachers and no Black teachers in a department of 10 teachers, while the student body is roughly 45% students of color.” Whether it is related to gatekeeping, the teacher shortage, class offerings, or, as Anya (2020) suggests, racist beliefs and practices, the underrepresentation of students of color and students with disabilities in world language studies is a significant issue, particularly at the advanced levels of language study.

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3. Although many sources use the term “English Language Learners” or “English Learners” as a label for students learning English in school, we purposefully use “emergent bilingual students” to suggest the additive, asset-based nature of their language learning and development.

4. Pseudonym

## So What?

Recent scholarship in world language education more broadly has suggested that the issues we describe are not just a problem in NJ. And to be clear, the ideologies, or sets of conscious or unconscious beliefs, surrounding world language study have historically been problematic. World language education has long been considered an elitist and imperialist endeavor, targeted toward students with ample resources (Macedo, 2019). Other commonplace practices in world language education more broadly, such as tracking (Anya & Randolph, 2019) and world language curriculum materials that are disconnected from students' identities and cultures (Herman, 2007), have exacerbated issues of equity and inclusion for language learners in the U.S. However, in collaboration with our professional organizations, world language teachers and administrators have the power to change the systems, policies, and practices that have given life to these barriers. We conclude with specific leadership and advocacy practices that we can use to move beyond the rhetoric. As a field of language educators, we must take significant steps to ensure that our classrooms, programs, and schools are living examples of what we actually mean when we say we are committed to DEI.

### **Next steps: Leadership and advocacy to support diversity, equity, and inclusion**

- 1. Ask questions.** Which students are missing from language study in your classroom, or for administrators, in your program? Ask for the demographic data for your students, including disability/IEP or 504 status, gender, home language, socioeconomic status, race, or other elements of student diversity. To what extent do the racial, socioeconomic, and gender demographics of your school in aggregate “match” those that are in all levels of language study in your school? Look specifically for gaps in access, equity, or opportunity and communicate these discrepancies to the administration, counselors, and the Board of Education. Talk to administrators, counselors, colleagues, and School Board members to advance the message that world language study is *for every student*. Find out if academic or linguistic gatekeeping is occurring in your school—learning another language should not be restricted to students in a particular track or with a particular academic profile. No student should be labeled as “bad” at languages. Encourage your administration or Board of Education to revise school policy to require all students to take world language courses.
- 2. Leverage community members.** Leverage community members as school leaders, as educators, and as language supports. For example, districts in Minneapolis-St. Paul created cohorts of aspiring teachers who were native speakers of heritage languages largely represented in the community (Dernbach, 2023). The cohort model allowed for easier navigation of teacher certification pathways and addressed a significant representation issue in their public schools. Targeted hiring of community members also ensures that minoritized students are more likely to interact with adults of a similar race, ethnicity, background, or socioeconomic status. Speak with administrators or those charged with hiring to organize an open house in your district or county for community members interested in teaching. Invite local university teacher preparation programs, alternate route programs, and state licensure representatives to meet with candidates and support them to navigate the licensure requirements. However, it is important to recognize that meeting licensing or educational background requirements can be a significant barrier to even the strongest candidates. Speak directly with representatives of your state world language association to ask what advocacy efforts they are undertaking with legislators or the state department of education to make pathways to teaching more accessible.

**Update the curriculum.**

Make inclusive, culturally sustaining curriculum a non-negotiable component of world language courses. Language educators may be missing opportunities to engage students of color and encourage them to continue language study by using culturally sustaining curriculum and pedagogy (Paris & Alim, 2017; Glynn, Wesely, & Wassell, 2018). “Students need to be empowered to understand that while they live in an oppressive, stratified society, their cultural identities are in fact valuable, worthy, and legitimate” (Borck, 2020, p. 383). For example, for Spanish teachers, there are a number of great examples of curriculum that center Afro-Latinx culture, language varieties, and literature (e.g., the Incorporating Afro-Latino Culture in Spanish Classrooms Facebook group). Connect with colleagues at conferences or on social media who are incorporating inclusive, antiracist, or social justice approaches into world language curriculum and instruction; for example, a membership to ACTFL’s Critical and Social Justice Approaches Special Interest Group (SIG) is free for ACTFL members. Advocate for state or regional language organizations to create banks of units and lessons that are inclusive, culturally relevant, and engaging—resources that are accessible to teachers and that make planning more efficient. Involve students in curriculum redesign; their voices are important and should be part of the process.

**Advocate for additive and sustained program designs.**

Some schools offer world language programming weekly as early as kindergarten, while others begin in later grades. All students should have the same access to high quality programming beginning in the early grades. World language should be as important as other content area learning, such as mathematics, literacy, science, social studies, art, or music, from the start of students’ educational journey. Reach out to your district’s Board of Education to share research on why early and sustained language learning is critical (e.g., see the *Lead with Languages* website for excellent, user-friendly resources: <https://www.leadwithlanguages.org/why-learn-languages/early-childhood-elementary/>). Advocate for dual language programs, considered the gold standard of language learning programs. Dual Language programs begin at the PreK or Kindergarten level and designate instruction in a predetermined mix of English and another language. In this model, students who may be linguistically marginalized in other contexts are experts in school in their home language. Monolingual English speakers gain not just additional language skills, but intercultural competence.

**Recommit.**

Recommit to deeper learning about the communities you serve and to drawing on the assets, rather than deficits, of your learners, their families, and their communities. We spend our days teaching our students that cultural and linguistic practices and perspectives that are unfamiliar are not bad or weird, but rather aspects to be affirmed and celebrated. We welcome the opportunity to explore points of view that enrich our lives and teach us empathy. We have tremendous power in our daily interactions with students: we can choose to either encourage or discourage; to build students up or to shut them down; to meet them where they are at or to write them off. *Every* student should have the opportunity, access, and support to become proficient, interculturally component bilingual citizens: what can we as educators do to ensure this becomes the norm?

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# Unlocking Student Success: The Power of Success Criteria, Relationships, and Clarity

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## Abstract

This article emphasizes the importance of success criteria as a tool to support students' academic success. Research has consistently shown that strong teacher-student relationships lead to improved academic outcomes, but building strong relationships involves defining their impact on student learning outcomes. Success criteria support personal development and academic success, leveraging relationships by answering three key questions: *What am I learning?*; *Why am I learning this?*; and *How will I know that I have learned it?* By describing what learners must know and be able to do, success criteria make the learning target visible to both teachers and students. The article further examines the concept of teacher clarity, central to effective learning partnerships within a culturally responsive context. When teachers are unclear, students may lose motivation and engagement, leading to low achievement, especially for underperforming students. Therefore, effective communication through success criteria can support academic success and build strong teacher-student relationships.

*Keywords: assessment & feedback, student experiences, classroom instruction*

## Introduction

Effective teacher support can be the key factor in unlocking student success, with research consistently showing a strong correlation between positive student-teacher relationships and improved academic outcomes (Fisher & Frey, 2014; Hammond, 2015; Hattie, 2012). Teachers often think of relationship building as saying hello to students in the hallway, getting to know them personally, or finding time to chat with them informally. That is all true, but in an educational context, relationships are further defined with a focus on their

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impact on student learning outcomes. The Education Trust defines strong relationships as “expressing care, challenging growth, providing support, sharing power, and expanding possibilities” (*Strategies to Solve Unfinished Learning*, 2021, p. 2).

Imagine Sara, a high school Spanish student who is having difficulty with the following interpersonal speaking prompt:

At lunch one day, you and your friends are arguing about social media. Does it bring people together or does it isolate people? You will be assigned a role and must argue your position effectively, providing reasons and examples from your own experience and from texts we’ve examined in class.

Sara’s teacher has given the rubric to the students, but Sara is not clear about what the rubric is for or why she isn’t meeting expectations. In other words, she does not know what success looks like or how to get there. Sara is stuck as a learner, which presents an opportunity for her teacher to consider some readily available tools that support academic success.

### **Success Criteria, Relationships, and Student Outcomes**

Success criteria can be one of those tools, because they support personal development and academic success. According to Almarode, Fisher, Frey, & Thunder (2021, Ch. 1), success criteria answer three key questions:

What am I learning?

Why am I learning this?

How will I know that I have learned it?

“Success criteria make the learning target, or ‘it,’ visible for both teachers and students by describing what learners must know and be able to do that would demonstrate that they have met the learning intentions for the day” (Almarode et al, 2021, Ch. 1). To illustrate the potential of success criteria, consider the research on *effect size*. In educational research, *effect size* is described as the measure of the size of the impact of any school-related influence (e.g., instructional strategies, ability grouping, feedback, homework) on student learning outcomes. Hattie (2012) describes the average effect size as .4; anything above that average has the potential for a positive impact on learning (p. 3). Almarode et al. (Ch. 1) point out that success criteria have a potential effect size of .88—well above the average—meaning that they have *tremendous* potential to impact student outcomes. They further note the vital “relationship between high-impact, high-quality success criteria and meta-cognition, deliberate practice, feedback, and equity” (p. 5). Building strong student-teacher relationships is central to integrating these elements into daily classroom experiences to effectively leverage the potential impact of success criteria.

Collecting data from classroom walk-throughs, Almarode (2021) made some interesting observations about students and their awareness of learning expectations. Presented with the questions: *What am I learning?*; *Why am I learning this?*; and *How will I know that I have learned it?* about 80% of the students were able to answer the first question. About 70% could answer the second question, and only about 30% could answer the third question. Sara fits into the majority who could not answer how they would know that they had learned it, which should give Sara’s teacher pause. In what ways is Sara’s teacher unintentionally not clear, and what can she do about it? Embedded in these three key questions is the concept of teacher clarity. Opportunities for Sara to engage with the key questions throughout her learning process can make a big difference in her subsequent achievement. How many times do teachers create an assignment, but not the rubric? How many times do teachers have the rubric but not use it as a learning tool? How many times do teachers look

at a class set of assessments only to realize at the end of a unit that students have not grasped the major concepts at all? When teachers are unclear, of course the students are unclear! Lack of clarity can not only result in low achievement, it can result in the loss of student motivation and engagement, especially for underperforming students. Saphier (2016) makes this argument with precision: “It is quite common that underperforming students don’t actually know what we’re looking for in a quality product. The clarity of the criteria plus the implicit message of valuing when we take the time to go through criteria personally with them can have a big impact” (p. 84). Chardin & Novak (2020) describe underperforming students using Hammond’s term *dependent learners*, and note that dependent learners are overly reliant on the teacher, and aren’t sure how to complete tasks. Dependent learners, they contend, often sit passively until a teacher steps in (Ch. 1). Teacher clarity is central to what Hammond (2015) calls *learning partnerships* (developmental, academically-oriented relationships) within a culturally responsive context (p. 19). She notes that effective learning partnerships are “anchored in affirmation, mutual respect, and validation,” and require teachers to work with students to “tackle a specific learning challenge” (p. 75). She presents the following teacher clarity dilemma concerning culturally and linguistically diverse students:

Too often, culturally and linguistically diverse students who struggle have developed a set of learning moves that aren’t effective and they are not sure what’s going wrong or what to do about it. They cannot do higher order thinking or complex work if they cannot learn to adjust their learning moves, acquire new ones, or strategize about how to tackle a task (p. 101).

From a Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) perspective, CASEL (CASEL: Advancing Social and Emotional Learning) illustrates four academic mindsets that support students’ social, emotional needs while also emphasizing the importance of teacher clarity and positive relationships with students:

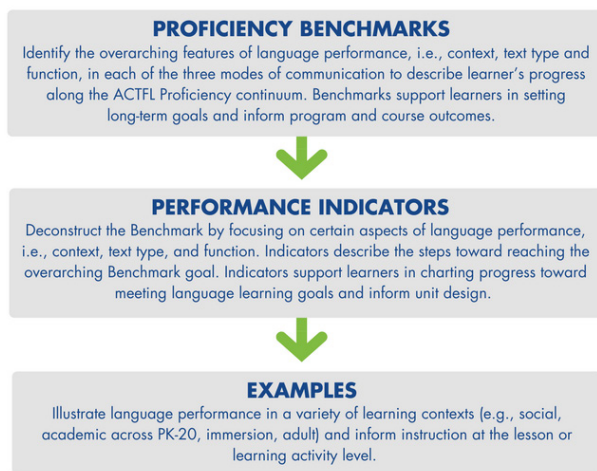
*I belong in this academic community.*  
*My ability and competence grow with my effort.*  
*I can succeed at this.*  
*This work has value for me.*

All students benefit from teacher clarity and strong relationships, but especially those students who experience a “high level of environmental adversity or a high level of personal challenge” (DuBois, Portillo, Rhodes, Silverthorn, & Valentine, 2011).

### **Success Criteria, Planning, and Instruction**

The intersection of clarity and relationships is central to reframing instructional design that focuses on improved student outcomes. When teachers ask the three key questions (namely, *What am I learning?*, *Why am I learning this?*, and *How will I know that I have learned it?*) from the learners’ perspective during the instructional design phase, these questions transform into a conceptual framework that fosters precision in the pedagogical process, cultivates interpersonal connections, and attends to Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) principles, all critical elements of the three stages of backward design described by McTighe and Wiggins (2012): *Identify desired results. Determine acceptable evidence. Develop a learning plan.* This is where the deep work happens. In world languages, the NCSS-FL-ACTFL Can-Do Statements (n.d.) are a key resource because they are carefully aligned with the backward design framework and “...describe what learners can do consistently over time, help learners set goals, are part of a self-assessment system, can be used for goal-set-

ting, and performance-based grading” (*What Are the NCSSFL-ACTFL Can-Do Statements?*, 2020). Figure 1 shows the organizational structure of the NCSSFL-ACTFL Can-Do Statements.



**Figure 1.** Organizational Structure of the NCSSFL-ACTFL Can-Do Statements

At each stage, teachers should address the three key success criteria questions from the outset. During the first stage (*Identify desired results*), teachers establish what learners should know, understand, and be able to do in terms of language functions and interculturality. In the second stage (*Determine acceptable evidence*), teachers decide on the assessment criteria that they will use to measure students’ success and align them with the proficiency target for the class. During the third stage (*Develop a learning plan*), teachers create lessons and learning opportunities that will assist students in progressing towards the desired learning outcomes. Figure 2 (next page) shows the Backward Design model developed for the performance assessment our learner Sara has encountered. Sara’s teacher can use a rubric like the one in Figure 3 (p. 100) to illustrate the desired outcomes and learning targets for this intermediate mid interpersonal speaking task from the outset of the unit. In this way, Sara and her teacher have a shared tool with accessible success criteria that define the pathways, include multiple steps, are measurable, and allow Sara and her teacher to monitor Sara’s progress through checks for learning (Almarode et al., 2021). In a nutshell, the three key questions play a deep role within the context of the backward design process. “[Teachers] focus on ensuring that learning happens, not just teaching (and assuming that what was taught was learned); they always aim and check for successful meaning making and transfer by the learner” (McTighe & Wiggins, 2012, p. 1). Without intentional clarity on the part of her teacher, Sara won’t be able to answer the three key questions.

### Success Criteria, Feedback, and Student-Teacher Relationships

Having established a basic backward design outline, Sara’s teacher proceeds to construct the flow of instruction and learning, considering the integration of Hammond’s (2015) learning partnerships into the design, with an acknowledgment that strong relationships can have an impact on students’ academic mindsets (*CASEL: Advancing Social and Emotional Learning*). Effective feedback is another crucial ingredient in learning partnerships (Hammond, 2015, p. 101). Feedback is most effective when it is, “desired, timely, comprehensible, actionable, applicable, and implemented by the learner” (Coss & Van Gorp,

2022, p. 20). Teachers can use tools like comment banks (See Figure 4) throughout the unit to help bring the rubric alive for students and streamline the feedback process, and can even co-construct comment banks with students based on their work, giving students greater agency over their learning. “...Clarity for learning is not a one-way exercise, but bi-directional. Not only do we have to communicate the learning intentions and success criteria, but our learners have to engage with these two components of the learning experience and leverage them into clarity about the what, why, and how of their learning” (Almarode, 2021). Using the intermediate mid rubric and comment bank or other resources as learning tools throughout the unit, Sarah’s teacher can target feedback, personalizing it for Sara. The more teachers involve students in the process, the more impact they have on students’ positive academic mindsets, resulting in students who are engaging with the feedback to their benefit.

Proficiency Benchmark (Desired Results)	Performance Indicator (Acceptable Evidence)
<p>I can participate in spontaneous spoken, written, or signed conversations on familiar topics (social media and technology), creating sentences and series of sentences to ask and answer a variety of questions, and ask appropriate follow-up questions, to keep the conversation flowing.</p>	<p>I can express, ask about, and react with some details to opinions about whether or not technology and social media bring people together.</p> <p><i>Performance Assessment Prompt:</i> At lunch one day, you and your friends are arguing about technology &amp; social media. Does it bring people together or isolate them? You will be assigned a role and must argue your position effectively, with reasons and examples from your own experiences.</p>
<p><b>Learning Plan</b></p>	
<p>The learning plan includes lesson-level can-do statements, checks for learning and understanding, feedback, reflection, and goal setting, using the rubric as a teaching and learning tool. Some examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I can identify different technologies and social media and their uses.</li> <li>• I can indicate which technologies and social media a person uses in their daily life.</li> <li>• I can list technologies and social media I used recently, when, and why I used them. (etc.)</li> <li>• I can sort social media platforms.</li> <li>• I can identify the purpose of different social media apps.</li> <li>• I can identify arguments in favor of activities that involve getting together without the use of social media.</li> <li>• I can describe ways I spend free time with family or friends that do not involve social media.</li> </ul>	

**Figure 2.** Backward Design Model

Writing & Speaking Performance Rubric & Feedback Form

<b>Can Do's</b>	I can express, ask about, and react with some details to opinions about whether or not technology and social media bring people together, by creating simple sentences and asking appropriate follow-up questions.
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Emerging	Developing	Meets standard	Strong
I can <b>independently</b> create a spoken or written message using language below <b>intermediate-mid</b> .	I can <b>independently</b> create a spoken or written message using some <b>intermediate-mid</b> language and some below <b>intermediate-mid</b> .	I can <b>independently</b> create a spoken or written message using <b>intermediate-mid</b> language.	I can <b>independently</b> create a spoken or written message using <b>intermediate-mid</b> language and <b>level-up</b> language.

INTERMEDIATE-MID SUCCESS CRITERIA	Emerging	Developing	Meets standard	Strong
I can be easily understood by someone used to a language learner, and possibly by a native speaker who doesn't know I'm a language learner.				
I can use a variety of words, expressions and personalized vocabulary and begin to use expanded vocabulary. I can give details.				
I use strings of sentences to describe or explain. I combine simple sentences using connector words to create original sentences. I pose questions to direct or advance a presentation or written work.				
I convey my knowledge of differences in familiar (learned or experienced) cultural products and practices. I use culturally appropriate vocabulary and expressions.				
My errors with targeted structures and/or word order do not interfere with communication.				
<b>TEACHER NOTES or STUDENT REFLECTION: EVIDENCE THAT SUPPORTS ON-LEVEL PERFORMANCE &amp; FEEDBACK FOR GROWTH</b>				

ADAPTED FROM: Can-Do Statements for a Basic Language Program; Bill VanHater and Walter F. Hopkins, CLEAR Newsletter, Vol. 19, Issue 2, Fall 2015; *Art and Science of Teaching*; Robert J. Marzano, 2016; ACTFL, *Keys to Assessing Language Performance, Implementing Integrated Performance Assessment*; NCSFL-ACTFL, *Can-Do Statements, Proficiency Guidelines*; Jefferson County Public Schools, Ohio Dept. of Education, *Languages and Learners: Making the Match*, Curtain and Dahlberg (2016); Grete Lundgaard (Personal Communication, 2017); LauraTemli; Shelby County School; Adlai E. Stevenson High School – World Languages. Updated: April, 2022

Figure 3. Wellesley Public Schools Intermediate Mid Writing and Speaking Rubric & Feedback Form

Teacher Feedback: What I did well	Teacher Feedback: What I need to work on to meet the target:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> You used high quality verbs in your speaking.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> You incorporated a lot of vocabulary from different resources from the unit.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> You asked a lot of questions to your group members.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> You varied the kinds of questions you asked.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> You followed up with what your group members said with questions or reactions.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> You responded to questions well.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> You helped your group members out.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> You used quality connecting words to explain yourself.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> You used connected sentences when speaking.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> You had few to no errors with your x-tense.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> You used both regular and irregular x-tense verbs.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> You leveled up and added different tenses.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> You demonstrated your own voice/personalized message.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Vary the verbs you use when speaking to include more specific action verbs.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Go back to readings/videos from the unit and add vocabulary to your list to expand.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Ask more questions to your group members.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Ask different kinds of questions.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Ask follow up questions to your group members to learn more about an idea they said.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Take your time answering questions.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Don't dominate the conversation; let others have a turn.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Look for more variety in your connecting words.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Connect your sentences more to give more detail.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> You had errors with the x-tense that got in the way of comprehension.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Make sure your subjects agree with the verbs.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Level up next time and try the "you may want to" section</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Your ideas were not clear.</li> </ul>

Figure 4. Teacher Feedback Comment Bank

**Closing Thoughts**

“One simple way in which to turn students off learning is for them to have a poor relationship with the teacher. The essence of positive relationships is the student seeing the

warmth, feeling the encouragement and the teacher's high expectations, and knowing that the teacher understands him or her" (Hattie, 2012 p. 141). Ultimately, implementing success criteria effectively is a critical component of academically-oriented relationship building with students, and of their educational journey. Through clear learning targets, Sara's teacher can help her understand what is expected of her, and guide her towards higher achievement. Sara's teacher can develop a supportive and inclusive learning environment, one in which Sara and other students are engaged and motivated because they know exactly what they are learning, why they are learning it, and how they will know that they have learned it.

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## Body/Language: Incorporating Movement and Dance into World Language Classes

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Ryan Casey, *Lexington High School (MA)*

### Abstract

Dance is an essential cultural product often overlooked in curriculum and lesson design in favor of sports, literature, visual arts, music, and other products from the target language culture. Given the similarities between the national standards for dance and for learning languages, movement and dance activities merit a greater role in world language classes. The author, a high school Spanish teacher and professional dancer, presents a continuum of approaches for incorporating movement-based activities into the classroom and describes specific activities that teachers can adapt for their classes, even without formal dance training or professional dance experience.

*Keywords: classroom instruction, curriculum design, student experiences*

### Introduction

Dance is a cultural product that reflects practices and perspectives of the communities in which it takes place. In contrast to other cultural products such as music, visual art, and literature, however, there is little scholarship on how dance and movement aid language learning or enhance a world language curriculum. Recent scholarship presents ideas for teaching students dance steps from specific styles of dance from target language communities (Gardner, 2016; Ortiz, 2010), but offers little else in the way of helping language teachers conceptualize the role of movement in their classrooms or develop other activities.

Clarifying this role will help teachers put into practice what research has proven: movement ranging from gesturing to dancing increases student interest, engagement, academic achievement, and social development, especially in young children (Furmanek, 2014; Lindt & Miller, 2017; McLaren, Ruddick, Edwards, Edwards, Zabjek, & McKeever, 2012). As Ross (2004) notes, however, “the student body’s presence in the classroom from

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Kindergarten to 12th grade gets quieter and quieter until it is effectively mute” (p. 173). There is a need, therefore, to consider how secondary students in particular can experience the benefits of movement-based instruction. Gardner (2016) argues that teachers are well-positioned to do this work in world language classrooms, “where motivation is essential to success and understanding of patterns can help language learners connect their language learning to other patterns such as those in dance” (p. 83). Gurzynski-Weiss, Long, & Solon (2015) extend this line of thinking by connecting effective world language pedagogy—such as communicative, student-centered instruction and thoughtful technology integration—to innovative classroom setups, like café-style seating, which impact students “by engaging attention and facilitating quicker ease of movement” (p. 62) with activities.

The author will make his own case for incorporating more dance pedagogy into language learning by pointing out the similarities in the national standards for both subjects. He will then describe three different philosophies for making dance part of a world language classroom (Figure 1) and provide specific examples of activities that fit each of these approaches: inclusion, integration, and interdisciplinarity.

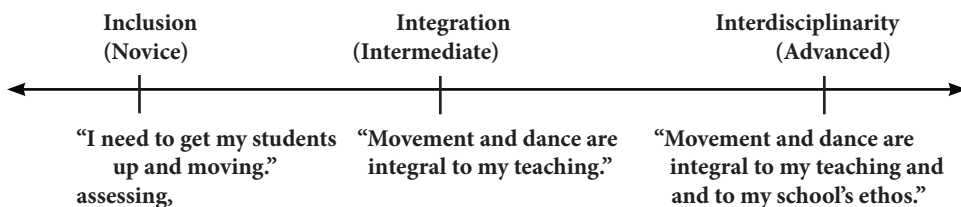


Figure 1. Continuum for Embodied Movement & Dance in the World Language Classroom. This figure shows a progression of three different approaches to incorporating movement and dance activities in a language class.

### Dance and Language Learning

There are many parallels between the [National Core Arts Standards](#) (NCAS) in Dance, released in 2014 by the National Coalition for Core Arts Standards (NCCAS), and the World-Readiness Standards for Learning Languages (The National Standards Collaborative Board, 2015), published in 2015 by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL). The former echo the five “C” goal areas of the latter: Communication, Cultures, Connections, Comparisons, and Communities. Together, NCCAS and ACTFL assure us that dance and language learning, respectively, can ensure a lifetime of learning and success. The former hopes that students will do with dance what the latter hopes they do with languages: discover, create, and leverage relationships with other fields of study.

First, the NCCAS incorporate the three modes of communication—Interpretive, Interpersonal, and Presentational—outlined in the World-Readiness Standards for Learning Languages (The National Standards Collaborative Board, 2015). According to the NCCAS, fifth graders answering the essential question, “How is dance interpreted?” should be able to “interpret meaning in a dance based on its movements” and “explain how the movements communicate the main idea of the dance using basic dance terminology” (2014, p. 9). Similarly, a high school student working toward Standard 9—“Apply criteria to evaluate artistic work”—should be able to define their own criteria for critiquing dance and “discuss perspectives with peers and justify views” (National Coalition for Core Arts Standards, 2014, p. 9). It is clear from words such as *interpret*, *discuss*, and *explain*, that both NCCAS and the World-Readiness Standards for Learning Languages value students’ abilities to thoughtfully

view a source, interact with classmates, and present information. For example, intermediate Spanish students studying narration and description in the past might watch a retelling of the classic fairy tale “[Cinderella](#)” by renowned flamenco dancer Sara Baras. Before even considering the language structures needed to retell the story, students could share their opinions on Baras’ performance and discuss how it relates to the story or whether it was appropriate for this particular fairy tale.

In addition, the NCCAS echo the World-Readiness Standards for Learning Languages’ expectation that students, “interact with cultural competence and understanding” (The National Standards Collaborative Board, 2015, p. 1). Apart from valuing dance as a cultural product, of course, the NCCAS explicitly asks learners to connect it to practices and perspectives. In response to the essential question, “How is a dance understood?” an high school student who meets the NCCAS’ “advanced” performance descriptor ought to be able to, “explain how dance communicates aesthetic and cultural values in a variety of genres, styles, or cultural movement practices. (National Coalition for Core Arts Standards, 2014, p. 8)” Likewise, eighth grade students focusing on dance literacy should meet the following criterion: “Analyze and discuss how dances from a variety of cultures, societies, historical periods, or communities reveal the ideas and perspectives of the people” (National Coalition for Core Arts Standards, 2014, p. 8). These objectives, among others, demonstrate a commitment to students knowing not just dance technique and terminology, but also the relationship of dance styles to the cultures from which they are derived. Continuing with the example of the Sara Baras video described above, students could follow up with interpretive reading and viewing activities to learn more about flamenco dancing and Ms. Baras herself. They could learn the names of the props Baras uses in the video and also think critically about why she was chosen to protagonize it.

Furthermore, NCCAS calls for students to engage in cultural comparisons, another pillar of the World-Readiness Standards for Learning Languages. As an example, learners as young as third grade should be able to, “select dance movements from specific genres, styles, or cultures” and “identify characteristic movements from these dances and describe in basic dance terminology ways in which they are alike and different” (National Coalition for Core Arts Standards, 2014, p. 9). Again, the repeated references to culture reinforce the importance of using dance to both learn about and reflect upon other societies and worldviews. After watching Sara Baras, students could compare the video with examples from their own communities that showcase dance as a promotional tool. They could also compare Ms. Baras and her art form with a famous dancer from their own culture.

Both sets of standards also support students in applying their content-specific knowledge to other disciplines. The World-Readiness Standards for Learning Languages (National Standards Collaborative Board, 2015) titles this goal area Connections, writing that students should, “connect with other disciplines and acquire information and diverse perspectives” (p. 1). The essential question for Standard 10 of the NCCAS is, “How does dance deepen our understanding of ourselves, other knowledge, and events around us?” (National Coalition for Core Arts Standards, 2014, p. 10). In response, sixth grade students might complete the following assignment: “Conduct research using a variety of resources to find information about a social issue of great interest. Use the information to create a dance study that expresses a specific point of view on the topic. Discuss whether the experience of creating and sharing the dance reinforces personal views or offers new knowledge and perspectives” (National Coalition for Core Arts Standards, 2014, p. 10). Once students are familiar with Sara Baras, they could adopt a historical lens and research the origins of flamenco or take a more contemporary perspective and explore how

the genre was affected by the closure of *tablaos*, or flamenco performance venues, during the COVID-19 pandemic. The teacher could also explore a connection with a local dance studio or arts council to sponsor a flamenco master class or performance. Students might be inspired to research other traditional Spanish dances, such as the *paso doble* or the *bolero*.

Finally, NCCAS and the World-Readiness Standards for Learning Languages both state that studying dance and languages, respectively, ensures that students can both function in and enrich the national and global communities of which they are citizens. When we incorporate the arts into education, says the former, “we are fulfilling the college and career readiness needs of our students, laying the foundations for the success of our schools and, ultimately, the success of our nation” (National Coalition for Core Arts Standards, 2016, p. 2). Dance students will develop into culturally competent community members and skilled artists who are poised to be movers and shakers in both the literal and idiomatic sense. The World-Readiness Standards for Learning Languages share this sentiment when they declare that the goal of learning a language is to “prepare learners . . . to bring a global competence to their future careers and experiences” (National Standards Collaborative Board, 2015, p. 2). Both practical and lofty, this goal suggests not only that being multilingual can enrich one’s work opportunities, but also that it can enhance one’s life overall. By taking their first steps along the continuum, teachers can help their students develop essential multidisciplinary skills and experience the beauty of how language and movement interact.

### Novice: Movement-inclusive classrooms

In the first step on the continuum—inclusion—movement is sometimes part of the lesson, though it is not the norm. A movement-inclusive teacher typically includes a movement activity because the teacher recognizes that students need opportunities to move around during class. The teacher may be particularly aware of the benefits of movement in the classroom, but does not necessarily see movement as anything beyond another pedagogical strategy. Students may see it more as a break from learning rather than an inherent part of how they learn in that course. If students only experience movement during brain breaks, for example, they may infer that moving should occur separately from learning.

Communicative activities that ask students to move around the classroom in some way fit the definition of a movement-inclusive language classroom. In a “Four Corners” activity, for example, students might move to the corner of the room bearing a sign with the frequency word (always, frequently, sometimes, never) that matches their answer to the teacher’s questions in the target language. Similarly, students might move to one side of the room or the other to indicate whether a statement about an interpretive reading assignment is true or false, or to indicate which of two options they would select in a game of “Would You Rather,” designed to practice language structures for expressing opinions and making hypotheses. The popular “Human Bingo” is another movement-inclusive activity. Often used as a community-building exercise at the start of a school year, “Human Bingo” typically has students practicing a frequent language structure while moving around the room and talking with classmates in order to identify peers who had certain experiences over the summer or who possess particular characteristics, for instance. Another way to get students walking around and talking to each other is by using “*Puedos*” [“Can-dos”], developed by North Carolina Spanish teacher Laura Sexton. Students move around and ask classmates to show something they can do from the list of skills (e.g., exchange information about their favorite academic classes, express an opinion about climate change) provided by the teacher.

A more fast-paced movement activity is a [running dictation](#). Before class, the teacher writes a series of sentences and posts them in the back of the room or in the hall-

way. In class, students are divided into groups, and one student must run to the sentences, memorize as much as they can, run back to their group and repeat it to their peers. Those classmates must, in turn, write down what was said (and, perhaps, begin to illustrate it). The activity continues until a team has transcribed the sentences exactly.

Learners might also get out of their seats, and even out of the classroom, in order to do a gallery walk as a way of learning new material at the beginning of a unit or presenting work at the end of a unit. Station activities or escape/breakout rooms could also involve physical tasks or at least require students to move around the learning space. Additionally, students could work in groups to craft a tableau, or a still scene, representing an event from the text they're currently reading or a cultural practice they recently studied. Other groups could observe the scene and engage in an interpersonal speaking or presentational writing task in which they comment on the tableau using familiar words and structures. Finally, learning dance steps from a target language culture can be fun, but without meaningful connections to the curriculum, teachers should be wary of considering this kind of activity an end goal for movement-based instruction. As Gardner (2016) writes, educators "should consider what topics or themes are already being studied and how to integrate dance with that unit, theme, topic, or chapter of study to make a cohesive lesson" (p. 88). For example, if students are going to learn steps from a dance that is traditionally performed as part of a particular festival, it would be a more culturally rich experience for students to also study the social and historical underpinnings of the festival itself within the context of a thematic unit rather than just learn the dance.

The term *inclusion* is deliberate: First, because it represents the fact that the teacher *includes* dance in their classroom, which is to say that they make it a part of their teaching (and could just as easily remove it) without changing any of their existing practices or pedagogy. Secondly, a classroom that is inclusive—of viewpoints, identities, or learning styles, for instance—is an admirable goal of any educator. A movement-inclusive classroom is an important first step for educators without formal dance training. However, whereas inclusion might be considered the ultimate goal for many teachers, there are phases beyond inclusion on the author's continuum.

### **Intermediate: Movement-integrated classrooms**

Integration implies more than just including dance in the curriculum, but rather embedding it inextricably into one's values and pedagogy. If dance activities were removed from a movement-integrated classroom, the class itself would change; students and teacher(s) alike might feel they were in a different course altogether.

For example, in a movement-inclusive classroom, the teacher might occasionally initiate a game of charades so that students practice new vocabulary. In a movement-integrated classroom, the teacher would regularly introduce new vocabulary by associating each word with a gesture or movement, for example, or would teach a movement pattern to accompany certain phrases repeated within a text. Students would regularly act out new words or structures in context by playing charades and/or role-playing a TPRS (Teaching Proficiency through Reading and Storytelling) story: As the teacher improvised or narrated a story, students would act out what was happening, with the teacher's repeated use of certain phrases or vocabulary words solidifying the connections between movement and meaning. In this kind of classroom setting, due to the frequency of movement activities and the consistency with which they would be embedded in teaching and learning, students (as well as evaluators) would recognize the importance of movement.

Another way in which an educator could integrate dance pedagogy into language teaching is by consistently arranging student desks or chairs in a circle. This formation is known in hip hop and tap dancing as a *cypher* (alternatively spelled *cipher*), a space where dancers can freestyle, cheer each other on, and make music together. Typically, dancers stand in a circle

and take turns going into the middle—sometimes individually, sometimes with one or more partners—to improvise while others watch, groove to whatever music is playing, and call out words of encouragement. Rapper and writer Toni Blackman, the first Hip Hop Cultural Envoy for the U.S. Department of State, described the cypher as an experience of “giving and exchanging information, energy, and ideas” with a focus on “community building . . . [and] connection” (TEDxTalks, 2013). That “giving and exchanging” echoes how world language students might “interact and negotiate meaning” via interpersonal communication in the classroom, and community and connection are two of the five “C” goal areas that make up World-Readiness Standards for Learning Languages (The National Standards Collaborative Board, 2015).

Northwestern University professor Billy Siegenfeld (2009), the creator of Jump Rhythm® jazz and tap technique, frequently begins his classes in a circle because it “helps students work in less hierarchical relationships,” and can “dissolve the military-like, single-direction facing and coax students to *connect with each other conversationally* [emphasis added]” (p. 114). Indeed, classroom setup can be key in encouraging both movement activities and oral interpersonal activities. In a study that explored the effects of traditional classroom seating versus collaborative, coffee shop-style seating on student interaction in university Spanish classes (Gurzynski-Weiss, et al., 2015), the teacher in the collaborative space not only noted that the setup “allowed for ample movement throughout the classroom,” but also “reported increased interaction among students throughout the semester, and, rather than attempting to modify the space to accommodate his instruction needs, he found himself modifying his lessons to benefit best from use of the space” (p. 74). Accordingly, a more movement-friendly classroom design, such as a circle, can inspire instructors to incorporate more movement and dance activities into their classes.

Numerous world language teachers, especially those who endorse TPRS and/or CI [comprehensible input] methods, have addressed this topic by going “deskless.” Though there has been minimal scholarship on this topic, “Going Deskless in the World Language Classroom” and “#deskless” were sessions at the Southern Conference on Language Teaching (SCOLT) in 2019 and 2022, respectively, and several popular bloggers in the world language community, such as [Allison Weinhold](#) and [Mike Peto](#), have written about it (Peto, 2015). This [setup](#) is particularly useful for leading TPRS activities, facilitating interpersonal speaking opportunities, and engaging in text-based class discussions, among other common tasks in the language classroom. As the removal of desks creates more space for movement—including the creation of a “dance floor”-type space in the center of the room—teachers interested in moving along the continuum may want to pursue a deskless environment.

An additional strategy for incorporating the cypher into the language classroom would be a text cypher, an activity I experienced in a class led by hip hop artist, educator, and consultant Aysha Upchurch, a Lecturer on Education at the Harvard Graduate School of Education. In this activity, which is appropriate for one class period, students would read, view, or listen to an authentic resource (at home or in class) and receive discussion topics or questions. Students would stand in a circle and the teacher would play music from the target culture. All participants would be encouraged to groove to the music, or at least keep the beat in some way (e.g., tapping their foot or snapping their fingers), and anyone who wished to speak in response to one of the prompts would move into the center of the circle and groove as they spoke, addressing everyone in the circle as best as possible. When they finished talking, they would move back to the perimeter of the circle, or they would trade places with someone who volunteered to speak next. The instructor would announce when the class was moving on to the next question. A text cypher could be used at the beginning of a unit, when students might read a particular text to serve as an introductory hook; in the middle of a unit, as a



class activity once students are familiar with thematic vocabulary and target structures; or at the end of a unit, perhaps as the presentational component of an [Integrated Performance Assessment](#) (IPA). It is just one idea for how movement can blend with interpretive reading and presentational speaking.

Whereas movement activities in a movement-inclusive classroom may have students moving merely to get them out of their seats, a movement-integrated classroom intentionally weaves movement into course content and objectives. For example, students could embark on a scavenger hunt around the school: They could be practicing school-related vocabulary; carrying out a series of tasks written in the imperative mood, to practice commands; or completing tasks as though they were traveling around a particular region of a target language community, perhaps as part of a unit on outdoor activities. This kind of activity could be enhanced by using Flip, a popular video platform for educators, as a “Fli-phunt.” As students fulfill each task on the scavenger hunt, they could record themselves doing so and upload the videos to Flip, perhaps within a time limit set by the instructor. For example, students learning about Spain’s Camino de Santiago, a well-known pilgrimage, might travel around the school in groups and complete a variety of tasks or questions at stations that represent some of the cities positioned along the Camino. These kinds of activities deliberately take kids out of the classroom and have them moving around, at times completing physical tasks, all while maintaining clear linguistic and/or cultural objectives.

Should a teacher want to grade a movement-based task, it may be useful to create a [single-point rubric](#) with the specific goals of the activity, perhaps culled from the NCCAS or generated with student input. Rather than a spectrum of performance descriptors, single-point rubrics present only the criteria for student success on a task and then offer space for the teacher to comment on where the student falls short of, or exceeds, the learning targets. It may also be possible to modify some of the rubrics from *Implementing Integrated Performance Assessment* (Adair-Hauck, Glisan, & Troyan, 2013) for this purpose; the “impact” section of the presentational rubrics could be edited to include specific criteria for movement.

Before assigning a grade or giving any kind of feedback, expectations for participation in movement or dance activities should be clear for all students, including those with injuries or physical disabilities, who may need alternate arrangements. In cases where a student may be reluctant to participate due to extreme shyness or fear of judgment from peers, educators may want to outline additional roles the student could take in order to stay involved in the activity. For example, a student could be the DJ, tasked with playing music for their group, or the director, charged with keeping the group focused and on task. Dance writer and photographer could be other responsibilities: Students could write a summary of the activity or, with permission, take photos of the activity to be included on a class website or newsletter. Over time, educators can hopefully cultivate classrooms in which everyone is comfortable moving with each other.

### **Advanced: Moving towards interdisciplinarity**

Further along the continuum, a more experienced educator could establish an interdisciplinary classroom, in which movement would be embedded into both content and pedagogy—that is, movement could comprise *what* is taught and also *how* something is taught. Administrators, teachers, families, and students alike would understand the value of movement in education, which is to say that the school would support incorporating dance into its classes. Professional development and other resources would be available to help teachers incorporate movement into their curriculum. Embedding dance into each unit would be a school-wide endeavor. Assessment options would include movement-based prompts, such as

the aforementioned example from the NCCAS for sixth graders (easily adaptable for any age).

Novice Spanish students, for instance, could learn the vocabulary for flatware and serving utensils by studying the choreography and lyrics to the popular children's song "[Soy una taza](#)" ["I am a cup"], which encourages students to connect movement to new words and phrases. As a class activity or project, students could write and choreograph another verse, perhaps, or devise ways to effectively stage the choreography for an informal performance. Even a movement-inclusive classroom could strive for interdisciplinarity by offering a movement component as part of a choice board assignment or summative project options, for example.

Another pathway towards interdisciplinarity would be to create lessons or IPAs that center movement in all three modes of communication. In a unit on the global theme of contemporary life, students could watch a video of a tango performance from Buenos Aires. Using a handout of related vocabulary and sentence starters, they could engage in a think-pair-share activity to describe the performance and share their opinions. Independently, they could then read an article about how the COVID-19 pandemic affected tango culture in Argentina before working in groups to write a summary of the main ideas and supporting details. Finally, they could work in pairs either to learn a basic tango step or to create a series of tableaux that represent the changes that occurred for tango dancers due to pandemic restrictions.

Alternatively, students studying the Spanish conquest of the Americas could learn about Hernán Cortés' indigenous interpreter, known as La Malinche, by watching the 1949 modern dance trio "Malinche," choreographed by José Limón. After describing and reacting to the dance, students could compare Limón's representation of Malinche to the depiction of her in *The New Conquest of Spain*, written by historian Bernal Díaz del Castillo, who accompanied Cortés on his expedition. They could also study works of visual art that feature Malinche, including paintings by Mexican muralists Diego Rivera and José Clemente Orozco. After using the think-pair-share strategy to discuss which portrayal of Malinche they enjoyed most, students could collaborate to create a tableau or movement pattern that expresses how they think Malinche might have felt, or to interpret a movement they watched in Limón's dance and explain how it connects to one of the other sources.

As an interdisciplinary classroom, as defined here, does not yet exist, we do not know what all of its qualities will be. Even the author, who has a successful career as a professional dancer, would place himself somewhere in the integration phase of his own continuum. The idea of an interdisciplinary classroom is optimistic yet ambitious, an idealized vision for what a movement-minded language classroom can be and how it can impact everything from students' physical well-being to their academic success. The fact that the World-Readiness Standards for Learning Languages state, under the Connections goal area, that students should "build, reinforce, and expand their knowledge of other disciplines" (The National Standards Collaborative Board, 2015, p. 1) certainly indicates a potential for serious collaborations with movement and dance.

### **Conclusion**

While dance and movement activities can present challenges in the classroom, such as lack of space or reluctant student participation, they merit more attention in world language curricula due to similar goals around communication, cultural proficiency, interdisciplinary thinking, and lifelong learning. The author has found that students respond positively and energetically to activities that get them moving around the classroom or around the school, especially as learners report that in other classes they are still expected to sit for long stretches of time.

The continuum presented here can help teachers reflect on what roles movement and dance currently play in their classrooms, what role they would like them to have, and how they might accomplish that goal. What movement and language learning can achieve together is undoubtedly powerful, and language teachers have the tools to lead the way.

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  - b. Your highest degree and what school it is from
  - c. Your title
  - d. If you are a teacher, indicate what level(s) you have taught in your teaching career: K-12, elementary school, middle school, high school, community college, college/university, other.
  - e. Your credentials.

### Example:

**Charles Bovary** (Ph.D., Duke University) is Professor of French and Foreign Language Pedagogy at the University of Montana. He teaches/coordinates . . . . His research . . . . He has published . . . .

9. Manuscript length:
  - a. For original research articles, please note that the typical length of manuscripts averages approximately 20-25 double-spaced pages, including notes, charts, and references. Slightly longer articles may be considered.
  - b. For original language classroom articles, the typical length of manuscripts should be 1,500-2,500 words. Slightly longer articles may be considered.
10. Please note that the typical length of manuscripts averages approximately 20-25 double-spaced pages, including notes, charts, and references. This does not mean that a slightly longer article is out of the question.
11. Authors should read the manuscript very carefully before submitting it, verifying the accuracy of the citations (including the spelling of names, page numbers, and publication dates); the accuracy of the format of the references; punctuation, according to the APA Guidelines; spelling throughout the article.
12. Please consult the **Checklist for Manuscript Publication** (<http://www.nectfl.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Review-Checklist.pdf>). Promising articles have been rejected because authors did not spend enough time proofreading the manuscript. Proofreading includes not only reading for accuracy but for readability, flow, and clarity. Using the Checklist will help ensure accuracy. Authors are encouraged to have several colleagues read the article before it is submitted. Whether you are a native speaker of English or not, please ask a colleague whose native language is English to proofread your article to be sure that the text sounds idiomatic and that punctuation and spelling are standard.
13. Submissions: In order for an article to be processed and sent to outside reviewers, authors must complete the appropriate Author/Article Information form found in “**Submit an article.**” These forms are used to match the author’s description of the article with the appropriate reviewers according to (1) instructional level; (2) areas of interest; (3) the type of content; (4) relevant language(s); (5) keywords that best describe the article content [no more than **four** should be indicated].
  - a. For original research articles: <https://nectfl.wufoo.com/forms/author-article-information-form-nectfl-review/>
  - b. For original language classroom articles: <https://forms.gle/Fi9YTV3qAcmpZBT8A>

## Checklist for Manuscript Preparation

Here are a few reminders, many of which are taken directly from the **APA Guidelines, 7<sup>th</sup> edition**. Please use the links provided to access the major changes in this 2020 edition of the guidelines.

- Please remember to use the spell check and grammar check on your computer before you submit your manuscript. Any portions of text in a foreign language must be followed immediately by an English translation in square brackets.



- ❑ Do **not** submit an article that includes tracking in Word.
- ❑ Remember that in the APA guidelines, notes (footnotes or endnotes) are discouraged.
- ❑ Do not use your word processor's automatic footnoting or endnoting.
- ❑ Do not use automatic page numbering.
- ❑ Please double-space everything in your manuscript.
- ❑ Use left justification only; do not use full justification anywhere in the article.
- ❑ The required font throughout is either Times New Roman 12 pt. or preferably Minion Pro 12 pt.
- ❑ There should be only one space after each period.
- ❑ Punctuation marks appear inside quotation marks.
- ❑ In listing items or in a series of words connected by *and*, *but*, or use a comma [the Oxford comma] before these conjunctions.
- ❑ When providing a list of items, use double parentheses surrounding the numbers or letters: (1), (2), or (3) or (a), (b), and (c).
- ❑ All numbers above nine must appear as Arabic numerals ["nine school districts" vs. "10 textbooks"]; numbers below 10 must be written out.
- ❑ Page number references in parentheses are not part of the actual quotation and must be placed outside of the quotation marks following quoted material.
- ❑ Use standard postal abbreviations for states in all reference items [e.g., NC, IL, NY, MS], but not in the text itself.
- ❑ Do not set up automatic tabs at the beginning of the article (i.e., as part of a style); rather you should use the tab key (and *not* the space bar) on your computer each time you begin a new paragraph. The standard indent is only ¼ [0.25"] inch.
- ❑ Please reflect on the title of the article. Quite often titles do not give readers the most precise idea of what they will be reading.
- ❑ According to APA guidelines, the References section contains only the list of works cited in your article. Check all internet addresses/hyperlinks before submitting the manuscript.
- ❑ Be judicious in using text or graphic boxes or tables in your text.
- ❑ Please make certain that the components you submit are in the following order:
  - ❑ First page—with the article title, names and titles of authors, their preferred mailing, addresses, home and office phone numbers, e-mail addresses, and the name of the primary contact person [also, times in the summer when regular and E-mail addresses may be inactive].
  - ❑ First page of the manuscript—containing the title of the article, the abstract, and no more than four keywords
  - ❑ The text of the article
  - ❑ Notes; References, Appendices—in this order
  - ❑ A short, biographical paragraph (no more than 4-5 lines).
  - ❑ Authors must complete the **Author/Article Information form**, uploading the submission using the following links:

- ❑ For original research articles: <https://nectfl.wufoo.com/forms/authorarticle-information-form-nectfl-review/>
- ❑ For original language classroom articles: <https://forms.gle/Fi9YTV3qAcmpZBT8A>

