

NECTFL Review

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



Empowering Language Learners for Global Change

Building on what we have learned over 71 years of the Northeast Conference, how are we as educators helping learners connect with others to share joy and work towards positive change? As educators, we help learners connect within and across cultures and communities. How are we designing learning opportunities and giving our students the tools (language and knowledge) that elevate them as our next generation of global citizens, as changemakers? This conference theme is designed to keep us looking forward, with student learning and empowerment at the center of all we do, for a more positive and interconnected world.



Jill Schimmel
2025 Conference Chair

71st Annual Northeast Conference
February 27- March 1, 2025
New York Hilton Midtown



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► Teacher Conference Scholarships

Thanks to very generous grants from The NYS Statewide Language Regional Bilingual Education Resource Network (RBE-RN) at NYU and Vista Higher Learning, NECTFL is pleased to offer 10 scholarships for new teachers (1–5 years of experience) and 20 partial stipends for experienced “mentor” teachers (7+ years of experience) to attend the 2023 Northeast Conference.

► NECTFL Future Language Educator Scholarship

NECTFL is pleased to offer the NECTFL Future Language Educator Scholarship. A \$1000 scholarship will be awarded to a future language educator from the NECTFL region to be used during the semester/year devoted to student teaching (graduate or undergraduate). The recipient will receive one night hotel stay and a complimentary registration to the NECTFL conference to accept the award. The scholarship will be awarded at the conference and may be used either during that spring session or the following fall semester.

For more information, click on the link to the NECTFL Scholarships/Awards page: <https://www.nectfl.org/scholarships/>



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THE LANGUAGE CLASSROOM

The Language Classroom section of the NECTFL Review is edited by Angelika Kraemer (langclassnectfl@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, go to this page on the NECTFL website:

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From the 2025 Conference Chair



Dear colleagues and friends,

On behalf of the NECTFL Board of Directors, I am pleased to present the 93rd edition of the *NECTFL Review*, an academic journal for PK–16+ world languages educators, researchers, and administrators. I am confident that this edition of the *NECTFL Review* will help to inspire and grow the profession. I am thankful to the authors and contributors for their time and research and to our editorial staff of Robert

Terry and Catherine Ritz for their work in producing this edition of the *NECTFL Review*. We express our sincerest thanks to Robert Terry, Ph D, for his tireless dedication to the journal for twenty-two years; soliciting manuscripts of high academic excellence and relevance in our field. Under his leadership, the journal has increased in scope and impact in our field. We extend our gratitude to Catherine Ritz, Ph D, for her vision to launch The Language Classroom as an important section of the journal with an eye to the future. It is thrilling to introduce Rebecca Fox, Ph D and Angelika Kraemer, Ph D, as the new editors of the journal. You will be introduced to them and their work at the annual conference.

I am honored to Chair the 2025 conference with the theme **Empowering Language Learners for Global Change**. This theme was inspired by a quote from years ago that has grounded me in my daily work supporting language teachers and pathways to multilingualism across our schools. Michael Gove, formerly a Member of the British Parliament, stated that “Learning a [foreign] language, and the culture that goes with it, is one of the most useful things we can do to broaden the empathy and imaginative sympathy and cultural outlook of children.”

The time is right to celebrate you and the work you do every single day designing learning opportunities so our students can be empowered as our next generation of changemakers. Building on what we have learned over 71 years of the Northeast Conference, this conference will highlight how we as educators help learners connect with others in their language in a culturally appropriate way to share joy and work towards positive change. I’ve seen students speak to UN ambassadors in a variety of languages, discussing ways to reach the 17 Global Goals. You will hear from students during our opening session. The hallowed halls of the Hilton will be a backdrop for you to learn with and from other educators doing connected work in their contexts.

You give your students the opportunity to think in new ways, connect with others in their language every single day, and when you are at NECTFL, it will be so powerful to be together in the most global and exciting city, all with the goal of keeping us looking forward, considering ways you can design and refine learning opportunities to give your students the tools (language and knowledge) that elevate them as our next generation of global citizens, as changemakers. We help our students connect to themselves, their community, then communicate in the larger

world, considering perspectives of others, so that they can take action and make change, in their own way.

The NECTFL Program Committee spent this summer reviewing hundreds of proposals to put together a rich program, with more than 140 one-hour sessions by some of our region's finest educators and language advocates, two sessions of #tech-lab, including one focused on AI possibilities (new and of interest to us all). We are thrilled to offer a "Fundamentals of Teaching" thread, requested by some of our newer teachers, but we are confident you will find them valuable however far along you are in your career. You will find a range of Pre-Conference Workshop options for deeper learning with some of the best presenters in our profession, so please do register soon to join us.

I can't wait to welcome you here to New York City, for three amazing days of professional growth with student learning and empowerment at the center of all we do, for a more positive and interconnected world. This is the true butterfly effect of our profession: inspiring our learners to be a force for positive change, empowered, so in turn we can learn from them and watch them make global change.

See you then,

Jill Schimmel



Logo by Elisha Liu

Elisha Liu is currently a sophomore at Appoquinimink High School, in Middletown DE, where she is learning Spanish. She believes that by learning languages, it truly pays off, as learning another language is an opportunity to know more about other ethnicity groups and cultures that they have, establishing greater interconnectivity around the world and causing global change. Through this belief, she created the logo in a particular way so that the wrapping ribbon around the globe demonstrates how interconnected the world is, and how language acts as the interconnecting bond and potential for change. Additionally, she is immensely thankful for her current Spanish teacher to give her this wonderful opportunity for her to participate in!

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**

Supporting the Academic Literacy Development of English Learners: Bridging High School and College

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Abstract

The percentage of multilingual learners in U.S. public schools is steadily increasing, and by 2025, an estimated 1 in 4 children nationally will be multilingual learners (National Education Association, 2020). Simultaneously, there has been a significant shift toward linguistic diversity in two and four-year colleges. Yet, there is little research on how to support English Learners (ELs) as they transition from high school to college. Given the extensive reading demands placed on students in their first semester of college, supporting ELs' academic reading skills is an area that requires greater attention, especially since strong literacy skills are necessary for students' academic achievement in college. To bolster students' success throughout this transition, we argue for three areas of focus: building metacognitive reading strategies, infusing academic language instruction into content area instruction, and finally, utilizing translanguaging, code-mixing, and L1 supports in the L2 classroom, which can provide students with the tools for success in both English and content-area courses throughout their college careers.

Keywords: additive L2 reading instruction, academic language, English Learners, metacognitive reading strategies, translanguaging

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Introduction

As of Fall 2020, there were five million English learners (ELs) in U.S. public schools, comprising 10.3% of K-12 public school students, an increase from 4.5 million ELs (9.2% of public school students) in Fall 2010 (National Center for Education Statistics, 2023). Higher education reflects a similar trend, with a significant shift towards linguistic diversity in two- and four-year colleges (Bergey et al., 2018) and an increasing number of schools gaining the designation of Hispanic Serving Institution. Yet ELs transitioning between high school and college can struggle with academic reading because of their linguistic background and literacy skills, and the reading demands in college can be especially overwhelming for students when English is not their first language (Roessingh & Douglas, 2011).

Literacy skills, and in particular, reading comprehension, positively correlate with college achievement across various academic disciplines (Clinton-Lisell et al., 2022). Therefore, supporting students' development of these skills is critical to student success in post-secondary institutions. In our roles as a secondary school ESL teacher, community college ESL professor, and community college professor of Modern Languages, we are uniquely positioned to discuss teaching methodologies that help ELs — defined here as speakers of other languages who are still developing their language and literacy skills in English — acquire literacy skills as they bridge the high school/college transition. We focus on three pedagogical areas: building metacognitive reading strategies, infusing academic language instruction into content area instruction, and finally, utilizing translanguaging, code-mixing, and first language (L1) supports in the second language (L2) classroom. Incorporating these strategies and practices will ensure greater success for ELs as they continue to develop proficiency in English and advance towards completion of their college degrees.

Theoretical Framework

High School Reading and ELs

According to data from the U.S. Department of Education, in 2022, only 5% of ELs were proficient in grade 8 reading, an increase from 4% in 2019. On the other hand, 33% of non-classified 8th graders were proficient in reading, down from 36% in 2019. As of 2019, only 3% of 12th grade ELs were proficient in reading, compared to the 39% proficient non-ELs. Graduation rates are slightly more positive: in 2015-2016, 67% of ELs graduated high school in four years, a rate that is lower than non-ELs (85%). While these numbers vary significantly by state, it is consistent that a disproportionately large number of ELs are not proficient in reading, and high school graduates, both ELs and non-ELs alike, are entering higher education deficient in reading skills.

To improve the academic literacy of ELs, we can look to two research-supported approaches implemented in K-12 settings: sheltered instruction and bilingual education. First, sheltered instruction is content instruction delivered at a language level appropriate for ELs, allowing students to acquire both content area concepts and academic English simultaneously. One common iteration of sheltered instruction is called the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP).

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In this framework, both the content area teacher, often along with the ESL teacher, employ a series of strategies to make content area instruction comprehensible to ELs while also focusing on development of academic literacy (Short et al., 2011). Teachers create both a content objective, which states the learning goal for the content topic, and a language objective, which states the language needed for students to achieve the content objective. For example, if a content objective is “Students will be able to write a narrative essay,” an appropriate language objective would be “Students will be able to construct a written narrative that sequences past events using time-order transition words (i.e. first, second, after that, as soon as, once).” Students receive instruction on both the target content topic and the academic language required to complete the content task.

Students with SIOP-trained teachers consistently demonstrated higher performance on a variety of academic language and literacy tasks than students who did not have SIOP trained teachers (Short et al., 2011). Furthermore, academic literacy improved for ELs even when the sheltered instruction was implemented in classes such as math, science, and social studies (Short et al., 2011), thus demonstrating that SIOP offers general education teachers important strategies for supporting ELs as they develop academic literacy in English.

In addition to SIOP, research supports the effectiveness of bilingual educational programs in developing ELs’ academic literacy. Research consistently shows that students in bilingual programs outperform students in monolingual programs, due in large part to their stronger L1 literacy (García et al., 2018). Thomas and Collier (1997) argue that literacy in the first language predetermines reading and oral comprehension in the target language and that L1 language supports are as necessary as L2 supports in the language acquisition process.

The true predictor is not *which* first language the student speaks but how much cognitive and academic development in L1 the student has experienced. The deeper a student’s level of L1 cognitive and academic development (which includes L1 proficiency development), the faster students will progress in L2 [...]. Of all the student background variables, the most powerful predictor of academic success in L2 is formal schooling in L1. This is true whether L1 schooling is received only in the home country or in both the home country and the U.S. (pp. 38-39)

Furthermore, Thomas and Collier (1997) found that the more L1 support that ELs received in addition to L2 support, “the higher they are able to achieve academically in L2 in each succeeding academic year” when compared to students receiving only L2 instruction (p. 39). Linguistically responsive instruction for ELs therefore includes both explicitly teaching academic English and supporting L1 literacy development. By strengthening students’ home language literacy as well as English, students will be better prepared as they transition to the academic literacy demands of college.

English Learners’ Preparedness for College-Level Reading

The transition from high school to college poses myriad academic challenges for all students, including the volume of academic work, complex readings and

writing assignments, and increased independence managing coursework — all of which differ from the majority of students' prior academic experiences. For ELs, this transition can be even more difficult, particularly with regard to college-level reading (Hirano, 2015; Murillo & Schall, 2016; Nguyen, 2020; Roessingh & Douglas, 2011). While some research points to poor preparation in K-12, especially for students from multilingual homes (Hirano, 2015; Murillo & Schall, 2016; Nguyen, 2021), an additional body of research focuses on the specific skills that are challenging for ELs because of their emerging academic literacy skills (Finn & Avni, 2021; Lei et al., 2010).

In the case of immigrant and language-minority youths, literacy instruction in high school has been closely tied to students' success in their first year of college (Murillo & Schall, 2016). In their study of Mexican-origin students' readiness for college literacy, the authors found that “male and female students from a range of majors cited difficulties with the types of literacy tasks they experienced as college freshmen, as well as the amount of reading expected of them” (p. 320), and “several participants attributed difficulties with reading and writing in college to lack of extensive practice in reading and writing in high school” (p. 318). Likewise, Hirano (2015) found that refugee students (all of whom had graduated from American high schools) felt that reading was taught differently in high school rather than in college, including the expectation of a deeper level of reading and analysis than they had previously practiced in K-12 settings. The students additionally reported struggles with managing a heavy reading load outside the classroom; whereas in high school, students often had the opportunity to complete reading assignments in class; in college, they were expected to come to class prepared and ready to engage with their classmates about the text. While this independence can be challenging for all students, academic vocabulary and background knowledge related to a specific historical or political time period make already-challenging reading materials even more burdensome for ELs (Hirano, 2015). Wahleithner (2020) also found that multilingual, first-generation college students felt that readings in college were longer, more complex, and required significant analysis — all of which differed from their reading experiences in high school.

Academic preparation for the types of genres and reading tasks introduced in college is paramount when supporting ELs, as is an explicit focus on language development and the development of critical thinking skills. To address the developing vocabulary skills of ELs in combined content-specific first-semester ESL reading and writing courses, Finn and Avni (2021) found that faculty scaffolded reading assignments, including focusing on content-specific vocabulary, because they recognized that their students struggled with comprehending complex academic texts. Further, the critical thinking skills required of students while reading in English can pose a challenge, and this is often because students might not have the academic vocabulary necessary to engage in a deeper discussion of the material. Nguyen (2020) describes that ESL students in college often hesitate with “articulating arguments and counter arguments in discussions before or after reading tasks. Even though students usually strive to grasp and comprehend language knowledge and new skills, it seems to be hard for many of them to apply what they have

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learned” (p. 35). These reading-based writing assignments pose a challenge for students who are still developing their vocabulary and critical thinking skills, and this is especially problematic since Scordaras (2009) argues that reading-based essays are common in college, and “require that students comprehend the reading, draw a relationship between the reading and their own experience, place that experience in the context of someone else’s experience, make appropriate and coherent connections; and include references to the reading” (p. 276). The result is a snowball effect, in which ELs who are overwhelmed by new vocabulary, textual analysis, and who are independently managing the reading load, may struggle to participate in class discussions or successfully analyze a text in a writing assignment. Effective pedagogical strategies are necessary to mitigate students’ challenges and further support their reading development in English.

Pedagogical Support 1: Developing Students’ Metacognitive Reading Strategies

As students enter college, they encounter a diverse set of complex reading tasks, most of which are unfamiliar to them (Wood et al., 1998; as cited in Gruenbaum, 2012). Successful readers in college can read challenging and diverse texts for comprehension and apply various approaches or strategies to these reading tasks (Conference on College Composition and Communication, 2021). However, when reading tasks are unfamiliar, students often use ineffective reading strategies to complete these tasks (Wood et al., 1998; as cited in Gruenbaum, 2012). A student’s ability to knowingly develop a set of reading strategies and apply them effectively to reading tasks is dependent on metacognition, or “the ability to monitor understanding of information communicated or to recognize a lack of comprehension, and then to apply corrective strategies to clarify comprehension” (Gruenbaum, 2012, p. 111). Research has shown that poor metacognition hinders students’ ability to “use corrective strategies to improve their comprehension” (Thiede et al., 2010; as cited in Gruenbaum, 2012). Therefore, developing strong metacognitive reading strategies builds an essential foundation that students utilize in the reading tasks they encounter in college and can provide a process for ELs as they navigate complex academic texts.

There are various approaches to building metacognitive reading strategies. According to the Conference on College Composition and Communication’s Principles to Support the Teaching and Learning of Reading, metacognitive awareness can be encouraged through the SQ5R approach, which includes the following steps:

survey (the text or reading), question (engage in inquiry), read (engage in active reading), respond (think about the text and the initial questions), record (annotate in the margins), recite (paraphrase key ideas), and review (reflect on the reading and revise notes). (Conference on College Composition and Communication, 2021)

This process encourages students to engage in both pre- and post-reading activities, including the metacognitive activities of creating questions before reading, identifying confusions created in the text, and reciting the concepts in the text and

then reviewing the text again for any parts missed. Through the SQ5R approach, students actively read and assess their understanding of the text. Metacognitive activities are especially helpful for ELs as they provide opportunities for ELs to use language abstractly and develop metacognition of their own academic language learning (Zwiers, 2014).

Similarly, Gruenbaum (2012) argues for a variation of SQ5R called Reciprocal Teaching Technique, which is a process of predicting, questioning, clarifying, and summarizing. The similarities between these two approaches, as well as other iterations of SQ5R, are that students move beyond reading the text and attempting to understand every word, but rather work themselves through a process of pre-reading, reading, and then ensuring comprehension through questions, clarification, and summarization, while monitoring their understanding and thought processes as they read. This process can help both ELs and non-ELs monitor their own reading comprehension, and students may benefit from faculty modeling an SQ5R-like process early in the course and providing reading guides that work students through this process. The questioning, clarifying, and summarizing in this process provide additional opportunities for ELs to utilize and refine their academic language use.

In both high school and college ESL classrooms, instructors can encourage students to apply reading strategies that center on the purpose for reading. Hilberg (2022) encourages a reading pedagogy that teaches “strategic reading.” A longitudinal study by Del Principe and Iharra (as cited in Hilberg, 2022, p. 132) showed that students realized quickly in their college coursework that they did not need to complete all of their assigned readings to be successful in college; rather, they read “‘strategically’: completing course reading assignments only when their performance in a course depended on it.” (Hilberg, 2022, p. 132). Since students noticed that professors did not always expect them to read every assigned text closely, Hilberg argues for teaching metacognitive strategies that enable students to select the most effective approach and strategies depending on the assignment and text. To introduce the idea of strategic reading, Hilberg asks students to search for and read product reviews for a product they have been considering buying. After completing the tasks, she asks metacognitive questions, drawing students’ attention to the strategies they employed:

Where did they begin—with a general search engine such as Google, or on a specific retail site such as Amazon? How did they make decisions about, for example, which links to click and which to pass over, which information to read and which to skim, when to scroll and when to pause? How do these decisions relate to their purposes as potential consumers considering whether to make a purchase? (Hilberg, 2022, p. 139)

This activity pushes students to look at the strategies they use while reading and reflect on how they are driven by the reading task, audience, and purpose. It converts the mere “reading for information” into a study of the genre of product review. Hilberg encourages students to choose their approach depending on the genre and the professor’s purpose for assigning the text: Does the assignment ask

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students to read and respond? Scan and locate specific information? Use the text to study for an exam?

These metacognitive practices of identifying the purpose for reading and analyzing a specific genre not only support comprehension, but also transfer across disciplines. When assigning a text, it can be beneficial to ask students to identify why they are reading and how to identify features of the genres assigned in the course. Genres such as lab reports, executive summaries, and journal articles have different structures and language features, and the faster an EL can recognize “the language and structure of a text and can create a mental framework, the faster and better the student can process the text and hang its information on the ‘frame.’” (Zwiers, 2014, pp. 199-200).

While these practices will benefit all students, they are especially helpful for ELs. Hilberg (2012) found that “strategic reading” benefited ELs more than any other student group because it encouraged them to reconsider their approach to reading texts in English. She found that “several students reported that they had previously relied upon a strategy of using an online tool such as Google Translate to decode from English into their first language nearly every unfamiliar word in a reading assignment” (Hilberg, 2022, p. 142). ELs can struggle with identifying what is most important in a text and often approach texts by trying to understand every single word, even when it requires a painstaking and time-consuming effort. Building metacognition can help ELs develop their own processes and strategies for reading, ultimately leading to improved reading comprehension.

Pedagogical Support 2: Building Academic Language

Access to academic language, as previously discussed, is an especially significant challenge for ELs who are still developing proficiency in English. Ranney (2012) defines academic language as

a register that is used to perform distinct academic language functions, draws on lexical and syntactic resources that are less common in everyday language, is realized in a variety of text structures and genres in different disciplines, and conveys messages about interpersonal aspects of academic interaction. (p. 565)

It is utilized to perform cognitively demanding tasks, such as inferring, analyzing, synthesizing, and persuading (Dutro & Moran, 2003). As such, Cummins (1981) estimates that it takes ELs five to seven years to develop academic language proficiency. This can make comprehending complex, academic texts quite challenging for ELs as they simultaneously master course content and develop academic language.

Research suggests that comprehension requires a knowledge of 98% of the words in a text (Hu & Nation, 2000), making vocabulary knowledge essential for understanding the language in academic texts. Beck et al. (2013) classify vocabulary into three tiers: Tier 1 vocabulary is non-academic, Tier 2 is composed of general academic words used across disciplines, and Tier 3 words are technical words, usually specific to a particular discipline. While Tier 3 vocabulary may already be

the target vocabulary in a course, effective instruction for ELs includes the explicit instruction of general academic, or Tier 2, words (Ranney, 2012). The [Academic Word List \(AWL\)](#) (Coxhead, n.d.) contains 570 of the most frequently used words in academic English (Coxhead, 2000) and provides a helpful starting point for identifying general academic vocabulary. Zwiers (2014) also advocates teaching appropriate usage of the many figurative expressions used in academic language, such as “boils down to, sidestep the issue, read between the lines, on the right track” (p. 30), as a support for ELs. Instructors across disciplines can assist ELs’ language development by including repeated instruction of academic vocabulary that includes exposure to and practice of target vocabulary (Ranney, 2012).

In addition to vocabulary, effective academic language instruction incorporates the unique language features used in academic language. Zwiers (2014) notes the use of long sentences, nominalization, passive voice, and the use of modals to “convey nuances of meaning” in academic language (p. 34). Directing students’ attention to and explicitly teaching the language features present in assigned texts can assist in building academic language (Ranney, 2012). Having students deconstruct or paraphrase passages of course texts can not only develop academic language (Ranney, 2012; Zwiers, 2014), but also serve as a review of target content material. For example, ELs would benefit from analyzing the relationship between clauses in a particular sentence (Fang, 2008; as cited in Ranney, 2012) and analyzing the language features that help establish that relationship. Students may also find it beneficial to annotate long, multi-clause sentences by using markings to separate clauses and indicate the main subject and verb (Zwiers, 2014). Employing these strategies enable ELs to break down and comprehend dense, complex academic texts.

Another essential component of building academic literacy and language is the use of oral language. There is a well-documented connection between using academic L2 oral language and improved L2 academic literacy (August & Shanahan, 2006; Zwiers, 2014). In high school and college classrooms, teacher-led discussions and pair or group work provide opportunities for students to hear and use academic language. Instructors can expose students to academic language and vocabulary in classroom discussions through their own talk or by repeating or rephrasing student contributions (Zwiers, 2012). In addition, group or pair activities like conversation circles, jigsaw activities, and think-pair-share provide students with low stress opportunities to repeatedly use academic language (Zwiers, 2014). To encourage rich academic conversation, Zwiers (2014) recommends that teachers model or scaffold group conversations; for example, students can elevate, or “academify,” (p. 161) a sample transcript of a group conversation. Another strategy is to give groups of students cards with “[Accountable Talk](#)” sentence frames (Institute for Arts Integration and STEAM, 2003) to use during in-class discussions. When a member of the group uses the sentence frame in the conversation, the student flips the card over, and the conversation must continue until all cards are flipped. When students use Accountable Talk in their academic conversations, they have repeated opportunities to use academic language to describe course

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concepts and develop critical thinking (Michaels et al., 2016). Fostering rich academic talk in class discussions can support ELs' development of academic language and ultimately, their L2 reading comprehension.

Pedagogical Support 3: Translanguaging

In the fields of both world language acquisition and bilingual education, translanguaging and code-mixing are internationally gaining traction as cutting edge linguistically responsive, additive, and socially equitable practices in the language acquisition classroom (Ascenzi-Moreno, 2018; García & Solorza, 2020; García, 2013; Muller, 2015). García (2013) defines “translanguaging [as] the language practices of bilingual people” (p. 7). It is distinct from code-switching in that:

The notion of code-switching assumes that the two languages of bilinguals are two separate monolingual codes that could be used without reference to each other. Instead, translanguaging posits that bilinguals have one linguistic repertoire from which they select features strategically to communicate effectively. That is, translanguaging takes as its starting point the language practices of bilingual people as the norm, and not the language of monolinguals, as described by traditional usage books and grammars. (p. 7)

Multilingual education researchers advocate for exploring the linguistic similarities and differences between the L1 and L2 as a learning tool (Hochberg, 2019). According to researchers, these practices are not only effective in helping students more rapidly and thoroughly acquire new languages, but are also required in order to achieve equity for diverse learners, from a critical pedagogy point of view (Freire, 1970). In the context of reading comprehension, translanguaging and code-mixing practices have been proven to help students with word recognition and overall sentence comprehension through the transfer of lexical, grammatical, and morphological patterns from the L1 to the L2. There is in fact “evidence that [...] bilingual students deploy their translanguaging in ways that assist them in skilled comprehension and production of academic texts” (García & Solorza, 2020, p. 13).

According to researchers, multilingual education classrooms that promote the use of translanguaging, code-mixing, and the intentional use of the L1 usually involve language transfer practices that draw students' attention to elements that are similar between students' L1 and the target language (L2). Beeman and Urow (2013) establish that in K-12 bilingual education practices, there are three main steps involved in language transfer between the L1 and the L2: a firm knowledge of the native language, comparing linguistic examples in both languages side by side, allowing students to actively observe similarities (e.g., lexical, grammatical), and finally, the application of this contrastive analysis to demonstrate English comprehension and produce comprehensible output in English. Beeman and Urow (2013) reiterate the indispensability not only of second language supports but also of informal to formal first language supports and literacy supports, or “skills such as spelling, phonics, punctuation” (p. 12). As stated previously, Thomas and Collier (1997) similarly maintain that literacy in the first language strongly

influences reading and oral comprehension in the target language and that L1 language supports are as necessary as L2 supports in the language acquisition process.

As a matter of fact, contemporary teacher-scholars in world language acquisition also endorse the use of language transfer and guide learners through an organic mixture of translanguaging, code-mixing, and code-switching in the language learning classroom to facilitate the acquisition of language proficiency and literacy skills in new world languages. Spinelli (2015) argues that “allowing students to use their knowledge of grammar, vocabulary, and morphological patterns in the native language helps [them] learn and make sense of the new language” (p. 17). Muller (2015) echoes that “students can be reasonably expected to almost ‘naturally’ pick up grammatical features in the target language [...]. If students are properly exposed to the syntactic or morphological connections through qualitatively and quantitatively adequate input, [...] they simply ‘get’ the point” (p. 185). When students have a firm lexical and grammatical foundation for L1 as well as L2, their L2 word recognition and overall reading comprehension improve.

These bilingual and multilingual education practices involving the active participation of the L1 in L2 learning are effective not only from a purely linguistic standpoint, helping students to learn languages more quickly and effectively by using their pre-existing linguistic repertoire to infer patterns in the new languages, but have also been proven to lower the affective filter (Krashen, 1982) and create a friendlier classroom environment and relationship to the languages for students. Donato and Oliva (2019) establish that “[n]o longer confined by imposed hierarchies of the ‘ideal’ speaker, [learners] establish a friendly relationship with languages, rather than a punitive one” (p. 3). Muller (2015) presents the following groundbreaking observation:

One of the most significant outcomes of our project [multilingual teaching methodology] is the collective realization that [...] classroom behaviors of the past have been detrimental to the actual patterns of communication among the students [...]. While immersion and communication in the target language still has high priority for us, we also realized [its] stifling effect on the students’ willingness to participate [...]. Code switching, or interlanguage contributes positively to the student’s learning experience and to a more vibrant classroom atmosphere. (p. 184)

Finally, Ascenzi-Moreno (2018) argues that in reading comprehension exercises where “emergent bilinguals access their entire pool of resources and are not limited to using language features from socially constructed language categories such as ‘English’ or ‘Spanish’ they fluidly and creatively participate in learning” (p. 357).

Ascenzi-Moreno (2018) also affirms that sometimes, students’ actual comprehension of the text is not the issue, but their expression in the L2 of their comprehension is lacking, lowering students’ reading scores on high stakes and standardized tests. To solve this problem, bilingual teachers can allow students to describe their comprehension of L2 texts in their L1. “When teachers limit emergent bilinguals’ reading performance to one language, they are not able to detect and re-

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spond to the full span of their students' reading abilities, leading to a partial and inaccurate assessment of students" (Ascenzi-Moreno, 2018, p. 357). If students can instead demonstrate their understanding of texts in whichever language they are most comfortable with, their experience is more equitable to that of native target language speakers and can help to close the equity gaps described above. This would mean that teachers would ideally be proficient in students' L1, which is a fairly reasonable expectation for common L1s such as Spanish. A reframing of the issue of students' reading comprehension in the L2, then, can be that some teachers do not have sufficient proficiency in the students' L1 to effectively guide learners in navigating patterns between languages and to allow students linguistic flexibility in demonstrating their comprehension of L1 texts.

An example of such an activity in the high school or community college world language or ESL classroom, where students would be invited to utilize their L1 knowledge in support of L2 reading comprehension and utilize translanguaging and linguistic flexibility to demonstrate their comprehension of a target language (TL/L2) text, may look like the following. Students may read a text in the TL individually or in groups with all necessary and appropriate scaffolds for their reading level. These scaffolds may include a glossary with particularly new or difficult words within the text translated directly into students' L1 (assuming students share a common L1, as in a world language class) and morphological flow charts that draw students' attention to cognates and easily transferable words between the L1 and the L2 found within the text, as well as any false cognates and idiomatic words or phrases the instructor anticipates students may struggle to comprehend. To guide and facilitate the post-reading discussion as a full group, students may also be provided with a RAN chart—a read and analyze nonfiction table in which students hypothesize, confirm, and correct their comprehension of a text during and after a reading assignment. In this activity, the RAN chart that students would fill out in any language or in mixed languages during both reading and group discussion would allow them to document 1) what they feel they understood, 2) if they were correct, 3) what they learned, and 4) final thoughts, questions, and inquiries. During the discussion portion, students would be encouraged to share out what they understood from the reading, ask questions on anything they did not fully comprehend, answer comprehension questions out loud to demonstrate what they did comprehend, and negotiate meaning with their peers and the instructor, all of which would take place in whatever language students are most comfortable with, whether L1, L2, or a mixture of both. An activity such as this would confirm the theory that when students are allowed and encouraged to engage with their L1 during L2 learning, both their confidence around L2 acquisition and their actual L2 comprehension increase.

The findings outlined above have been consistent across disciplines, whether in world language acquisition (Donato & Oliva, 2019; Spinelli, 2015; Muller, 2015; Krashen, 1982), or bilingual education (Beeman & Urow, 2015; Thomas & Collier, 1997; Ascenzi-Moreno, 2018; Krashen, 1982; García, 2013), further proving their validity. The findings prove that translanguaging and code-mixing are not simply an excuse to keep students at a Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS)

level of language, but rather a legitimate avenue by which to help them achieve Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP). As demonstrated, this teaching methodology also offers the added benefit of being culturally responsive and psychologically beneficial to students who see their previously existing skill set as useful and helpful in the formation of new linguistic and cognitive skills.

When students' home languages are actively allowed and encouraged in the L2 classroom, they are better able to make connections between languages and begin to notice morphological and lexical patterns that improve their word recognition and overall reading comprehension. These practices also support their cognitive development and improve their linguistic production in the L2, positioning them to better demonstrate their comprehension of the texts they read by responding to oral or written comprehension questions in the L2, if necessary. Finally, students will simply have a better response and more openness to the L2 if the L2 classroom supports and validates the use of their L1 in learning. This alone can improve their L2 comprehension and production by lowering the affective filter (Krashen, 1982) and neutralizing any stress or trauma in regard to the L2, as learners become aware that target language instruction is building on—rather than attempting to erase or replace—their existing skills and knowledge.

Conclusion

When ELs are engaged directly and holistically at every stage of the process between entering and exiting the high school and college ESL program, when their existing linguistic and cultural skillsets are viewed through a more additive lens, and when faculty validate and build upon students' existing skills and background through linguistically and culturally responsive instruction, students are given the necessary resources to achieve at their highest possible potential. Supporting students through this transition is more important than ever given the increasing numbers of multilingual students enrolling in both K-12 and higher education and the documented challenges that students encounter with college-level reading in English.

Pedagogical approaches like building metacognitive reading strategies, incorporating academic language instruction into content area instruction, and encouraging the use of translanguaging, code-mixing, and L1 supports in the L2 classroom can all enhance students' L2 literacy development. Teaching students to build metacognitive reading strategies provides them with critical tools to comprehend and engage with the texts and tasks they encounter in college, and these strategies are especially beneficial for ELs since they provide opportunities for abstract language use and heightened metacognition related to students' academic language learning. Additionally, building academic language, including increased attention to — and awareness of — academic vocabulary, specific language features in a text, and oral discussions will provide students with the skills and confidence necessary to comprehend and analyze challenging reading material. Finally, linguistically responsive classroom instruction can improve students' comprehension of L2 texts on assessments and graded assignments. The more instructors can allow, and even encourage, translanguaging in the everyday classroom so that students draw similarities and patterns between their L1 and the L2, the more

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rapidly their reading comprehension will improve. Furthermore, translanguaging values students' identity not only as English Learners, but as Emergent Bilinguals, where their entire linguistic repertoire is viewed as an academic and cultural asset in the classroom.

As ELs transition between high school and college, it is important that high school and college faculty across disciplines work together to recognize the curricular and pedagogical barriers to student achievement in areas such as reading where significant achievement gaps exist between ELs and non-ELs. Many times, it is not—or not exclusively—students' skills that need to be improved, but the way in which we approach diverse students at the systemic and curricular level that may cause achievement gaps in students from demographics that are often overlooked and underserved, such as the culturally and linguistically diverse multilingual learners described here. Teacher education and professional development for world language, bilingual education, and ESL pre- and in-service language educators—but also general education instructors—must approach diverse students with a holistic and asset-based mindset. By focusing on the significance of students' cultural background, linguistic repertoire, and access to resources, all educators can effectively and sustainably close achievement gaps and ensure student success in college and beyond.

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World language teacher perspectives on attrition and retention

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Abstract

This study addressed the problem of a continuing loss of world language (WL) teachers in the United States. The author analyzed semi-structured interviews with five current and former high school WL teachers to investigate their perspectives on factors that may predict WL teacher attrition and retention. Findings identified elements related to human, social, structural, and positive psychological capital as important factors in WL teachers' decisions to remain or leave. The results of this study provide important implications for encouraging WL teachers to stay in the profession.

Keywords: world language teachers, foreign language teachers, teacher attrition, teacher retention.

Introduction

The ability to attract and retain a strong workforce of effective world language (WL) teachers is crucial for ensuring that students are successful upon graduating and entering the workforce. However, there is a continuing crisis in attracting and retaining high-quality teachers, especially WL teachers (Acheson et al., 2016; Swanson, 2012a; Swanson & Huff, 2010). Although numerous programs have been implemented over the past 60 years in order to resolve this issue, the shortage continues, and there is still no consensus on the causes (Swanson, 2013). This is problematic given the increasing importance of effective WL instruction in today's global society, a multicultural world in which people of diverse cultures, races, and ethnicities increasingly come into contact in ways that require the mutual cooperation that is facilitated by language (Guerin, 2009; Guryanov et al., 2019; Josefova, 2018). Unfortunately, there is limited research investigating the

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attrition of WL teachers as a unique population. In addition, more research is needed to better understand the perspectives of WL teachers on this issue. As such, this study answers the following question: What are some of the factors that may predict WL teacher attrition and retention? By applying a three step coding process (Hesse-Biber, 2017) to semi-structured interviews using a four-capital theoretical model of teacher retention (Mason & Matas, 2015), valuable insights emerge for addressing WL teacher attrition through policy, practice, and future research.

Literature Review

The cost of teacher attrition

Teacher attrition, or the rate at which teachers leave the profession, is an ongoing problem in the United States (U.S.). Teacher attrition in K-12 school systems has become an even greater concern over the past two decades (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017, 2019). Some amount of attrition is to be expected in teaching. In fact, there are some benefits to teachers leaving in situations such as when there is a poor teacher-school fit or when a teacher is ready to retire (DeFeo et al., 2017). However, when Carver-Thomas and Darling-Hammond (2017) analyzed trends in a nationally representative survey of U.S. teachers, they found that less than a third of national teacher attrition is due to retirement; more teachers cite dissatisfaction with some aspect of the job as their reason for leaving voluntarily.

Teacher attrition has a significant financial impact for school districts (Boivie, 2017; Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2019; Rumschlag, 2017). During the 2008-2009 school year, the U.S. was estimated to have spent between \$1 billion and \$2.2 billion due to teacher attrition in public schools (Haynes et al., 2014). These costs are incurred as school districts must complete administrative tasks and recruit, hire, and train new teachers to replace teachers who leave prematurely. If teacher turnover is not addressed, these costs will likely continue to increase.

There are other negative consequences of a high teacher turnover rate, including harmful effects on school climate, professional development, and instructional quality (DeFeo et al., 2017). Teacher turnover also contributes to teacher shortages, forcing schools to enact stopgap measures such as “hiring inexperienced or unqualified teachers, increasing class sizes, or cutting class offerings, all of which impact student learning” (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2019, p. 3). In addition, teacher turnover precludes the ability of teachers to make gains in experience and productivity (Boivie, 2017). Perhaps most importantly, when teachers leave prematurely, student achievement suffers (Boivie, 2017; DeFeo et al., 2017).

World language teacher attrition

WLs continue to be consistently identified as a high-need field in which there is a shortage of qualified teachers (Cross, 2017; Sutchter et al., 2019; U.S. Department of Education, 2020). Sass et al. (2012) conducted a Kaplan-Meier analysis to estimate survival data for teachers based on multiple factors, including teaching assignment. Sass et al. concluded that WL teachers “possessed the greatest risk of attrition, with few teachers ($n = 1,392$; 0.65%) remaining in the profession after

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ten years. In other words, of those WL teachers who entered the profession, less than 1% stayed in the classroom after ten years” (pp. 10-11). Carver-Thomas and Darling-Hammond (2017, 2019) found teacher attrition to be especially problematic for teachers of math, science, special education, English language development, and WLs. When the authors compared predicted turnover rate by subject area using data from the U.S. Department of Education Schools and Staffing Survey (2011–12) and Teacher Follow-up Survey (2012–13) (National Center for Education Statistics, n.d.), they found that mathematics and science teachers exhibited a rate that was 37% higher than that of elementary school teachers, while special education teachers had a rate that was 46% higher. Meanwhile, the predicted turnover rate of WL teachers was 87% higher, implicating WLs as a field of particular concern.

Given the ongoing issue of attracting and retaining WL teachers, the attrition of WL teachers merits additional focus. Unfortunately, there has been a lack of representation of WL teachers in research on teacher attrition and retention as compared to teachers in other areas that are deemed to be more critical, such as math and science (Mason, 2017; Swanson & Huff, 2010). Research that has been done has frequently focused on external factors that are difficult to address such as age, gender, and family responsibility (Wilkerson, 2000). Although some factors in attrition may be common to teachers of all subjects, a one-size fits all approach may not adequately address some of the more nuanced reasons that WL teachers choose to leave prematurely. As such, further investigation is needed to determine which factors may be of particular interest in the attrition of WL teachers.

As Swanson and Mason (2018) declared, “the days of simply ringing the bell about the shortage need to end” (p. 258). This study answers the call to find ways to address WL teacher attrition and retention more actively. Doing so may ensure that future generations of students have effective language teachers to guide them in developing the language proficiencies necessary for a global society.

Theoretical Framework

Numerous models have been developed and applied to better understand the underlying causes of teacher attrition and retention. These include, but are not limited to, push-pull theory (Knell & Castro, 2014), burnout (Madigan & Kim, 2021; Maslach & Leiter, 1999), self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997; Swanson, 2012a; Swanson & Huff, 2010), and job satisfaction (Madigan & Kim, 2021; Ouyang & Paprock, 2006). However, as noted by Mason and Matas (2015), there is a need for a theoretically-driven framework to fully capture the complex nature of teacher attrition. Thus, Mason and Matas created a four-capital theoretical model of teacher retention. The use of the term “capital” resonates with the use of the term to describe assets that one is able to use for production. In this framework, these assets include human capital, social capital, structural capital, and positive psychological capital. These four capitals are comprised of specific subcomponents, which are included in Table 1. Also included in Table 1 are references to literature supporting the relevance of these subcomponents to each theme.

Table 1

Themes and subcomponents of the four-capital theoretical model of teacher retention

Theme	Subcomponents	References
Human Capital	Presence, quality, and nature of pre-service education	Aguilar, 2018; Kearney et al., 2018; Mason, 2017; Meyer et al., 2019; Sribayak et al., 2018; Swanson, 2008a, 2010, 2012b; Wilkerson, 2000
	Professional skills and knowledge	Mason, 2017; Meyer et al., 2019; Swanson, 2012a
	Opportunities for and relevance of continuing professional development	Cummings Hlas et al., 2018; Harris et al., 2019; Mason, 2017; Mason & Matas, 2016; Moore et al., 2018; Myung et al., 2013; Swanson, 2012a; Whitebook et al., 2018
Positive psychological capital	Quality of relationships with members of the school community	Cummings Hlas et al., 2018; Mason, 2017; Mason & Matas, 2016; Waters, 2019
	Presence and quality of leadership	Harris et al., 2019; Kearney et al., 2018; Mason, 2017; Mason & Matas, 2016; Moore et al., 2018, 2018; Singh, 2017; Wilkerson, 2000
	School culture	Cummings Hlas et al., 2018; Harris et al., 2019; Kearney et al., 2018; Mason, 2017; Singh, 2017; Wilkerson, 2000
	Presence, quality, and nature of informal and formal support	Acheson et al., 2016; Kearney et al., 2018; Mason, 2017; Mason & Matas, 2016; Moore et al., 2018; Sribayak et al., 2018; Whitebook et al., 2018; Wilkerson, 2000
	Value of teachers and teaching	Cummings Hlas et al., 2018; Mason, 2017; Mason & Matas, 2016; Swanson, 2010; Wilkerson, 2000
Structural capital	Nature and complexity of role	Acheson et al., 2016; Mason, 2017; Sribayak et al., 2018; Whitebook et al., 2018; Wilkerson, 2000
	Employment conditions, structure, and pathways Departmental policies	Mason, 2017; Moore et al., 2018; Sribayak et al., 2018) Harris et al., 2019; Kearney et al., 2018; Mason, 2017; Sribayak et al., 2018; Wilkerson, 2000
	School resources and facilities	Harris et al., 2019; Kearney et al., 2018; Mason, 2017; Meyer et al., 2019; Moore et al., 2018; Swanson, 2010

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Together, these capitals and their subcomponents describe the assets necessary to retain teachers. Although this framework was developed in Australia, the researcher hoped to demonstrate its applicability to a U.S. context to build upon the important work that researchers are accomplishing internationally concerning this topic. Thus, these capitals and their subcomponents were applied as themes to participant data during a three-step coding process, which is described in the methodology section below.

Methodology

This qualitative study (IRB #20-271) utilized Seidman's (2012) three-interview series and Hesse-Biber's (2017) three-step coding process to identify key factors that related to the themes identified by the four-capital theoretical model of teacher retention proposed by Mason and Matas (2015). The use of a three-interview series allowed the researcher to gather more information from each participant than would be possible with a single interview. In addition, each interview covered a different aspect of participants' experiences, as described further in the research procedures below. A three-step coding process allowed the researcher to systematically analyze the data to gain a deeper understanding of participant experiences and perspectives and how they aligned with the framework.

Research Question

This study aimed to answer the following question: What are some of the factors that may predict WL teacher attrition and retention?

Participants

Participants were invited via convenience sampling. More specifically, participants were recruited via social media posts, email, and snowball sampling, a non-probability technique in which participants recommend additional participants for the study. Participants were selected if they met the qualification of being a current or former high school WL teacher in the U.S. within the last ten years. Demographic information for all participants is provided in Table 2 on the next page. All names included are pseudonyms.

Context

This study was conducted completely online due to a worldwide pandemic which precluded in-person interactions. As a result, two of the participants were interviewed using email, one via Zoom teleconferencing software, and two by phone.

Research Procedures

This study was conducted following Seidman's (2012) three-interview series. Three semi-structured interviews were conducted with each participant. The first interview was designed to learn more about each participant's background as a WL teacher. The second interview explored details of each participant's experiences as a WL teacher and why they chose to stay or leave. The third interview asked each participant to reflect on the meaning of the experiences they shared in the previous interviews. Special care was taken when writing the questions for the semi-structured interviews to avoid including biased or leading questions.

Table 2
Participant Demographics

	Ella	Julie	Tab	David	Flor
Gender	Female	Female	Male	Male	Female
Region	Midwest	Northeast	Southwest	Southwest	Northeast
Total time spent teaching	26-30 years	31-35 years	1-5 years	11-15 years	6-10 years
Language(s) taught	French	French, Spanish	French	Spanish	Spanish
Certification type	Traditional	Traditional	Alternative	Traditional	Traditional
Types of school taught	Parochial Suburban Public	Rural Urban Public	Urban Public	Urban Charter Public	Urban Magnet Charter Public
Grade level(s) taught	Preschool High school	Elementary School Middle School High School	High School	Elementary School Middle School High School	Middle School High School
Teaching status	Left teaching, wants to return	Left teaching, doesn't want to return	Left teaching, unsure if wants to return	Left teaching, doesn't want to return	Still teaching, wants to continue
Reasons for school-to-school transfer	By choice	By choice	By choice	By choice	By choice
Additional roles and responsibilities?	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Prior career(s)	None	None	Business	None	None
Study abroad experience	None	One semester	One semester	Six months	None

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Participants were asked to expect interviews to last approximately 30-60 minutes rather than Seidman's (2012) suggestion of 90 minutes out of respect for their busy schedules. Given the number of interviews and repetition of core themes noted during data analysis, the presence of shorter interviews was not considered to be a concern with respect to the quality and breadth of the data. Each series of interviews was conducted over the course of 2-3 weeks at the convenience of each participant, with each interview spaced at least 3 days to a week apart. Participants who chose to complete the interviews via email received the three sets of interview questions in a Microsoft Word document following this same timeline.

Analysis

The researcher re-read the interview transcripts. The researcher then wrote field notes about their overall impressions of the data before importing the transcripts into NVivo 12. This software was used to create descriptive, categorical, and analytical codes (Hesse-Biber, 2017). Memos to take note of interesting findings were also written while reading through the transcripts. In addition, cases for each participant were created, including attributes such as existence of a prior non-teaching career, certification type, types of school in which they taught, grade levels taught, current teaching status, presence of additional roles and responsibilities, total time spent teaching, and study abroad experience.

During the descriptive coding step, segments of the transcripts were assigned basic descriptive labels such as "professional development," "teacher efficacy," "work environment," and "workload." This resulted in the creation of 23 unique labels. Subcategories were created to help with preliminary organization of codes – for example, "workload" included subcategories such as "workday hours" and "other duties."

The categorical coding phase organized the deductive codes from the first phase into nine main categories:

- Compare to non-WL
- Compare to non-teaching
- External factors
- Pre-service experiences
- Relationships
- Salary, leave, benefits, and retirement
- Teacher KSAOs [knowledge, skills, abilities, and other characteristics]
- Work environment
- Workload.

Subcategories were created as necessary. Redundant codes and categories were merged.

The analytical coding phase involved deductive organization of the descriptive codes into categories based upon the 13 themes of the theoretical framework. For example, "pre-service experiences" was organized under the theme "presence, quality, and nature of pre-service education." Finally, a matrix coding query between the analytical and categorical codes was applied to look for additional coding intersections. Subcategories were also included in this analysis. This helped

gain additional insights as to what lower-level factors were most important within each higher-level factor. For example, seeing that the categorical code for relationships with students had far more intersections with quality of relationships with members of school community than other possible relationships (with admin, with parents, with colleagues, with the community, with other campus staff) highlighted the particular importance of building relationships with students as compared to others in the school community.

To enhance the validity and credibility of the study, member checking was then performed to obtain participant feedback on how well the findings aligned with their perspectives. To accomplish this step, participants were provided a copy of the final draft of the manuscript and asked to provide feedback. Participants were asked to pay particular attention to the accuracy of their information in the participants section as well as whether the findings, implications, and conclusion accurately reflected their thoughts and ideas. Any errors that participants pointed out were corrected. All participants expressed that the manuscript correctly represented their contributions.

Findings

Below are the findings for each theme from the theoretical framework. Relevant quotes from participants are included for each theme along with a short discussion of the most commonly referenced categories for each theme. The most commonly referenced categories overall from the descriptive and categorical stages of coding are noted as well.

Human capital

Human capital was the third most frequently referenced main category of the theoretical framework. The category with the highest number of references within this theme was professional skills and knowledge. Important KSAOs related to human capital included an ability to create fun and engaging activities, ability to encourage student participation and engagement, knowledge of content teaching and assessment, ability to relate well with kids, and efficacy in classroom management and discipline.

Presence, quality, and nature of pre-service education

In terms of pre-service education, one topic that surfaced was that of student teaching. Julie mentioned the need for teacher candidates to have a broad set of student teaching experiences. Since her student teaching experience was with high school students, she felt underprepared when asked to teach elementary and middle school students.

So they need to get, have a broader experience too. Like I only ever student taught high school. Whereas I should have student taught elementary and I should have student taught middle school because I ended up doing all three at one time, you know, I taught elementary sixth grade, which you know, I guess is Middle School in some places too. But um, yeah. And people always ask language teachers, can you come into the preschool and do a lesson on this? Can you come into the kindergarten class and do a lesson on this? (Phone interview)

Personality and psychological factors

Key terms that surfaced within this subtheme for all participants included enthusiasm, passion, and fun. In her interview, Julie noted that WL teachers “have to be passionate about what they’re teaching. They have to love it. And it’s not just a career, it’s a way of life.” Later she added the need “to be enthusiastic, and to really have fun, and to really answer everybody’s questions, you need to be in it 100%.” Ella added that WL teachers should “focus first on relationships with kids, don’t try to be perfect, have fun!”

Tab added that WL teachers should “take it easy,” noting that “The world is not going to end if you make a mistake. You don’t have to be perfect. You don’t have to let situations upset you too much. You don’t have to stress out about standardized testing.”

The above responses demonstrate a recommendation that WL teachers should focus less on perfection and more on enjoying the chance to build relationships with their students. This ability to build meaningful relationships with students was by far the most salient theme in the interviews, as discussed next.

Social capital

Social capital was the most frequently referenced category of to navigate a wide variety of topics that a university teacher training program might not cover in their curriculum. In addition, the student teaching experience can help teacher candidates gain a better understanding of the nature and quantity of work that will be expected of them.

Opportunities for and relevance of continuing professional development

With regard to ongoing professional development, David mentioned the desire for professional development tailored to his content area needs:

I think a teacher should have access to professional development that is individualized for them, to grow in areas that they seek to grow in. Also that they may lack an [sic] expertise. (Zoom interview)

Flor mentioned the desire for professional development that would promote more buy-in from the rest of the school community:

Overall I would just say this is just more of a buy-in within the school community, to actually implement foreign language more explicit in the curriculum ... There isn’t, you know, there would need to be like PD on this ... it needs to be carried out from the very, very bottom. And that isn’t something that is given a lot of time ... But that doesn’t happen when we’re talking about foreign language courses ... how you go about it is the problem area. I think teachers want that, they see that it’s important, they wouldn’t know how to incorporate it into their curriculum. (Phone interview)

Flor highlighted the importance of both quality and quantity of student teaching experience:

Any program that you go through for teaching, it does NOT prepare you at all for what you’re actually gonna be doing in the classroom. It does not prepare you. I mean, pedagogy and understanding the history of

teaching, that has nothing to do with the actual things that are gonna be happening in the classroom. I was fortunate that the program I chose to do had a longer student teaching experience. So I was in the classroom for four months, where some programs only require that you be in a classroom for four weeks. And so, a student experience of four weeks, you're not going through the weather changes of being in the classroom in student teaching. (Phone interview)

David added to this need for student teaching experiences to help teacher candidates practice dealing with real-world situations that teacher education programs don't necessarily cover:

What you don't get sometimes is things that are real life. Like how do you deal with losing a student? How do you deal with training for school shootings? How do you deal with COVID? How do you deal with behavior? Like, your kids acting up in class, what do you do? The education program doesn't really set you up for that kind of stuff. How do you deal with irate parents? And so those are on-the-job learning that you get. But I guess the expectation in general was, I knew what I was getting myself into. No one prepares you for that extra work you do. Like the grading and stuff like that. (Zoom interview)

These comments highlight the need for lengthier student teaching programs that move beyond providing theoretical understandings of child development and pedagogy toward helping teacher candidates build an awareness of the realities of classroom life. Student teaching experiences can help teacher candidates learn to navigate a wide variety of topics that a university teacher training program might not cover in their curriculum. In addition, the student teaching experience can help teacher candidates gain a better understanding of the nature and quantity of work that will be expected of them.

Opportunities for and relevance of continuing professional development

With regard to ongoing professional development, David mentioned the desire for professional development tailored to his content area needs:

I think a teacher should have access to professional development that is individualized for them, to grow in areas that they seek to grow in. Also that they may lack an [sic] expertise. (Zoom interview)

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Tab and David also bemoaned the lack of training on how to do their everyday jobs effectively, such as using gradebook software or setting up a website. Overall, participants expressed a desire for professional development that is focused on their unique needs as WL instructors.

Professional skills and knowledge

In terms of professional skills and knowledge, most participants mentioned an ability to work effectively with children as being highly important. Julie focused on the discipline aspect:

But the second thing is discipline, you just have to have that, I don't know what it is. The personality, the innate sense, the way to handle the kids. I don't know exactly what it is, but you know it when you see it. (Phone interview)

Tab focused more on just the general ability to relate well with small children in a way that makes teachers happier and thus more likely to stay:

So there is a matter of skill set. Some people have the skill set of relating well to small children. These teachers may be happier and opt to stay. (Email interview)

An ability to effectively teach content area information was also mentioned by several participants, as well as finding ways to keep the students interested in the language they are studying as an elective. Julie mentioned this in her interview:

I have to say, my biggest challenge was learning the grammar, so that I could present it in a way that all students would understand it. And to make it so that it was fun and not boring ... and you know, keeping the kids interested also, because I was the only Spanish teacher at the high school. (Phone interview)

Overall, the participants' responses reflected a need for a balance between skills involving knowledge of their language and how to teach it as well as how to work well with children. This theme overlapped with positive psychological capital, which is discussed next.

Positive psychological capital

Positive psychological capital was the least frequently referenced category of the theoretical framework. Teacher qualities and teacher efficacy were among the most frequently referenced factors at the descriptive stage of coding. Since there was only one subcategory to choose from, personality and psychological factors, the categories with the highest number of references within the most similar categorical code, teacher KSAOs, were used. Important KSAOs related to positive psychological capital included having a growth mindset, a love of the language and culture, a positive disposition toward children, and a passion for their field. Additional teacher qualities included being flexible, fun, passionate, capable, and not trying to be a perfectionist.

Personality and psychological factors

Key terms that surfaced within this subtheme for all participants included enthusiasm, passion, and fun. In her interview, Julie noted that WL teachers "have

to be passionate about what they're teaching. They have to love it. And it's not just a career, it's a way of life." Later she added the need "to be enthusiastic, and to really have fun, and to really answer everybody's questions, you need to be in it 100%." Ella added that WL teachers should "focus first on relationships with kids, don't try to be perfect, have fun!"

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The above responses demonstrate a recommendation that WL teachers should focus less on perfection and more on enjoying the chance to build relationships with their students. This ability to build meaningful relationships with students was by far the most salient theme in the interviews, as discussed next.

Social capital

Social capital was the most frequently referenced category of the theoretical framework. The category with the highest number of references within this theme was quality of relationships with members of school community. The category within this theme that was among the most frequently referenced factors overall at both the descriptive and categorical stages of coding was that of relationships. Relationships with students was the most commonly referenced factor within this category, with administrators not far behind. When talking with participants, it seemed that relationships with campus- and district-level administrators were not highly relevant in WL teacher attrition unless the relationship was bad or even toxic, in which case administrators then became a key factor in a teacher wanting to leave the school, district, and/or the profession. Relationships with and support from other members of the campus community, including other teachers and counselors, were also specifically mentioned as having a role in teachers wanting to leave.

Quality of relationships with members of school community

Although several participants mentioned the importance of building relationships with their colleagues, department heads, administrators, counselors, other school staff, parents, and members of the community, the most important relationship they had was with their students. Ella in particular specifically mentioned the relationship with students as a key factor in not wanting to leave:

I loved interacting with my students. In many cases I taught my students for 4 years in a row and we were like family. I was confident and relaxed with them and looked forward to my time in the classroom. We laughed together and many of my students fell in love with the language. For most of my career I couldn't imagine ever leaving ... I never felt like leaving because of the students; in fact, it was the students that made it so hard for me to leave. For the most part my relationship with my students was the best part of going to work every day. I often said that if I could just do the work I did during the regular school day I would do it forever. (Email interview)

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Given its importance to influencing a teacher's desire to stay, building relationships with students should be an area of focus when training current and future WL teachers.

Presence and quality of leadership

Leadership did not influence teacher attrition unless leadership was bad, in which case it was a crucial factor. Ella mentioned the effect of overall leadership:

When leadership is not supportive of language programs (no limits on class size, teacher workload, money for resources, funds for professional development, etc.) a teacher's experience can be more challenging. Likewise, a lack of leadership in a department can make growth and collaboration nearly impossible. These facts may influence many teachers' decisions to leave. (Email interview)

David specifically mentioned how a principal can foster either a desire to stay or a desire to leave in language teachers:

I think when you have strong leadership, who has a vision for educating our students that is positive and impactful for not only them, but teacher learning and teacher growth, then that will help teachers stay. But when you have these I gotcha type of administrators or administrators who are not supportive, who seem like they're just out to check boxes and not really care, I think that's when teachers, especially foreign language teachers, because we're an elective, we're not one of those required classes. And so that would make us feel like we don't want to stay ... I definitely think administration has the strongest impact on teacher retention. (Zoom interview)

Julie implicated the superintendent of the district as being the reason that many teachers (including herself) left the district or the profession entirely:

She [superintendent] never, the whole time I was there with her, which was three or four years, she never observed anybody. Yet, she would say things to the board like Oh, so and so, they're not doing their job, or something like that. I can't tell you how many people took early retirement or changed districts because of her. (Phone interview)

School and district leadership should be considered as a key element that may affect attrition or retention of teachers. Leadership must try in particular to demonstrate support and value for WL teachers.

School culture

The desire to stay can also be impacted by the overall culture of their school and school district. Ella described the hostile environment she experienced and how it affected the ability for her and her colleagues to collaborate effectively:

There was no socializing and relationships were very tense. Furthermore, the language teachers in the district were very divided in methodologies ... As a result, our 1.5 hours per week of mandatory collaboration were extremely strained. Things were just as difficult in my own building. The

teachers were extremely unkind to each other and gossiping was rampant. (Email interview)

This hostility may cause a teacher to actually leave, whereas a supportive, caring environment may help a teacher want to stay, as David expressed:

I think when you're in a supportive environment, you, and in a, like, not to be cheesy, but like a loving environment, where, you know, people genuinely care about each other. I think that will help a teacher stay, but when that environment is not fostered, and it's more hostile, then that can also cause that teacher to leave. (Zoom interview)

The environment in which a WL teacher works may be considered one possible factor in their decision to stay or leave.

Value of teachers and teaching

The value of WLs was a key topic in this subtheme. Flor described her least favorite moments in teaching as those in which parents demonstrated a lack of value for language learning:

Some of the least favorite moments are when you have to call home about a student who's not doing so great academically is not meeting standards, doesn't have the grades. And then you call home and you're hit with a parent who either is like, Well, can they, you know, is it, can they just get like a passing grade, like, they're not gonna need this after this class. Who are not supportive, and just don't see the value in language learning. Or they're like, you know, at home it's not really supported. And then it comes through in conversation. (Phone interview)

Flor added a desire for WL courses to be given the same recognition and value as other content areas such as math and science:

I would say is having foreign language courses, so that the required ... how the credits work for the school, it was given the same recognition and value and importance as some of the other courses that are considered gen ed, not having it be under elective. But a main course that's held to the same requirement as some of the other courses like math and science and English. So what would be ideal is if you had a more inclusive environment, like if teachers, not just by mouth like that's only what they say, Oh yeah, you know, learning a second language is important. But actually, if the school as a community as a whole embodied that idea, if other subjects would also incorporate foreign language in their classroom, into their curriculum. (Phone interview)

Showing WL teachers that they and their subject are valued at all levels is a helpful way to increase their job satisfaction and thus their desire to stay.

Presence, quality, and nature of informal and formal support

Support for WL programs as well as for the teachers themselves were key factors in this subtheme. Ella specifically mentioned frustration with a lack of support from counselors in promoting the program:

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Most of us probably spend very little time with counselors. Unfortunately, some counselors may not be supportive of our programs. I've had many steer students away from taking French, for example, because it would be "too hard." (Email interview)

Flor described the unique support needs of WL teachers as compared to other content areas and their desire to receive this support from colleagues such as their department head:

I mean, if you don't build a good relationship with them [department lead], if you don't feel like they have your back or you're not being supported, I think that's enough to determine if a teacher stays in foreign language because I feel like, across all the different subject areas that there is to teach, I do think that foreign language teachers need a different level of support than perhaps an English teacher who, or even science, because our standard testing, state testing rides so much on those two areas that they're often given a lot of support whereas perhaps foreign language teachers are not given that same caliber of help or are given that same amount of coaching. (Phone interview)

A sense that WL teachers and their content area are not being provided the same level of support as others on campus or within a district may affect teachers' desire to stay. There are many ways to provide support, including those related to structural capital, which is discussed next.

Structural capital

Structural capital was the second most frequently referenced category of the theoretical framework. The category with the highest number of references within this theme was nature and complexity of role, while the categories within this theme that were among the most frequently referenced factors overall at both the descriptive and categorical stages of coding were work environment and workload. Within work environment, frequently mentioned factors included support, leadership, mentorship and guidance, technology and technology access, atmosphere, collaboration, access to resources, and freedom and latitude. Within work-load, factors that were frequently mentioned included expectations to commit to other duties, workday hours, grading, and number of preps. Work/life balance and lack of flexibility were also specifically mentioned as a reason for leaving, as well as lack of information and/or input regarding classroom situations or policy changes

.Nature and complexity of role

Workload and time commitment were two major factors expressed within this subtheme. Ella noted that "the enormous time commitment required to teach languages according to current best practices is the most important reason teachers leave." David elaborated further on the importance of workload:

The workload is something that can make like have a teacher stay or leave. And I mean not just the teaching load, but everything that entails working as an educator, like grading, teaching, meetings. (Zoom interview)

Tab added a lack of flexibility to allow teachers to maintain a healthy work/life balance as an issue:

A family emergency would arise at the same time a “must do” school responsibility would arise, and I was stuck in the middle. This is one of the main reasons I resigned from teaching. There was too little flexibility for me. It was unreasonable. (Email interview)

David supported this in stating that “if there's not a balance in work life, then teachers may feel the need to find a different profession to support work life balance.” Training teachers to deal with the immense workload expected of them and finding ways to help them decrease their workload and maintain a healthier work/life balance may help increase the likelihood that they will want to stay in the profession.

Employment conditions, structure and pathways

Previously, leadership was associated with employment conditions such as class size, workload, money for resources, and funds available for professional development. Ella expressed similar desires when providing ideas for administration and/or district officials to make their experience better:

Limit class size, limit number of preps, provide leadership so that all members of the department had common goals, implemented best practices in instruction and assessment, etc. (Email interview)

Meanwhile, David expressed frustration at the lack of pathways toward promotion for WL teachers:

I felt that at times for, a long time, actually, I felt that being a foreign language teacher hindered my ability to move up in the ranks of education at that particular school. (Zoom interview)

Ella mentioned some of the benefits of being a WL teacher over other professions in terms of employment conditions:

As a teacher, I was mostly not under direct supervision. For the most part I was able to make my own decisions about how to teach my students and I appreciated this independence very much. Since I was usually the only French teacher (or at least the only full-time one) in my building, I did not have to collaborate extensively with colleagues. Upon further thought, I would say that my work satisfaction was probably much higher than those of most of my non-teacher friends. (Email interview)

Making improvements in employment conditions such as number of preps, class size, overall workload, and ability to make decisions may be helpful in encouraging a desire to stay in WL teachers.

Departmental policies

Tab specifically mentioned flexibility in grading policy as an important factor:

The two districts where I worked had drastically different grading plans. Although I liked the structure offered by District 2, I preferred the flexibility of District 1. The first district basically required just a 60/40

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split, not even stipulating a required percentage for the final. The important thing was to make sure teachers were not grading based on behavior. Again, I really liked that flexible grading policy. (Email interview)

Tab also mentioned that flexibility for students should not be given just by teachers but also by school district and state laws. They added a desire to be “informed, not surprised, by policy changes or important items impacting the profession.”

Flor echoed this desire for information about and input in decisions affecting teachers and students:

Maybe back when we were still a much smaller school, we probably would have been able to have that input. But now that we've gotten bigger and sort of more known, with all that comes, they have to just kind of make decisions without consulting the teachers as they used to do that, they were a lot better with that before but now, it's all about the dollar. (Phone interview)

Decisions with regard to policy are necessary, and changes frequently need to occur, but what is important is keeping teachers informed and involved to the greatest extent possible to show that their input is valued and desired.

School resources and facilities

Along with environmental conditions like class size and preparations, Ella also expressed a desire for access to technology and other resources:

I think the ideal experience would be class sizes of 12-15, access to adequate technology and programs used by language teachers (Flipgrid, FluentKey, Goformative, Pear Deck etc.), 2-3 preps (different courses) per day, adequate time for collaboration and preparation, a supportive staff/administration that was familiar with best practices in language teaching, strong leadership so that the language department was on the same page when it came to methodology, a district-wide grading program that supported language teaching, such as standards-based grading. (Email interview)

Julie praised her experience with a superintendent who supported her and her students by providing resources and opportunities, such as support for trips to Spain and extensive classroom resources:

So he really loved languages. So we had to put a wing on in our school because at one point we were really growing. And he came to me and said, What would your dream room look like? And he built it. I had a complete kitchen in my room. Microwave, stove, refrigerator, cabinets. Oh. My. God. He put the bulletin boards where I wanted them. I had everything. It was the best. (Phone interview)

These resources, as well as other employment conditions such as the ability to teach culture in class, were mentioned again by Julie as a specific way for the new superintendent, who replaced the previous one who was incredibly supportive, to harm the teacher:

So anyway, next thing you know, to retaliate, she takes away the trip to Spain. She said, we're not doing trips to Spain. Then she said to me, we're taking out your kitchen. And she did. Refrigerator, stove, microwave and everything. She said they were fire hazards. She said there will be no more culture taught in class. That's not necessary. They can get all the culture they want from TV, movies. You are just supposed to strictly stick to the book. (Phone interview)

Providing teachers with the resources necessary to do their job, whenever possible, is another way to help promote a desire to remain in their position.

Discussion

All four capitals of the framework (i.e., human capital, positive psychological capital, social capital, structural capital) were found to be influential in participants' discussions on factors relevant to WL teacher attrition and retention. References to social capital occurred most frequently, resonating with prior research that has linked social capital to WL teacher retention (Mason & Matas, 2016). References to social capital were followed in frequency by structural capital, human capital, and personality and psychological factors, respectively. Each of the 13 subthemes (e.g., quality of relationships with members of school community) also emerged in the data.

With regard to social capital, relationships with members of the school community is crucial to promoting WL teacher retention. A hostile school culture may encourage WL teachers to leave prematurely, whereas a school culture that is supportive and caring will make these teachers more likely to want to stay. WL teachers are also more likely to want to stay when they feel valued (Cummings Hlas et al., 2018; Mason, 2017; Mason & Matas, 2016). Encouraging collaboration between WL teachers and other content areas on campus may help WL teachers feel more valued and potentially less isolated. Additionally, informal and formal support that attends to the unique needs of WL teachers (e.g., mentoring) may also increase the likelihood of WL teacher retention (Kearney et al., 2018; Swanson & Wagner, 2016).

Presence and quality of leadership is not the most important factor until teachers become dissatisfied with leadership (Kearney et al., 2018), at which point it becomes a key factor in WL teacher attrition. Administrators should consider the crucial role they play in retaining WL teachers. Administrators should also maintain a visible presence in WL classrooms and openly recognize the value of WL programs and teachers. They should also trust the professional expertise of teachers, giving them latitude and respecting their ability to act as masters of their craft. Administrators may also act as advocates for greater access to resources as well as field trips, campus events, and guest speakers that are relevant to WLs.

With respect to structural capital, attention should be paid to finding ways to reduce the immense workload and time commitment faced by WL teachers. Reducing class size and reducing the number of preps expected of each teacher should be considered when possible. Taking concrete steps to promote greater flexibility in scheduling and a healthier work-life balance should also be consid-

ered (Sribayak et al., 2018). WL teachers should not feel excluded from pathways to promotion. They should also be involved in making decisions (Kearney et al., 2018), especially those which may impact their programs. Finally, increased access to language-specific resources such as technology and trips may help increase a desire to stay.

For human capital, the presence, quality, and nature of pre- and in-service education experiences are important. As such, administrators and policymakers should provide WL teachers with more time and latitude to engage in professional development experiences and networking opportunities (Swanson & Mason, 2018). WL teachers especially need opportunities to develop their skills with regard to instructional strategy and classroom management (Mason, 2017; Swanson, 2012a; Swanson & Huff, 2010). It is also crucial to ensure that professional development opportunities are tailored to the specific content and contextual needs of WL teachers (Cummings Hlas et al., 2018). Providing professional development opportunities that align with the personality and interest profile of WL teachers may also promote retention (Mason, 2017; Swanson, 2008a, 2008b, 2012b).

In terms of positive psychological capital, helping WL teachers build psychological skills may also be influential in promoting retention (Cummings Hlas et al., 2018). In this study, skills that may be of particular interest include a growth mindset and a love for not only the content area itself but also for teaching it to children. Flexibility and fun are also important. Not only will students be more likely to be engaged and willing to participate, but teachers will likely be happier at work as well, likely increasing their desire to remain.

Although supporting evidence surfaced for the unique importance of each theme indicated in the theoretical framework, it is important to note that they also frequently overlap. For example, access to resources may be impacted by value for teachers and teaching and by support from leadership and others in the school community. As such, policymakers and administrators should take a multifaceted approach toward applying the findings of this study when developing retention strategies.

Future studies might aim to incorporate the ideas of teachers representing additional locations, certification types, and languages. Target language proficiency should also be considered to continue investigating its impact on the factors of interest in this study. Given the small number of participants in this study, it is also hoped that future researchers will engage in research with larger numbers of participants to further confirm the applicability of this framework to attrition in the U.S. Finally, it is acknowledged that most of the teachers who volunteered to participate in this study ended up leaving teaching. Hearing more from those who remained in the profession would be beneficial in future research.

Implications

A number of actionable implications emerge from the findings of the current study. Below is a list of concrete suggestions for teachers, administrators, district officials, and those in charge of pre-service and/or continuing education programs. Although some recommendations may seem idealistic, it is hoped that in taking smaller steps toward reaching these ideals, meaningful improvements may occur.

Teachers

- Maintain a growth mindset. Seek opportunities to learn more about your content area and pedagogical strategies for teaching it.
- Aim for progress, not perfection. Know that you will make mistakes and learn from them.
- Don't try to "reinvent the wheel" during the first few years. Use resources that are available and gradually implement new ideas as you feel more confident in your teaching skills and less overwhelmed with everything involved with teaching.
- Build relationships with students, other teachers, administrators, and members of the community. Knowledge of the language and culture that you teach is important, but even more important is making valuable connections with those you work with.
- Seek opportunities to collaborate with other content area teachers. For example, offer to help the biology teacher with strategies on how to help students master necessary vocabulary. Work with the art department on a project involving famous painters from your target culture. Ask the theatre and music department for help in making a WL showcase for the community.
- Find ways to have fun. Not only will your students be more likely to be engaged and willing to participate, but you will likely be happier at work as well.
- Prioritize work-life balance whenever possible. If you find this challenging given the nature of your role, start small. Set boundaries between your work and school life. Remember that not everything has to be graded.

Administrators

- Trust teachers to do the right thing. Give them latitude and respect their ability to act as masters of their craft.
- Facilitate field trips, campus events, and guest speakers.
- Encourage cross-disciplinary collaboration on campus.
- Put into place a system in which WL teachers are not consistently the ones burdened with extra tasks such as translations, 504 meetings, etc.
- Maintain a visible presence on campus and in classrooms as much as possible.
- Demonstrate that you recognize the value of your WL programs and teachers.
- Facilitate paths to promotion (to instructional coaches, for example) for WL teachers.
- Be transparent about decisions and involve WL teachers in decisions impacting them, their students, and their programs whenever possible.
- Show WL teachers that you "have their back."
- Get to know your WL teachers and what they are teaching.
- Differentiate support and professional development. Although teachers in general may share in common many needs, there are also needs specific to WL teachers' that should be addressed.
- Create a work environment that leverages the knowledge, skills, abilities, and other characteristics of WL teachers.
- Help teachers find ways to maintain a healthy work-life balance.
- Remember that although leadership may not always be a key factor in teachers' decisions to stay or leave, it becomes a crucial factor when it is bad.

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- Try to avoid stacking multiple levels in a WL class whenever possible.
- Facilitate WL teacher access to resources whenever possible.
- Put into place a mentorship program to help new teachers get to know their way around campus and how to find and use the resources that are available to them.
- Hire WL teachers that demonstrate KSAOs who are potentially associated with higher levels of teacher retention.

Pre- and in-service educators

- Provide courses specific to teaching a WL.
- Provide instruction not just on pedagogy but on specific strategies on how to navigate the complexity of the role and the workload involved in teaching.
- Provide instruction on strategies for classroom management and building relationships with students.
- Provide strategies for potential challenges such as working with multi-level classes.
- Promote work-life balance as a standard upon entering the field.
- Help teachers develop important KSAOs that may contribute to higher levels of teacher retention.
- Provide individualized/personalized professional development for WL teachers. Provide alternatives to WL teachers when a required professional development session has no relevance to their content area.
- Help teachers find ways to create cross-disciplinary connections during professional development sessions.
- Provide WL teachers with strategies for working with multi-level classes.
- Provide veteran WL teachers with strategies for moving from the “survival mode” of the first few years to an exciting time of incorporating new ideas and innovations.
- Provide teachers with strategies for maintaining a healthy work-life balance.
- Help teachers continue to develop and refine important KSAOs that may influence levels of teacher retention.

Conclusion

Failure to understand and address continuing issues in recruiting and retaining effective WL teachers will only exacerbate the problem. This study is only one step in working toward effective solutions. It is hoped that future studies will continue to discover new insights as to how effective WL teachers can be recruited and retained in order to provide students with the tools necessary to participate in a diverse multilingual and multicultural world.

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Happily Ever After? Community Engagement and Social Justice through Fairy Tales

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Abstract

Considering that fairy tales have long been popular in second language (L2) education, we ask how these texts can remain applicable to our changing student body. In addition to their use in lower-level German classes for language and culture acquisition, fairy tales also provide a springboard into L2 literary interpretation for more advanced students, both at the secondary and post-secondary levels. The authors demonstrate that scaffolding and historical contextualization can enable students to engage in deep cultural and transcultural readings, public presentations, creative re-imaginings, as well as critical analyses. Examples come from two German programs at institutions with different educational goals—one focused on community-engagement, the other on diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). Both demonstrate how reading seminal tales through a variety of lenses can serve divergent learning goals. In one language program, they form the basis for community-engaged projects that connect learners to L2-speaking communities; in the other, they allow students to imagine social change by learning to recognize deep-seated inequities and critically examine how concepts of gender, race and ableism shape the spaces in which they live. The activities described are also applicable to other languages.

Keywords: fairy tales; L2 literature; community engagement, social justice

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Introduction

Their predictable story lines, narrative structure, familiar content, and repetitive language make fairy tales accessible for second language (L2) learners at multiple levels of proficiency. For advanced students who are learning to analyze L2 literary texts, prior familiarity with the genre also aids the development of their literacy skills since they may understand the tales and the literary devices they use more easily than other types of fiction. Recent scholarship highlights how courses based on fairy tales can advance students' cultural and linguistic knowledge (Schenker, 2021), help them analyze systems of power and oppression (Peabody, 2021), facilitate discussion of anti-Semitic tropes and other prejudices (Helfer, 2021), even bridge social justice theories and intercultural citizenship to classroom practice in beginning German classes (Meredith, Geyer, & Wagner, 2018). The ubiquity of fairy tales ensures that even in culturally diverse language courses most learners have some shared background knowledge, which allows for a variety of approaches that "can fill a broad range of curricular needs [and] help students improve critical-thinking abilities, strengthen writing skills, and explore cultural values" (Jones & Schwabe, 2016, p. 6); thereby providing opportunities for deep textual analyses.

For this paper's purpose, we define fairy tales as short, folklore-based, made-up stories, that involve magic and supernatural forces or places in which improbable events lead to a happy or successful outcome. Oral in origin, the ones we focus on were collected, edited, and published by Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm in the 19th century. The familiarity with the genre makes it both easier for students to engage in deeper, social justice-related readings of the tales and to create fairy tale-based projects for communities beyond the classroom, since community members, too, generally know the story lines.

The combined results of three recent surveys seem to validate the relevance of critical fairy tale analysis for community engagement and persistent social inequities in 21st-century language classrooms. In one survey, boys aged 5-11 viewed females as weak, incompetent, and unable to survive or thrive without a man's help (Hammond & Cimpian, 2021). In another, girls aged 8-15 in the global south internalized White privilege through watching Disney fairy tale films (Uppal, 2019). The third highlighted that post-secondary language programs remained strong if they encouraged "language application in real-life contexts," such as "opportunities to interact with local communities" and courses with "career-focused learning approaches" (Lusin, Peterson, Sulewski, & Zafer, 2023, p. 3). Although two surveys involve younger children, they indicate that these attitudes prevail and continue to color current secondary and post-secondary students' perceptions of fairy tales. The third highlights that community engagement and real-life applications to L2 learning are elements that characterize successful post-secondary programs.

We seek to demonstrate how working with fairy tales can not only enable students to conduct critical analyses of social inequities but also form the basis for meaningful community engagement projects in advanced language classes in two different German programs. The institutions discussed support divergent learning goals: one focuses on community-based instruction and the other fosters curricula

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that support approaches to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). This DEI focus allows for applying a critical literacy framework to the classroom that encourages learners to question how language, texts, images, spaces, and objects portray race, class, gender, and disability and re-imagine other, more socially just ways of being (Comber, 2016). The examples described below are also applicable to advanced high school classes and other languages.

Introducing the Two Programs

One is a program with a single full-time tenured faculty member and an occasional part-time instructor at a small private university with a strong focus on community engaged learning (CEL) and workforce readiness. The German program offers a major and a minor as well as a 5-year dual degree program with Engineering. The majority of the approximately 25 majors are in engineering; the 10 German minors generally have majors in the College of Arts and Sciences. Roughly 70 students enroll in German classes per semester, most of whom are native speakers of English with the occasional German heritage speaker. In the class GERM 350: Genre Studies in Literature and Film, advanced German majors and minors prepare for a community-based project by first learning how to analyze fairy tales in multiple representations, then interpreting them through the disciplinary lenses of their (other) major, and finally, developing and publicly presenting research posters at an event organized by a local community partner. At the beginning of the course, students develop skills and vocabulary necessary to interpret texts through discussing short stories, film versions, and visual representations. Afterward, they apply these skills in connection with fairy tales and the CEL project.

The second is a mid-sized program at a large private R1 institution which prioritizes the development of DEI-focused curricula across campus. A total of six full-time faculty teach around 120 students taking German and up to 100 non-language students in cross-listed literature and film courses per semester. About half are English native speakers, often with study abroad experience, the rest are multilingual international students and a growing number of heritage speakers. Since German is part of a Comparative Literature major program that also includes Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Russian, and Persian, the number of majors with a German concentration varies widely from one year to the next. Science, Computer Science, and International Relations majors make up the majority of the program's 15 plus minors. In LG 350: Introduction to German Literature, which is a pre-requisite for other, more advanced literature, culture and film courses, and required for all students pursuing a German major or minor, learners spend the first three days of the semester applying different approaches to fairy tale analysis before critically re-reading the same stories in more socially just ways as a preparation for interpreting longer, more complex literary texts.

The First Example: Students Engaging with a Community Partner Through Fairy Tales

In areas where students have access to L2 speakers, language programs have successfully developed community-engaged or service-learning course units. In German, examples range from studying a German community, which increasingly

relies on Mexican farmworkers to "think through the often-contentious negotiations of space and power among different language communities" (Boovy, 2016, p. 142), to developing a partnership between college students and a German Saturday School (Hellebrandt, 2014) to having students connect service-learning projects to environmental sustainability initiatives (Kost & Peabody, 2021). Reasons for community-engaged coursework include helping fulfill a university's community service goal, having students understand "that language is a social practice [...] and that ethical issues are embedded in intercultural learning" (Jorge, 2010, p. 137), or instilling "a sense of civic responsibility to putting course content into action" (Holmes, 2015, p. 50).

The German program at the University of St. Thomas connects students to German-speaking communities beyond their classroom to meet the institution's community engagement mission. Building on previously successful collaborations with the Germanic-American Institute Saint Paul (GAI), the course partnered again with this organization that frequently facilitates public events attracting large groups of guests, both with German heritage and those without, who have an interest in German culture. The advanced German course mentioned above uses fairy tales to facilitate students' hands-on, real-world learning experiences by curating an exhibit for the institute. The project also supports writing proficiency development through scaffolded research and assignments that eventually result in a Community-Engaged Learning (CEL) project.

Pedagogical goals for community-engaged learning

The fairy tale project, like most CEL projects, is designed to ensure that the students learn to work cooperatively toward a carefully organized goal, in this case, the exhibition and presentation of fairy tale-based research posters written in English and intended for the GAI's Open House on the topic of fairy tales and German culture. Projects are presented in German or English, depending on the community partner's specific needs. Through their work, students learn that a group environment can be unpredictable, unless structured guidance engenders positive interdependence and encourages individual accountability (Fushino, 2010). Although successful CEL projects can lead to transformative learning experiences, leaving the safety of the classroom to collaborate with local community partners can "be risky, disorienting, and emotionally demanding for students and teachers" (Holmes, 2015, p. 48). It is therefore incumbent upon the instructor to approach service learning transparently by telling students from the beginning that they will not know beforehand what will happen and encourage open and continuous communication with the instructor, team members, and community partners. Precisely, because teachers have little control over how their experiences "may clash with students' personal worldviews," they must confront their own biases and "address issues that may have not come up within the relative safety of the classroom." It is therefore understood that community-based learning can be impactful (Holmes, 2015, p. 51). At the conclusion of the project, students have ideally gained a sense of civic responsibility through the curation of a public educational exhibition for the GAI Institute.

Project description and student learning outcomes

For this CEL project incorporated into an upper-level literature course, students engaged in research on German fairy tales by using academic research skills and (digital) media resulting in deliverable products such as an essay, presentations, and a public poster exhibition. Depending on the community partner's needs, the posters were created in German or English. Students' research and analyses allowed them to demonstrate their linguistic and cultural competence, writing ability in English and German, and professional skills such as teamwork, time management, and developing a project from conception to presentation, while learning about German culture, literature, and history.

Learning to analyze fairy tales and multimedia retellings

In a course that introduces learners to literary analysis through L2 fairy tales, students approach the stories from different angles to gain deeper insights into the genre and structure. In this course, learners focus on several tales by the brothers Grimm but, for the purpose of this paper, examples come from one only: "*Rotkäppchen*" [Little Red Cap] (Grimm & Grimm, 1843). Apart from reading the tale itself, students engage with retellings through a comic (Berner, 2008), manga (Ishiyama, 2006), a cookbook (Arnold, 2000), two short feature film versions (Janssen, 1954; Tafel, 2012), as well as an advertising campaign.

In addition to text versions, the different types of filmic and visual representations provide students with varied opportunities for learning in, from, and about the L2 and its culture(s). Students watch, read, analyze, and evaluate the effectiveness of the retellings and compare them to the original Grimm version focusing not only on linguistic-structural components but also at times on the obvious sometimes more hidden cultural messages. While most materials originate from Germany, the manga version traverses cultures. Students first read "*Rotkäppchen*" in its original version, analyze the text and discuss the main characters. Then, they review the simple past tense and other grammatical structures relevant for the next tasks and list elements typical to this fairy tale. Afterward, they read Berner's (2008) comic version, identify the differences and discuss why they were made. Content changes include that the story is set in the present time and features items such as airplanes, cars, an RV, light bulbs, and plot elements which are virtually identical to the original but differ in linguistic structures using contemporary colloquialisms reminiscent of oral communication. Students discuss how the illustrations in the comic version not only change the message but are also comprehensible to a more diverse group of readers than only a written text would be.

For reception-oriented didactic purposes, the next exercises focus on grammatical structures of "um...zu" [in order to] and adjectives. In the comic version, the wolf uses colloquial language, bypassing the final connector um...zu. Students are therefore asked to either come up with their own questions or change Rotkäppchen's statements into *Warum-Fragen* [why questions] and answer them by using "um...zu", e.g.: *Was hast du für große Ohren!* changes into *Warum hast du so große Ohren?* and is answered with *Um dich besser hören zu können*. [What big ears you have! So that I may hear you better].

To better understand the change in the portrayal of the main characters in both versions, students compile lists of adjectives for each of the five main characters (*Rotkäppchen*, wolf, grandmother, hunter, mother), explain their choices, and decide which ones fit best for each of the versions. They may come up with adjectives such as *wild*, *böse*, *grausam*, *hungrig* [wild, mean, gruesome, hungry] for the wolf or *verträumt*, *vergesslich*, *ungehorsam* [dreamy, forgetful, disobedient] for *Rotkäppchen*.

In a more production-oriented step, students discuss what the wolf may have said to the grandmother prior to devouring her and write these thoughts down in direct speech before changing them to indirect speech. This exercise is followed by students creating short texts in which they describe what the wolf does in the RV. Afterward, they write a suitable short dialogue between the wolf and the grandmother which they first present as a skit to the class and then retell using reported speech.

For the manga (Ishiyama, 2006), which adds a flair of Japanese pop culture too, students decide what is new or different. What changes does the manga make and why were these made such as the marriage between the two principal protagonists. Possible tasks in relation to grammar and production are (a) finding and analyzing separable prefix verbs, then creating a short text using some of the verbs; (b) writing a dialogue between *Rotkäppchen* and the wolf that takes place after they have been married for multiple years using separable prefix verbs they have collected.

Next, students read an abridged version of the tale (Arnold, 2000, p. 149-151) and the recipe for the cake (p. 72-73) *Rotkäppchen* brings to her grandmother in Arnold's fairy tale cookbook. They analyze the dominant grammatical structures typical for recipes such as comparatives and imperatives and then bake the cake for the next class session.

For filmic representations, shorter films and advertisements are watched in class. Students watch both hour-long *Rotkäppchen* films (Janssen, 1954; Tafel, 2012) at home and are asked to look for themes or note character traits. Students then report on their impressions of both films, compare them to the original text and notice potential changes. They reflect on why these changes might have been made and discuss if these films are still relevant today. The 1950s film version tends to spark discussion on cultural changes and on what may have been "acceptable" and the norm then, but no longer is today and students surmise what today's audience might find problematic in this film. Examples include the portrayal of the male as provider and hero and the female as weak and a homemaker which generates a sense of nostalgia and peacefulness, before they come up with ideas how to update this film to fit current sensibilities. In another exercise, using stills from both films, students first put the pictures in the order, then summarize the story as a class using the pictures as a guide, and finally create texts appropriate to the displayed image (monologues, dialogs, narrative texts). Throughout this task, students have an opportunity to apply previously practiced grammatical structures.

In the final section of this course unit, learners analyze the story based on *Rotkäppchen* Sekt (sparkling wine) advertisements (AlteTVSpots, 2017; El Mansouri, 2017; TVClips10, 2014). Students are aware that an alcoholic beverage is the subject of the advertisement but understand that the activity's objective is to iden-

tify specific fairytale elements and that it neither promotes nor condones alcohol consumption. The commercials' highly condensed story lines facilitate critical reading, analysis, and examination of marketing strategies, as well as aesthetic considerations for advertisements based on literature.

As an introductory exercise, students conduct online research using German web pages about the product and describe the uses and emotions associated with sparkling wine and occasions on which it might be consumed. Their search also helps them delineate the historical trajectory and geographic origins of the brand. Subsequently, learners examine instances of *Rotkäppchensekt* advertisement across print and film media, discerning and describing nuances. They quickly realize that the advertisers' core messaging has changed little over time. They also observe undertones of promiscuity, which were socially acceptable during the 1920s or the beginning of World War II. Students find these advertisements by entering search parameters such as *Rotkäppchensektwerbung* [Little Red Cap sparkling wine advertisement] as the main search parameter and *Sektwerbung in der Weimarer Republik* or in der DDR [Champagne advertising in the Weimar Republic or in the GDR], *Rotkäppchensekt 1940* [Little Red Cap sparkling wine 1940] as secondary terms. For posters, students add additional terms such as on *Nachkriegszeit* [post-war Germany] and DDR [GDR]. They easily find filmic representations from the 1990s to the present day on YouTube (also see: *AlteTVSpots*, 2017; *El Mansouri*, 2017; *TVClips10*, 2014). The internet inquiry reveals imagery that, by contemporary standards, can seem inappropriate. After establishing the long history of problematic advertising, students are fascinated with the most recent *Rotkäppchensekt* campaign (Feil, 2023), which drastically changed its message to one of integration of the wolf as an outsider into the community, but also eliminates the obvious connections to the fairy tale. Only the most astute interpreters will understand that some clues, communicated through red, still relate to the fairy tale.

Developing their own research projects based on fairy tale analyses

The activities built around the analysis of "*Rotkäppchen*" provide the template for reading the other fairy tales before beginning the community-engagement segment of the course. Completing the readings and viewings, students decide which fairy tale aspects they want to interpret through their respective disciplines. In preparation for their research papers, class discussions ensure that students dive deeper and above superficial plot lines to devise relevance of these tales to their own projects.

Students are now prepared to analyze different fairy tales, using what they have learned through the *Rotkäppchen* example as a guide. After discussing what constitutes reputable scholarly sources, students first conceptualize a general topic for their projects, formulate a thesis statement, choose one or more fairy tales they want to analyze, and then pose essential questions. Initially drafting their research paper in German, for which they receive both peer and instructor feedback, they subsequently condense their findings into an aesthetically engaging and informative poster in English. Like the written research paper, the CEL poster production

goes through various rounds of scaffolded assignments and peer reviews; though the posters, this time, are not edited by the instructor.

Presenting their work to the community

Fully aware that their work will be publicly displayed at the GAI, and closely following the University of St. Thomas' CEL guidelines, students combine visuals and text to illustrate their disciplinary-specific perspectives. While working on their research papers and posters on campus, students familiarize themselves with the community partner's website, physically visit the Germanic-American Institute, discuss possible volunteer opportunities with the community partner, and view the results of a community project a previous German class completed a few years earlier and was now archived at the GAI. In addition, they complete a CEL module on the course's learning management system and reflect on their community engagement throughout the semester both orally and in writing.

A few examples of the posters show the wide range of topics students chose to pursue: a Neuroscience major analyzed how the Nazis instrumentalized Grimms' fairy tales in film and propaganda and explained the neuroscience behind mob behavior; a Film Studies major traced the evolution of Grimms' print versions through Disney retellings, modern science fiction, and other re-imaginings; an Engineering major postulated that fairy tales are literary artifacts and cultural products but also generally highlight problems that require creative solutions much like STEM experiments do; and a journalist looked at the depiction of power dynamics in multiple fairy tales.

A closer look at one of the posters illustrates what the students exhibited publicly. In her work on Nazi propaganda and fairy tales, the Neuroscience major combined her German cultural knowledge with her scientific insights. In her presentation, the student led the audience through the Nazi government's pseudo-legal maneuvers, beginning with the instrumentalization of fairy tales in schools during the Third Reich. She explained how tales like *Der Jude im Dorn* [The Jew among Thorns] (Grimm & Grimm, 1843) were repurposed to support anti-Semitic tropes to bolster indoctrination endeavors and justify Nazi actions and discriminatory measures against Jews. Similarly, she described how Third Reich cinematic adaptations like *Rotkäppchen und der Wolf* [Little Red Cap and the Wolf] (Genschow & Stobrawa, 1937) seamlessly interwove Nazi propaganda into the Grimms' narratives with characters like the grandmother and the hunter symbolizing so-called true Germans, adorned with swastika-emblazoned caps, while the wolf was cast as the Jewish antagonist. To emphasize the point further, *Rotkäppchen* and her grandmother's savior is depicted as *Onkel Jäger* [Uncle Hunter], decked out in a full SS uniform, and reinforcing the narrative of rescuing German purity from Jewish corruption and evil.

Transitioning to an exploration of the neuroscience of mass behavior, the student then drew upon the Stanley Milgram experiment (Milgram, 1963) to elucidate the phenomenon of blind obedience to authority figures among the German populace. The Nazi Party, as the student contended, engineered similar mass behaviors by cultivating an exclusive German national community and fostering un-

wavering loyalty to Adolf Hitler. Leveraging fairy tales as a conduit for propagating the party's ideology capitalized on their widespread popularity and trusted status. From a psychological standpoint, the brain's oxytocin- and dopamine-driven reward system plays a pivotal role, with studies showcasing the addictive nature of positive social experiences induced by oxytocin-dopamine stimulation. Consequently, the student argued, even antisemitic messages within fairy tales would resonate with German children who are chemically predisposed to associate dopamine-induced feelings of contentment with acceptance into the Hitler Youth and the camaraderie it offered.

The concluding segment of the poster scrutinizes contemporary advertising through the lens of fairy tales. The student analyzes advertisements from global corporations like Volvo, Adidas, and Pepsi, drawing parallels to the Nazis' manipulation of German fairy tales. She observed that modern marketing strategies evoke warm, nostalgic sentiments reminiscent of buyers' childhood experiences, effectively "softening" consumers and enhancing the efficacy of advertising campaigns.

Reflecting on what they have learned

Like the poster described above, all CEL posters reveal a nuanced understanding of the fairy tales the students had chosen. Some discipline-specific interpretations were more compelling than others, but in designing their posters, all students showed that they could use digital tools to communicate well-structured interpretations, and demonstrated a clear understanding of the cultural contexts for the fairy tales as well as cultural, historical, and social factors that have helped shape the stories. Most presentations also illustrate that the students felt secure enough in their subject knowledge to think on their feet, and field unanticipated questions from community members who were not as steeped in fairy tale analysis. Although, in this case, some unanticipated scheduling issues and miscommunications presented challenges, the students' detailed reflection papers revealed that they were able to meaningfully combine the academic course-work related activities and the poster production with the CEL project.

The Second Example: Reading Fairy Tales Through a Social Justice Lens

The second program also introduces learners to literary analysis through L2 fairy tales. Here, students read fairy tales through a critical literacy perspective, which is both a theoretical and helpful framework of practices that facilitates analysis of how power relations work as well as the creation of spaces for learners to contribute to a more critically informed and just world (Comber, 2016).

Students are first asked to find information about Western fairy tale authors and collectors, recall stories from their own childhood, then discuss what they perceive as fairy tales' major themes and topics, before re-reading the tales more closely to uncover underlying societal attitudes toward race, gender, sexual orientation, and disability. Much like community-engaged work, a focus on social justice activities also requires mental flexibility; in this case, in a respectful and multiculturally sensitive classroom environment that allows students to discuss topics that can be uncomfortable. In both cases, students apply a variety of questions and

interpretive lenses to the fairy tales, which prepares them for their respective L2 projects.

Considerations for the discussion of social justice-related topics

If instructors seek to engage learners with different experiences, preferences, and skills through diversity of content and assessments and believe that students' self-image is affected by ways in which they see their own and second language (L2) communities' lived experiences reflected in the course materials (Criser & Malakaj, 2020), they will also provide opportunities for learners to imagine themselves as speakers of the L2s they are learning (Anya, 2020). This approach provides students' access to multiple perspectives and centers language and culture among issues like power, privilege, representation, and equity.

Critical engagement with racism and other forms of structural and institutionalized exclusion thrives, as Ogette (2020) finds, on disrupting the repeated reproduction of dominant viewpoints. To create a class environment in which students have multiple and diverse opportunities to question White privilege (Hurley, 2005) and heteronormativity (Sandhal, 2003), instructors not only ensure that everyone gets to know one another, but also relinquish their own authority, involve students in decisions about course materials and projects, and acknowledge that they, too, are learners. For course structure, this means that explicitly stated learning goals communicate to students what they will be able to do with the course information and are reminded of these goals throughout the course. In her work on strategies to promote student engagement and classroom equity, Tanner (2013) finds that giving students time to process questions before requiring answers also facilitates the development of a supportive learning environment. In such a collaborative and inclusive atmosphere all students feel comfortable to "disrupt and revise" written and visual texts (Hurley, 2005, p. 229). This not only promotes, as Kishimoto (2018) finds, recognition and discussion of all forms of privilege and bias embedded in dominant narratives but empowers both students and instructors to examine spaces they themselves inhabit critically and share their ideas for possible alternative ways of being.

Linguistically, fairy tales provide learners with multiple chances to apply a variety of language functions because they use repetitive patterns of narrative development and predictable plot devices. In this program, too, students practice the subjunctive and future tense by discussing possibilities and transformations: paupers become rich, frail children grow strong, the youngest surpass their siblings and achieve great things, and the homely become handsome. Originally not intended as children's literature, fairy tales reflect and magnify their creators' anxieties, fears, and dreams (Tatar, 2003) and, since the tale tellers often hailed from working classes, where sudden disabilities or illnesses resulted in living with hunger, even starvation, the tales regularly center around the desire for a comfortable life, in which characters are healthy and have enough food and wealth for their families' well-being (Zipes, 2002).

Additionally, fairy tales often pass on information in a type of code which is only understandable to a subset of the intended audience (Gordon, 1993), espe-

cially when related to trauma (Cleto & Warman, 2019). For students to understand how such codes work, learners could share instances in their own lives when they coded information, such as using a secret language with their siblings or friends that were unintelligible to adults, explain the reasons why, and then consider how they could identify with a protagonist that might have to code their trauma (Cleto & Warman, p. 109). Even when students identify with a story's main character, that "identification comes about differently for different people" because they connect what they read to their own life experience (Gordon, 1993, p. 266).

Since "fairy tales dwell on pain and suffering rather than on blissful happiness" (Tatar, 2003, p. xxxii) they often subliminally convey the idea that even domestic spaces are not safe and use exaggeration or parody to unsettle conventions that constrain women's agency and freedom. The Grimms collected their tales predominantly from female narrators who resisted moving from being their fathers' to becoming their husbands' property. As Bottigheimer (1982) points out, the brothers' editorial liberties diffused but did not erase the women's coded language. A "critical understanding of the classical fairy tale as a mirror of the forces limiting women makes it possible to project alternative ways of constructing lives" and "demonstrate how women could regain autonomy in a society dominated by men" (Haase, 2000, p. 21).

After considering how women send hidden, coded messages through their stories, asking students to think about how they would convey profoundly unreliable experiences and develop symbols or metaphors to try and do so anyway, helps them develop "empathetic literacy [sic], the ability and willingness to read about experiences far removed from their own lives and be receptive to the complexities of those experiences" (Cleto & Warman, p. 112).

Preparing for textual analysis

Students are first asked to find information about Western fairy tale authors and collectors, recall stories from their own childhood, then discuss what they perceive as fairy tales' major themes and topics, before re-reading the tales more closely to uncover underlying societal attitudes toward race, gender, sexual orientation, and disability. Students tend to note that collections published by Andersen, Afanasev, the Grimm brothers, Perrault, and others contain similar tales and deliver messages about what is considered normal or mainstream, right or wrong, beautiful or ugly, but also what is attainable. They also learn that the brothers Grimm heavily edited their originally published fairy tales in subsequent editions, making them more palatable to critics. As students revisit seminal fairy tales, discuss film versions, and apply critical perspectives, they gradually become aware of racist, ableist, ageist, classist, misogynistic, and sexist symbolism and learn how to uncover hidden, coded meanings. After identifying pervasive inequities and applying multiple interpretive lenses, they imagine other, more contemporary, and socially just outcomes.

Applying different models to re-read the familiar

In both programs, instructors noticed that if students know certain fairy tales through childhood engagement with illustrated or film versions, their emotional association with specific stories seemed to result in their resisting in-depth analy-

ses. Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm's (1843) "Sneewittchen" [Snow White] and "Rapunzel" tend to be familiar to German language learners. Globally, "Snow White" is known through the wide-spread distribution of Grimms-inspired picture books and especially the animated Disney film *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (Pearce, 1937). This version has not only "almost erased the cultural memory of earlier variants" (Tatar, 2020, p. 34), but also means that most students never engaged with non-illustrated text versions of the story. Similarly, most of today's language students likely know "Rapunzel" through Disney's *Tangled* (Greno & Howard, 2010).

Since students read these tales in a language not their own, the following outlines how they can develop effective reading strategies to interpret the fairy tales using two different approaches: one, by analyzing patterns of motifs prevalent in a specific fairy tale-type (Uther, 2004); the other, by identifying discrete narrative units or functions that comprise the structure of a fairy tale (Holbek, 1987; Propp, 1968).

Reading "Snow White" as a tale-type

The first approach relies on an organizing principle according to which all fairy tales are composed of a certain number of motifs or elements that combine to form narrative patterns to create plot-stories with the same patterns of motifs are grouped as tale-types and given a classification number. The most widely used fairy tale type catalogue is the Aarne-Thompson-Uther Index (ATU), originally created and published by Finnish folklorist Aarne in 1910, translated and revised by American scholar Thompson in 1928, and most recently expanded by German folklorist Uther in 2004. In this categorization system, "Snow White" and similar tale versions are grouped as an ATU 709 tale-type (Uther, 2004). Despite the existence of numerous ATU 709 versions from across the globe, the Grimms' story is the most well-known in Western cultural traditions and gives this group of tales its overarching name, although the Grimms' is by far the most murderous ATU 709 tale (Tatar, 2003; Abate, 2012) with the (step)mother attempting to kill her daughter four times, all share the following elements: (attempted) murder of a child, clairvoyant mirror, mother-daughter competition, compassionate executioner, and magic or poisonous apple.

Before their initial reading, students consider the motifs and then take notes while they are reading. This step seems to make a more in-depth interpretation of the story easier for language learners. After discussing initial ideas about the story based on tale motifs, the class collectively reduces the actions to descriptions that might appear in a police report: They come up with *aussetzen* [abandonment], *Mordversuch* [attempted murder], *einbrechen* [breaking in or burglarizing], *vergiften* [poisoning], and *ungewollte Annäherung* [unwanted advances], which the instructor collects on the board.

Students then break into smaller groups to discuss what "Snow White" reveals about (1) *Geschlechterrollen* [gender roles], (2) *Schönheit* [beauty], (3) *Behinderung* [disability], and (4) *Gewalt* [violence]. As students discuss the tale, they also contemplate what aspects would be considered problematic behavior in the 21st century, while other elements continue to reflect contemporary realities.

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When the class reconvenes, the instructor inputs their observations and examples into a Google document which remains accessible after the conclusion of the class. After class discussion, essays assigned as homework generally reveal versions of the following:

(1) Gender roles: Students tend to note how the women perceived as "good" (Snow White's mother, Snow White herself) are associated with female-coded chores like sewing, cooking, and keeping house. They also see that Snow White's beauty seems to predispose male characters (the huntsman, the dwarfs) to help, rather than hurt her. They surmise that her goodness is equated with beauty and ensures her personal safety, which implies that people perceived as "good" ultimately do not need to worry about abandonment or death. Although nine adult men play a role in this story about a beautiful, unprotected adolescent girl (ten, if you count the absentee father), the story ends with a heterosexual marriage to the prince, while neither the huntsman nor the dwarfs are taken seriously in terms of their masculinity. However, students realize, that the prince is the only one who transgresses by first initiating intimacy without Snow White's consent and kissing her while she is unconscious. Students also note that "happily-ever-after" ending of this and other fairy tales affirms a heterosexual norm, not validating other life experiences.

(2) Beauty: Students recognize that beauty is related to youth and coded as white (the fairest of all, *weiß wie Schnee* [white as snow], Grimm & Grimm, 1843, n.p.). As they find other examples, students discuss that darkness usually signifies evil or ugliness, even punishment, since transgressions often result in a darkening of the culprit's complexion or is signaled by their dark clothing. Given that students are usually familiar with Disney films, they tend to mention the sea witch Ursula from *The Little Mermaid* (Clements & Musker, 1989), Jaffar in *Aladdin* (Clements & Musker, 1992), or the beast in *Beauty and the Beast* (Trousdale & Wise, 1991; Condon, 2017) as examples of darkness as evil or punishment. They also discuss that the queen's age-related loss of physical attraction plays one, if not the, crucial role, in the story. When the mirror pronounces that Snow White has surpassed the queen's beauty, students tend to read this as her struggle with her own aging. Also, since physical beauty is equated with influence, loss of beauty could, they surmise, precede the queen's loss of power. Some also note that the German word for mirror, here used in the neuter diminutive (*Spieglein* [little mirror]), is actually a male gendered noun (*der Spiegel*), which leads some more linguistically minded learners to theorize that it represents affirmation in a male-dominated society, also a common Feminist reading first put forth by Gilbert and Gubar (1979). More astute students realize that the queen's weapons are all associated with enhancement of feminine physical appearance or seduction (laces, a comb, an apple). Some also note that Snow White's black hair is unusual for Grimms' fairy tale heroines. When they are asked to research the explicit likening to ebony, they uncover links to Greek mythology: Not only is ebony a dense, black, and heavy type of wood, but

Hades, Greek God of the Underworld, sits on a throne of ebony, which students sometimes interpret as symbolizing Snow White's multiple returns from death.

(3) Disability: While discussing European fairy tale collections at the beginning of the course, students learned that fairy tales often tend to equate physical ability with a character's moral virtue and other positive traits. They also frequently depict disability as a burden to non-disabled people and society at large. According to Leduc (2020), it is therefore virtually impossible for a disabled fairy tale protagonist to find happiness without eradicating their disability. As students discuss that the seven men suffering from dwarfism in "Snow White" can only work underground and live nameless in the forest, segregated from society, they understand that the dwarfs, although seen as positive characters, have no hope for any reversal of their condition, let alone being granted agency. Students also note that the dwarfs are asexual, since Snow White never once questions her safety living alone among seven unknown male adults. In their conversations, students tend to echo what Solis (2007) observes, namely that the dwarfs' perceived physical shortcomings not only signal their asexuality, but also "confirm ideas about manhood; their disabled bodies explicitly contradict normal conventions of masculinity" (p. 127). At this point, the conversations often conflate sexual orientation, gender, and disability since some students agree with Solis' observation that the dwarfs' "de-sexualization and infantilization" (p. 117) "reinforces and extends homophobia and ableism" (p. 127). Deconstructing heterosexism and exposing arbitrary delineations and "the social ramification of attempts to homogenize humanity" (Sandahl, 2003, p. 37) and using fairy tales to uncover "attitudinal and institutional barriers aiming to privatize, seclude, conceal, and silence discussions about homosexuality and disability" acknowledges young readers' concerns (Solis, 2007, p. 116) and allows students to develop empathy with life experiences far removed from their own.

(4) Violence: Students identify (attempted) murder and mutilation. While the Grimms' changed the mother in their first edition to a stepmother, because "Wilhelm Grimm recognized that most children [...] find the idea of wicked stepmothers easier to tolerate than that of cruel mothers" (Tatar, 2003, p. 37), students discuss that violence against the stepdaughter is perpetrated by the very person who is supposed to love, nurture, and protect her. As soon as the queen understands that she is losing her physical attraction, the hatred and envy she develops leads her to see filicide as her last resort. The queen first orders a huntsman to kill Snow White and bring her liver and lungs not only as proof of the girl's death, but so that she can consume them, thus breaking another taboo: cannibalism. Upon learning from her mirror that Snow White is still alive, the queen conducts the next three attempts on the girl's life. Since happily ever after also "means witnessing bodily torture of villains" (Tatar, 2003, p. xviii), the tale ends with the queen's punishment at Snow White's wedding: her dance to the death in red hot iron shoes.

After reviewing the information collected during class discussion in the Google document, students write their essays. During the final discussion of "Snow White," they are asked to theorize why child abuse and murder are so common in fairy tales. Since the introductory literature course exposes students to texts from the Enlightenment through the 21st century, in which they have discussed general features of pre-industrial European societies before reading the fairy tales, they tend to list famine, war, disease, poverty, and abortion as possible reasons, all of which they locate mostly in the Grimm's pre-industrial period or earlier times. Many are shocked when the instructor posits that "Snow White" reflects common patterns of abuse, abandonment, and murder that persist today. Filicide continues to be "a major cause of pediatric mortality" in the US today where children make up over 10 percent of homicide, abuse, and neglect victims, and the queen's attempts also "accurately echo the common methods by which women tend to kill" namely "through suffocation and poison" (Abate, 2012, pp. 187-88).

Lastly, returning to the ATU classification system they encountered at the beginning of this course segment, students consider that it was created and adapted by three white men in different time periods between 1910 and 2004. They discuss problems with classifying a tale that exists in places that have neither indigenous white populations nor snow as a "Snow White tale-type" and reflect on Tatar's (2020) criticism of the ATU classification system as "cultural imperialism." They also consider Tatar's contention that using this particular tale and tale-type moniker to the US with its history of slavery and racism, ensured that the name "Snow White" became charged with new meanings.

Applying a structuralist model to "Rapunzel"

Now familiar with the ATU tale-type index, statistics on filicide, and "whiteness" as idealized beauty, students have understood that the tale version they are reading next likely also has a long, varied, and multi-ethnic pedigree. They already know that these stories often address difficult and horrific, but not uncommon, events and behaviors. After reading "Snow White" through the ATU tale-type lens, students briefly consider the motifs prevalent in ATU 310 "Maiden in the Tower" tale-types to determine commonalities and differences: A (pregnant) woman or her husband steal herbs or fruits from the garden of a witch, and promise the unborn child to appease her; the child is named after a stolen plant; the witch locks her in a door-less tower, which the witch enters by climbing the girl's hair; a prince discovers the girl because of her hair, the witch uncovers the relationship, whereupon they couple flees, and is (eventually) married (Uther, 2004).

After discussing the motifs in "Rapunzel," students consider structuralism as a different methodological approach that identifies elements of the tale as part of a story's underlying narrative structure. Unlike ATU motifs, which can be reconfigured arbitrarily to form a new fairy tale type, the structuralist model understands tales as composed of a fixed, consecutive order of up to 31 functions. After a tale's initial situation is depicted, these functions define the narrative (Propp, 1968). While not expressly introduced to their work, student groups are asked to come up with common structural elements and generate functions that fall some-

where between Propp's (1968) morphology, albeit with far fewer than his thirty-one narrative units, and Holbek's (1987) five moves that reconcile three main tensions between youths and adults, individuals of low and high status, as well as male and female. Usually, they come up with elements such as "heroine leaves home through no fault of her own," "has an antagonist," "finds herself in a forest" or "is separated from society," "does something she should not do," "encounters a prince," "survives a test or trial," and "gets married"—not necessarily in that order.

Applying the narrative structures they generated, students frequently interpret Rapunzel's segregation in the tower during her teenage years as being similar to Snow White's forced sleep in the glass coffin and tend to understand it as meaning maturation before marriage. Already aware of the hair symbolism in "Snow White," students find that Rapunzel's hair functions both to keep her away from others, safeguard her chastity, and to access her.

After the initial discussion, students break into groups to determine what the tale reveals about disability and social status: Once Rapunzel has left the tower, the witch uses Rapunzel's cut off hair to trick the prince, who leaps from the tower where the thorns at its base blind him. Sightless, he wanders the wilderness until he miraculously meets up with Rapunzel and the twins she has borne in the meantime. Rapunzel's tears fall into his eyes, magically restoring his vision and everyone lives happily ever after.

Most students tend to conclude that the prince's blindness is the low point in his life since he wanders the world and no longer seems to have the power normally ascribed to a royal, such as commanding an army to look for Rapunzel – according to Leduc (2020) a diminished, lesser version of his formerly able-bodied self. Yet, somehow, he can survive on roots and berries in the wilderness. Like most fairy tale characters who are considered good, the prince develops alternative senses to counteract his sudden disability, a "compensation" that seems to disregard his actual disability or "psychologically erase the reality of the impairment" (Schmiesing, 2014, p. 148). Since one's disability does not automatically ensure the development of another sense and the prince cannot reclaim his social standing until his blindness is magicked away, this trope is offensive to individuals who do not want to be defined through their disabilities (Leduc, 2020). Students discuss that the prince's disability, although a punishment, is temporary. It does not resemble mutilation and death of Snow White's stepmother, and although they are not necessarily familiar with the pre-industrial belief that disability was considered God's punishment, they usually conclude that the prince must atone for seducing Rapunzel, but, that his fundamental decency will cause his impairment to be reversed.

Exploring alternatives: What if-scenarios for more socially just outcomes

After their interpretations of "Snow White" and "Rapunzel," students are asked to develop several what-if scenarios for both stories. Students often come up with: *Was wäre, wenn die Zwerge Handlungskraft hätten?* [What if the dwarfs had agency?], *Was wäre, wenn Schneewittchens Stiefmutter keine Angst vor dem Älterwerden hätte?* [What if Snow White's stepmother wasn't afraid of getting older?];

Was wäre, wenn Schneewittchens Vater sehen könnte, wie böse die Stiefmutter ist? [What if Snow White's father could see how evil the stepmother is?] *Was wäre, wenn Rapunzel ihr Haar für die Hexe nicht heruntergelassen hätte?* [What if Rapunzel hadn't let down her hair for the witch?]. *Was wäre, wenn der Prinz Hilfe holte und Rapunzel suchte?* [What if the prince got help and searched for Rapunzel?]. After sharing their various "what if" scenarios and suggested answers, students discuss Disney's upcoming live-action remake of *Snow White* (projected release in 2025) and actor Peter Dinklage's critique (Zilko, 2022): They consider that the company has re-cast *Snow White* with a Latinx actress but is not forthcoming about how it intends to change the characterizations of Disney's original seven dwarfs. In class, students propose various alternatives, and after imagining how they would impact the story's message, they have a choice of final assignments that range from the analytical to the creative. Learners can either analyze two different versions of the same tale type from diverse geographic areas, compare one of the tales to a film or graphic novel version, create a visual representation of one of the story's aspects, or retell one of the stories as an infographic. For those students, who enjoy creative writing, they either rewrite "Snow White" or "Rapunzel" to provide agency to those who do not see themselves represented, create backstories, or retell the story from another character's perspective.

Conclusion

In both German programs, in-depth engagement with fairy tales ensures that students produce substantive analytical or creative work related to either community engagement or social justice. In keeping with goals common to advanced L2 literature courses, both groups of learners also develop a more profound appreciation of tales as literary artifacts and a clearer understanding of the cultural contexts in which they were collected, written down, edited, and retold. Their work indicated that students developed the skills to analyze literary texts, film versions, and visual representations.

Both instructors strongly believe that "engaged pedagogy does not seek simply to empower students" but that "[a]ny classroom that employs a holistic model of learning will also be a place where teachers grow and are empowered by the process" in addition to showing vulnerability themselves "while encouraging students to take risks" (hooks, 2000, p. 21). They therefore seek to create inclusive spaces to discuss gender, race, and class to help students prepare for the potentially disorienting community-engagement segments and possibly fraught social justice discussions.

As students from the first institution apply the conventions of the fairy tale genre to their own academic disciplines to create publicly exhibited interpretive posters, they gain experience with community- and group-work-based projects. In addition to acquiring real-life skills like effective and clear communication, time management, teamwork and presentational abilities, students and their instructor also learned to accept that they would not always be in control of their own learning but had to compromise with others and adjust to unforeseen challenges. Ideally, transformative learning as one of the goals of community engage-

ment involves becoming self-reflective and critically aware of personal assumptions, which can generate feelings ranging from mild disorientation to frustration, anger, guilt or even shame (Holmes, 2015, p. 52). Although community-based projects are unpredictable and this one, too, did not exactly work out as planned, the students' final reflections nevertheless revealed that they enjoyed the experience, liked to be more engaged with the greater community and seeing their work on display, as well as having learned skills relevant for future academic classwork and the workforce.

In the other institution, students who were learning how to analyze literary texts developed deeper awareness of commonly communicated inequities and came to understand how seminal texts and their retellings convey both injustices and find ways to subvert them. As they imagined worlds different from their own and envisioned other more inclusive and equitable ways of telling these stories, their interpretations also situated fairy tales in their historical and cultural contexts, while honing their presentational language skills. Through their analyses and creative work, students were also able to demonstrate detailed understanding of how historical and systemic social, racial, gender inequities occur and are perpetuated.

While the examples come from German college-level courses, the activities outlined here are applicable to other languages, both in high school and the university-level, since they use familiar fairy tales to "enable access to unfamiliar identities and experiences" (Cleto & Warman, 2019, p. 102).

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The Language Classroom

**Articles focusing on research-based teaching and
learning in language education**

From the Editor of The Language Classroom

Welcome to a new issue of *The Language Classroom*. Launched in September 2022, this new section seeks to share articles that feature classroom-based applications of research in language education. I am honored to serve as the section's new editor and am excited to introduce my first issue. First, I would like to thank Dr. Catherine Ritz for her two years of service as inaugural editor of this section. She has worked tirelessly to provide the readership with an excellent selection of relevant pedagogical approaches and instructional innovations, and I am grateful for her dedication to the *NECTFL Review*. The previous four issues offered 14 articles in this section, covering topics from assessing proficiency, advocating for DEIA, and decolonizing language curricula to incorporating graffiti, digital escape rooms, dance, films, and music in the language classroom. I look forward to my own opportunity to shape the future of this section and continue the work that has been done by my predecessor.

The *Language Classroom* section features shorter articles (8+ pages/1,500–2,500 word) focused on classroom practices and experiences. We invite submissions from language educators of all levels and languages, administrators, and researchers that address topics such as classroom instruction, curriculum design, assessment and feedback, leadership and advocacy, planning and program design, technology integration, student experiences, or other similar topics. Articles can be submitted online at <https://bit.ly/langclassnectfl>. Your voice and experiences are important, so I hope you will consider sharing your ideas with the field.

In addition to the willingness of authors to submit manuscripts, the journal cannot thrive without the thoughtfulness of reviewers in providing valuable feedback during the peer-review process. Each article undergoes a double-blind review process, and I am indebted to the reviewers for their careful consideration and detailed feedback, an invaluable service to the authors and to the *NECTFL Review*.

As I start my tenure as section editor, I particularly encourage and support collaborative publications that discuss pre-university and alternative learning contexts. Submissions focusing on pre-K, elementary, and middle school language programs have been scarce, yet insights into early language learning can shape pedagogical and administrative decisions at the college level and have important implications for our profession at large. Articles on best practices for creating inclusive and welcoming classrooms for all learners are also always welcome.

This issue's article by Rebecca Borden explores ways to support pre-service language teachers' oral proficiency development, using the online conversation platform *TalkAbroad*. Through structured post-conversation activities involving transcription, self-assessment, goal setting, and feedback, the participating pre-service language teachers exhibited increased self-awareness and confidence in their linguistic abilities. This article emphasizes the platform's positive impact on student learning and highlights its potential to support language proficiency development, offering valuable insights for future language education practices.

I hope that the *NECTFL Review* readers find new ideas for their classrooms and programs in this article. I am proud to be a member of our thriving organization. Today more than ever, we have important tasks to fulfill in contributing to a better world by teaching languages and raising cultural awareness.

Angelika Kraemer
Editor, The Language Classroom
Cornell University

Reviewers—The Language Classroom

Manuscripts submitted to **The Language Classroom** are reviewed by at least two expert readers to ensure submissions fit the aims and scope of the journal and the section. The reviewers greatly contribute to the high standards of the journal and help ensure an expedited reviewing process. The individuals below served as reviewers of manuscripts submitted for publication since the last issue. The editor and NECTFL are grateful for their service. The expertise of these professionals makes the publication of the NECTFL *Review* possible.

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Self-Assessment with *TalkAbroad*: Bolstering Oral Proficiency Development of Pre-Service Language Teachers

Rebecca S. Borden, *University of Oklahoma (OK)*

Abstract

This classroom practice article explores the integration of TalkAbroad, an on-line language conversation platform, in an undergraduate World Languages Education program to support pre-service language teachers' oral proficiency development. Two pre-service teachers, facing challenges like family responsibilities and limited study abroad opportunities, engaged in four 30-minute conversations on topics including media, future plans, current events, and cultural comparisons. Through structured post-conversation activities involving transcription, self-assessment, goal setting, and feedback, students exhibited increased self-awareness and confidence in their linguistic abilities. This article emphasizes the platform's positive impact on student learning and highlights TalkAbroad's potential to support language proficiency development, offering valuable insights for future language education practices.

Keywords: *pre-service teachers, oral proficiency, self-assessment, independent learning*

Introduction

Globally, research on pre-service language teachers'(PSTs) oral proficiency has consistently reported that those who fall below the threshold for teacher candidacy are less willing to actively participate in interactional classroom tasks at the educator preparation program (EPP) level (Aslan & Āžahin, 2020) and subsequently shy away from using the target language (TL) during classroom teaching once in the field (Bell & Borden, 2022). In the context of the US, a proficiency level

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of Advanced Low (AL) or higher is required for language teacher licensure in more commonly taught languages including Spanish, French, and German. These requirements have been set forth by ACTFL and the Council for Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP), the governing body for teacher preparation in the US (ACTFL/CAEP, 2013).

The ability to communicate at the AL level is important for several reasons. First, speakers at the AL sublevel are able to engage in informal and some formal conversations about topics like school, home, leisure, employment, and current events, and narrate and describe past, present, and future events in paragraph-length discourse, although often separately. While their speech may contain occasional errors and lack specificity in vocabulary, they can convey intended messages with sufficient accuracy and clarity, while performance deteriorates significantly when tackling more advanced tasks. Additionally, performance at this level must be sustained in order to receive an AL rating on the ACTFL Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI; ACTFL, 2020).

Beyond the licensure requirements for PSTs that necessitate reaching the AL proficiency threshold, the rationale for possessing advanced proficiency has a profound impact on a teacher's ability to provide "target-language input in the classroom at a level necessary to develop students' interpretive skills or to guide students in interacting with others in interpersonal contexts," and those teachers who cannot reach at least AL "have difficulty serving effectively as a facilitator in helping students negotiate meaning with one another and to function spontaneously in the TL" (ACTFL, n.d., n.p.). In addition, research on teacher oral language proficiency has revealed that it plays a crucial role in teachers' sense of confidence and credibility while instructing in the TL (Kamhi-Stein, 2009; Murdoch, 1994). Furthermore, research findings on language proficiency and self-confidence validate the significance of proficiency in the TL as the foundation for teachers' beliefs about their own effectiveness (Digap, 2016; Yilmaz, 2011).

However, nearly 50% of PSTs are unable to attain the proficiency level recommended by ACTFL/CAEP as assessed by the OPI by the end of their EPPs (Glisan et al., 2013; Kissau, 2014; Kissau et al., 2019). Although PSTs are also assessed in reading and writing, oral proficiency assessments remain a challenge for many of them (Weyers, 2010). Contrary to other subject areas that are mastered through academic study, language proficiency evolves and develops gradually. Furthermore, achieving an AL proficiency level can be an ambitious aspiration for language majors, especially if they are unable to participate in a substantial study abroad program (Rifkin, 2003). In sum, more program-level support needs to be available to help PSTs achieve their oral proficiency goals.

In our program, it is important to us to support our students' linguistic development to be able to enter the field with confidence and necessary linguistic skills to deliver effective instruction in the TL. In collaboration with the language department at our institution, we have adopted a culture of proficiency mindset to enhance the content area expertise of PSTs (Brooks & Darhower, 2014). The culture of proficiency framework emphasizes the necessity for PSTs to engage in a number of diverse learning and practice-based opportunities, as these experiences

play a vital role in shaping both their overall pedagogical and content knowledge in teacher education (Klemenz et al., 2019; Swanson, 2013). For this reason, we opted to integrate TalkAbroad to provide additional language practice for struggling students. We included opportunities for choosing the most useful strategies for a particular task, planning, monitoring, regulation, and self-evaluation of learning, as a way for PSTs to develop conscious habits and practices toward language proficiency, as these metacognitive strategies are well-documented as effective approaches to advance language acquisition (Anderson, 2004; Schraw et al., 2006).

The Teaching Context

This classroom innovation took place with two PSTs in an undergraduate EPP at a doctoral-level university in the Southwestern United States. Our small program supports roughly 10 students per year in several languages. Approximately half of those students are unable to engage in a significant study abroad experience (e.g., more than a month), if at all, and we have had several students who struggle to achieve the required proficiency level needed to complete their certification programs.

TalkAbroad (<https://www.talkabroad.com/>), an online platform that connects users with trained conversation partners to provide language practice and meaningful cultural exchange, was implemented during the Spring 2023 semester. TalkAbroad is a tool utilized by language educators worldwide and allows teachers to create targeted assignments, include instructions for the conversation partner, and provide recording capabilities for student playback, reflection, transcription work, and self-assessment. In addition to TalkAbroad's features, its effectiveness in creating opportunities for noticing language features, positive engagement during language learning, and building second language confidence are well-documented in research (Hetrovicz, 2021; Kessler et al. 2023; Sama & Wu, 2018)

Two students participated as they responded to a free opportunity (paid for by a small grant in the college) presented to them through email. Student A had retired from the military and returned to school to complete his undergraduate degree in Spanish Education. With an obligation to work to support his family, he was unable to study abroad during his program. Student B was a French Education major who studied abroad for one semester but was still unable to pass her oral proficiency interview at AL.

The Language Activities

I created four 30-minute language conversation activities from topics generated from our prior conversations on the TalkAbroad platform. The first topic, media, tasked the students to introduce themselves to their conversation partner and get to know some basic information about each other. They were prompted to ask about some of their favorite shows/movies to watch, the platforms used to stream media, and their favorite forms of media. The idea for this part of the conversation was to establish some things in common with their partner. For the first conversation, I gave the students some sample questions they might ask, such as

- What are the top 10 movies/shows in your community/country?

- Ask your partner about the 10 most popular shows in their community/country.
- Compare their responses with yours.
- What are some of the differences and similarities between your lists?
- Take and give a few recommendations to watch something completely new to you.
- What influence have different cultures and communities had on the media consumed worldwide in the past?
- How do you think these trends might change in the future?

The second conversation focused on talking about future plans, a topic that is often discussed during the OPI as the interviewer probes the interviewee at the Advanced level. However, this time, I did not provide the students with sample questions. Instead, they were asked to create their own to encourage a more personalized experience and allow for spontaneous interaction. The third topic, current events, addressed the fact that students stressed that they struggled to discuss current events, partially due to the specialized vocabulary involved. The final conversation asked the students to compare and contrast their cultures with their conversation partners. This topic was chosen by the students to better understand the cultural products, practices, and perspectives of real people (not from a textbook). Finally, for each of the topics, I provided instructions in the TL to orient and guide the conversations. The instructions included information about how long the students had studied the language, guidelines for equitable turns at talk, and details about the topic.

Post-Conversation Activities

After completing each conversation, the students completed a linguistic analysis, transcribing a segment of their speech during the conversation verbatim, including utterances, phrases, and complete sentences. Once they completed the transcriptions, they underlined phrases (incomplete sentences), added an * for complete sentences, marked an X over words like “um,” added a # symbol for each complete question, and added a \$ symbol for well-connected sentences. Then, they tallied the number for each symbol and recorded it on a grid to identify patterns in their communication. Next, I asked the students to use an AAPPL oral proficiency rubric to self-assess their performance based on the findings from their transcriptions. The rubric contained specific can-do statements at each of the sublevels and specific strategies for improvement.

After each conversation, the students used the self-rated assessment rubrics to describe in more detail what they did to earn the score and set specific goals based on the strategies listed in the rubric to work toward moving up another sublevel. It was important that the students target specific strategies described for the next level up in the goal-setting stage of the post-conversation activities in order to be able to effectively implement them in the next conversations. Finally, I provided each of the students with feedback on their self-assessments and goals to complete the conversation cycle.

Reflection

Upon completion of the semester using TalkAbroad with my students, I engaged in a self-reflection process to consider my own learning and modeling about

the practice of self-assessment and reflection with my students. Through the lens of my students' experiences with the platform and an analysis of their responses on the self-assessment, reflection, and goal setting, I was able to evaluate the implementation of TalkAbroad, its impact on the students' learning, and the impact on our undergraduate EPP.

Reflection on the Implementation of TalkAbroad

Overall, the TalkAbroad platform was easy to use over the course of the semester in which it was implemented. The platform's layout, detailed instructions, and space for targeted information for both the student and conversation partner made it easy to set up the assignments and copy them into each of the language sections created for the students. In addition, the platform provided students with a step-by-step guide to set up an account, view potential partner profiles, and schedule conversations. The playback feature allowed students to review and reflect on their conversations, and I was able to view them as well, which permitted additional in-depth feedback for students.

Impact on Student Learning

Despite the small cohort of two students who participated in this innovative practice, student self-awareness and perceived language growth over the series of the four TalkAbroad conversations were evident in their self-reflections. For example, both students described their linguistic performance during the first conversation as "poor." Specifically, they mentioned the number of times they used "um" and "uh" as transition or filler words. Student A expressed difficulty in giving himself a rating at all, as he did not feel he could count any of his utterances as complete sentences due to his overuse of filler words in English. Both students indicated a feeling of disappointment at their fluency and performance at the close of the first task.

However, both students were able to identify specific strategies they could work on during the conversations that followed, and the self-reflections demonstrated how they implemented them with success. For instance, Student B set a goal to ask more questions of her partner during the second conversation, and her transcription and reflection indicated an effort to do so. Additionally, at the close of the final conversation, the breadth and depth of the students' transcriptions increased substantially, as did their self-reported confidence in speaking with their conversation partners. The students wrote about how the repeated language experiences helped them alleviate the fear of making mistakes while speaking and encouraged them to keep communicating.

Finally, the students appreciated and interacted with the feedback that was given to them throughout. For Student A, whose conversations took place in Spanish, I was able to provide targeted suggestions, such as to substitute the word "um" during communication by offering words like "eh" or "*este*" instead. I explained how these filler words in Spanish could serve as pauses to gather his thoughts in the same way he was using them in English but might help him polish his speech and stay in the TL throughout the conversation. Intentional engage-

ment in dialogic feedback with my students throughout the activities served as emotional and relational support, maintained an open feedback loop, and provided opportunities for students to express themselves (Steen-Utheim & Wittek, 2017).

Impact on Our EPP

Given the positive feedback from the students involved in this innovative practice, we concluded that the additional time and effort to utilize, engage, and converse using TalkAbroad was well worth it. Our students expressed appreciation and increased confidence through the opportunity to work with the education faculty as a continuation of their proficiency development outside of their regular language coursework. While we will not know immediately whether this work will impact student scores on the OPI going forward, we feel that TalkAbroad facilitated student ownership and autonomy in their learning, which may contribute to lifelong learning and work toward developing and maintaining their oral proficiency over time.

From an EPP perspective, we plan to implement similar opportunities into earlier courses for our students, as they understand how the language acquisition process works, including the time and effort required to develop AL proficiency, an aspect of teacher preparation we begin discussing with them from the start of the program (ACTFL/CAEP, 2013). Finally, with the success of the TalkAbroad implementation, we are motivated to explore additional opportunities that could be integrated into our course sequence as supplementary experiences toward building a culture of proficiency throughout students' time in our program (Brooks & Darhower, 2014).

Future Pedagogical Directions

Language conversation platforms such as TalkAbroad can be adapted and implemented for a variety of purposes across languages and EPPs. However, to maximize their effectiveness, it is important to consider these factors prior to adopting similar approaches:

1. **Talk with your students:** What specifically do students need or want in terms of linguistic development? What interests do they have? Discussing these questions directly with students prior to developing language tasks may facilitate a deeper connection to the topics of conversation and the assessment and reflection work throughout.
2. **Determine the number of conversations:** While four conversations were incorporated into the current semester-long innovation, student and program constraints may require a careful evaluation of cost, time, and necessity for the number of conversations selected during the semester.
3. **Create extension and follow-up opportunities for students:** Engaging in conversations, self-assessment, reflection, and goal setting can be a first step in promoting a lifelong learning plan for TL development among students and language programs. Additionally, looping back with students to check-in with their progress and connecting students with additional

language experiences could be a way to build and sustain a culture of proficiency in language programs.

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Guidelines for the Preparation of Manuscripts — NECTFL Review

Below, you will find a summary of the Guidelines for the Preparation of Manuscripts and the Checklist for Manuscript Preparation. The complete documents for both in PDF format can be downloaded at <https://www.nectfl.org/nectfl-review/>

All articles submitted will be evaluated by at least two, normally three, members of the Editorial Review Board. Elements to be considered in the evaluation process are the article's appropriateness for the journal's readership, its contribution to foreign language education and the originality of that contribution, the soundness of the research or theoretical base, its implications for the classroom, and finally, organization, focus, and clarity of expression.

As you prepare your manuscript for submission to the NECTFL Review, please keep the following guidelines in mind:

1. We use the most recent APA [American Psychological Association] Guidelines (<http://www.apastyle.org/>), and not those of the Modern Language Association (MLA) or the Chicago Manual of Style. Please use the latest edition (7th ed., 2020) of the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association or the Concise Guide to APA Style as your guide. For models of articles and references, examine The NECTFL Review, recent issues of the Modern Language Journal, or Foreign Language Annals. These journals follow the APA style with minor deviations (and those being primarily changes in level headings within articles). Citations within articles, bibliographical entries, punctuation, and style follow the APA format very closely.
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3. Please think carefully about the title of your article. It should be brief, preferably without subtitles, and no longer than 12 words.
4. We require an abstract of your article. See p. 13 [Section 1.10] in Concise Guide to APA Style (2020) for clear guidelines for writing an abstract.
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8. 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.

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- In listing items or in a series of words connected by and, but, or use a comma [the Oxford comma] before these conjunctions.
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