

**The Monolingual Norm: How State Standards Affect Spanish Language Instruction
for Texas Public School Students**

Hannah Garcia

An Undergraduate Thesis

Submitted to the Humanities Department

University of Texas at Austin

2022

Dr. Sarah Jey Whitehead, Thesis Supervisor

Dr. Monique Pikus, Second Reader

Abstract

Though the state of Texas mandates credits in foreign languages under their Languages Other Than English (LOTE) curriculum standards, Texas residents remain predominantly monolingual English speakers. Former research on language learning in Texas focuses on English learners rather than native English speakers who may learn a second language. This focus enables the state to provide specialized support to increase English literacy but also maintains monolingualism by overlooking the cognitive and social benefits of learning a non-English language. In the interest of promoting foreign language education research, I investigate the Spanish instructional experiences of Texas public school students to explore the connection between state-mandated curriculum standards, language learning, and language ideologies. I use the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) to dissect what skills and proficiency levels students are poised to demonstrate upon completing their K-12 education. I then conduct quantitative surveys that ask former Texas students to self-report their proficiency in Spanish. Finally, seven survey respondents participated in interviews where they were asked to describe their experiences and relationship with the Spanish language. I found that students self-report a proficiency level that is succinct with those listed in the LOTE proficiency TEKS, and that engagement and valuation of Spanish affects reported proficiency ratings for this survey sample. I argue that the LOTE curriculum can be revised to provide cultural engagement, transferable skills, and innovative instructional modes to encourage multilingualism among Texas residents.

Introduction

Language learning enables students to expand their global and cultural literacy, refine their communication skills, enhance their cognitive function, and connect with their identity. In the hopes of capitalizing on these benefits, eleven states, including the state of Texas, have mandated Languages Other Than English (LOTE) credits as part of their high school graduation requirements. Texas, in fact, leads all other states in student enrollment in Spanish language learning courses, the second-most spoken language in the state behind English (American Councils, 2017). However, high rates of enrollment do not necessarily yield high rates of Spanish language retention. Data suggests that 76.4% of U.S.-born Texans speak only English despite 781,711 students being enrolled in a Spanish class in the 2017-2018 school year alone (Migration Policy Institute, 2019).

The disparity between Spanish language program enrollment and English monolingualism among native English speakers has several implications. These trends suggest that despite fulfilling their mandated language-learning credits for graduation, students are not retaining the Spanish language. But Texas does not expect them to. According to LOTE Texas state standards, dictated under the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS), students should be poised to demonstrate a novice to intermediate-level command of their second language after completing these requirements, a proficiency standard that is functionally similar to a beginner level of Spanish (Texas Education Agency, 2017). Additionally, there is no state-mandated examination to assess proficiency, so the state has virtually no mode of quantifying proficiency rates against the standards they have designed.

A second implication of this disparity is that Texas LOTE requirements are written as

a reflection of how the state envisions student success. As a major consumer among textbook publishers, Texas is an influential state in national curriculum trends. A board of elected officials, who sit on the State Board of Education (SBOE), write the curriculum standards that publishers reference to inform the textbooks and instructional content that they supply state education agencies (Chiarelott, 2006). This state-centralized jurisdiction of the curriculum makes instructional content inherently political; what the SBOE members choose to omit and include, and how content that is included is framed, is intentional, influential, and imposes values-based priorities unto the classroom. Perhaps a lack of measurable curriculum standards is a devaluation of the subject matter, an indication that the state does not prioritize LOTE learning as a primary mode of improving student outcomes.

Without a strong emphasis on LOTE, students are unable to take advantage of the benefits of a language education, and Texas is reinforcing an English-centric norm that maintains the predominance of monolingualism. My thesis analyzes these implications through the following inquiries: (1) In what ways can LOTE curriculum standards be revised to foster higher rates of multilingualism among Texas residents? (2) What skills do the LOTE TEKS provide that are considered valuable to students? and (3) How does the way that K-12 LOTE TEKS are written relate to language ideologies among Texas residents? I argue that the narrow scope of LOTE TEKS contributes to a monolingualistic norm where Spanish retention is uncommon despite widespread Spanish program enrollment, and as a result, Texas students fall behind in taking advantage of language learning benefits

This study's focus is public schools governed by state standards. However, as part of my data analysis, I studied the experiences of students who attended non-public schools or attended school outside of Texas to have a control to compare Texas public school students

against. I study the Spanish language exclusively. My methodology consists of both quantitative and qualitative analyses. I first reviewed the Texas LOTE TEKS, breaking down what skills students should acquire upon completing Spanish and what Texas deems is the purpose of offering LOTE coursework. Skills acquired are progressive with course levels offered, I being introductory and VII being the most advanced level possible. The proficiency levels for each course were referenced from the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) and their Annual Proficiency Guidelines.

I next share the results of a quantitative survey to estimate proficiency among respondents who are predominantly former, public school students from Texas. This survey asked respondents to self-report their Spanish proficiency along a four-point scale with each point representing a proficiency level between Novice (1), Intermediate (2), Advanced (3), and Superior (4). Respondents had the opportunity to review how they are measured against the TEKS and reflect on their Spanish acquisition. Through statistical analysis, I found that the sample reported an average proficiency rating of 2, or Intermediate, corresponding with the expected proficiency level of Texas graduates according to the LOTE TEKS. Reported proficiency was positively correlated with engagement and intrinsic interest, suggesting that perceived value was related to perceived proficiency.

Finally, I conducted a qualitative analysis using former student interviews. Seven representative students were selected to evaluate how their varying K-12 classroom experiences impacted their retention of, interest in, and relationship with the Spanish language, all of which contribute to the formation of language ideologies and valuations. Each interview was codified to examine trends in respondent perspectives, such as similar feedback, descriptive language, or themes between respondent answers. These trends were

then condensed into three common themes: 1) accessibility of programming, where respondents described in what formats courses were offered and how this impacted their opportunity to learn Spanish, 2) transferable skills, where respondents expressed interest in language learning formats that provided them with skills they could apply outside of the classroom or to other modes of learning, and 3) cultural literacy, where respondents explained how language learning enabled them to explore and connect with an array of cultures, including their own. In my conclusion, I provided policy suggestions informed by my analyses. Among these include suggestions to adjust funding allotments to encourage dual-immersion models, provide career and college readiness exploration in Spanish learning, and integrate cultural learning into the general LOTE curriculum.

The importance of this topic is illustrated by its limited existing research. Language acquisition research, including those conducted internally by Texas school districts, focuses on English learners rather than LOTE learners. I acknowledge that this focus is warranted considering that English is the most-spoken language in Texas and the U.S. A focus on English learners is also seemingly by Texas public student demographics statistics. Accountability ratings reported 20.7% of students with “limited English proficiency” in the 2019-2020 school year, exceeding the 18.9% of students enrolled in non-English languages (The Texas Tribune, 2020). However, while a focus of investment on English learners is warranted, limited funding and attention to LOTE programming is not. To do so reaffirms the monolingual norm and deprives students of a high-quality language education. An investigation into the quality of LOTE curriculum standards is a necessary prerequisite to providing enhanced language learning opportunities for students.

Literature Review

To review previous research on the topic of LOTE, I investigated literature in: the benefits of multilingualism, barriers to language learning, and the role of the state in LOTE instructional outcomes.

The Benefits of Multilingualism

Extensive research suggests that multilingualism has several advantages. Socioculturally, multilingual speakers can communicate with a wider range of people to broaden their worldview, learn from a diversity of perspectives, and become a well-rounded global citizen. This enables students to make interpersonal connections, travel, and exchange cultural ideas with other language communities. Researchers commend language classrooms that incorporate cultural materials, such as foods, clothing, or media, into culturally authentic learning. Speakers who are multilingual may also enjoy higher salaries and job opportunities in international spaces (Jasmin, 2021).

Other researchers focus on the cognitive benefits of learning a second language. Grammar control makes for a more active brain that enhances problem-solving skills and long-term physical brain health (Anderson, 2002). There is also value in language learning that emphasizes the language learning process, or metacognition, rather than on "direct strategies" such as vocabulary memorization. An understanding of how the brain acquires language can be applied to not only learning other languages, but the learning processes of other subjects (Hismanoglu, 2000).

Barriers to Language Learning

Researchers disagree on what inhibits second language retention. Some suggest that major barriers to second language retention are cognitive, that students who struggle to learn LOTE may have learning difficulties that require classroom accommodations (Ganschow, 2009). Adult language learners may also struggle to acquire a second language compared to children due to brain development. Reports indicate that children who are consistently exposed demonstrate mastery and long-term retention of language compared to adults who are observed to have wide variance with a general lack of success in retention; in other words, “younger is better” in idealized language learning (Bley-Vroman, 1990).

Other researchers attribute language learning inhibition to systematic structures, focusing on how language hierarchies maintain language homogeneity. In a “linguistic environment” where two languages interact, such as a dual-immersion classroom, experts express concern for the quality of instruction in the minority language (Valdes, 1997). The minority language can mean a language that is spoken by fewer students in the classroom, but it may also mean a language that is not allotted equal instructional time to its partner language. These hierarchies are not lost on students. They are observed and then internalized to form perceptions of language valuation. The acceptance of the monolingualistic English norm is thus an acceptance of neglect and devaluation of LOTE, inhibiting retention (Norton, 2011). Despite this, educators found success in English-Spanish dual-immersion retention when a conscious effort was made to equalize the two languages and promote explorations of culture, identity, and diversity (Shannon, 1995).

Resistance to language learning refers to student attitudes and even opposition towards language learning. A study of university students suggests that willingness to

practice language learning is often dependent on language competence. Students self-judge their competence through classroom performance, such as slow progress in language proficiency. Their perception is also influenced by negative feelings towards perceived language learning challenges, including the social adaptation necessary to immerse in language (Brem, 2021). Between perceived progress and difficulty, many students experience high anxiety, apathy, and frustration, all of which disengage students (Ariza, 2004). These conditions are not unique to the subject of language; students have negative feelings towards other subjects based on perceived competence or interest. However, what is unique to language learning is its inclusion of identity, culture, and a global worldview, and these are vital in framing student perspectives.

The Role of Texas

Researchers describe state standards as a way to hold the state accountable to meeting its instructional goals. A study from the Association of Departments of Foreign Languages (ADFL) describes efforts to create national standards in language learning on the university level due to a disconnect between K-12 and post-secondary language instruction. In this study, many university educators said that they did not cater instruction to the previous K-12 language learning experiences (Scott, 2009). Without standards, performance is not progressive because there is year-to-year variance in instructional quality (Scott, 2009). Texas provides LOTE standards with the intention of creating course continuity and concentrating curriculum around essential skills.

Curriculum is designed to reflect the values of the state. It is for this reason that each state is responsible for designing their own curriculum and educational standards that are

conducive to their unique student population. This state-centric process defines what experiences, skills, and knowledge are deemed valuable in cultivating student success. The selection of curriculum preserves the ideologies, norms, and “conceptions of competence” valued by its writers (Flude, 1976).

This review gave background to my research questions and were important considerations in reviewing the LOTE TEKS.

Review of State Standards

The K-12 Spanish standards are written under Title 19, Part 2, Chapter 114 of the Texas Administrative Code, “Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills for Languages Other Than English” (LOTE TEKS). Languages Other Than English is not limited to Spanish courses, but for the scope of this study, Spanish is the sole focus.

Students are required by the Texas Education Agency (TEA) to complete “two [sequential] levels of the same language” as part of the Foundation High School Program, or the standardized path to graduation (Texas Education Agency, 2020). The TEA describes the objective of providing LOTE coursework as equipping students with communication skills in a global and cultural context to become aware of “multiple perspectives and means of expression...to [appreciate] diversity” (Texas Education Agency, 2017).

The most recently updated LOTE TEKS were adopted during the 2017-2018 school year. Each sequential level, between I and VII, is provided with a description of progressive skills, knowledge, and overall proficiency that the student should demonstrate upon course completion. These descriptions are referenced from The American Council on the Teaching

of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) who provides a guide that measures proficiency on a progressive scale: Novice, Intermediate, Advanced, Superior, and Distinguished.

In this section, I first describe the TEKS of the general LOTE curriculum, outlining proficiency descriptors at each sequential level that Texas provides. I then discuss other LOTE programming beyond general curriculum, such as pre-high school coursework and electives.

Essential Knowledge and Skills

Texas offers seven levels of general curriculum for LOTE which are written under Subchapter C, or “High School.” They are called levels because they are sequential according to the student’s language proficiency upon entering high school. Each level has proficiency ranges that coordinate with ACTFL’s:

Table 4.1: Proficiency descriptors for Levels I-IV from LOTE TEKS

Curriculum Level (Designated by SBOE)	Proficiency (Designated by ACTFL and followed by SBOE)	Performance Descriptors (Low Range)	Performance Descriptors (High Range)
Level I	Novice Mid to Novice High	Highly predictable contexts. Use of memorized and recalled words and phrases. Best able to understand aural cognates, borrowed words, and high-frequency, highly contextualized words and phrases with repetition. Difficult to understand by the most sympathetic listeners and readers accustomed to dealing with language learners. Inconsistently successful when performing Novice-level tasks.	Simple, predictable contexts. Use of learned and recombined phrases and short sentences. Best able to understand sentence-length information within highly contextualized situations and sources. Understood by sympathetic listeners and readers accustomed to dealing with language learners. Consistently successful when performing Novice-level tasks. Evidence of Intermediate Low proficiency but lack consistency.

Table 4.1: Proficiency descriptors for levels I-IV from LOTE TEKS [Continued]

Curriculum Level (Designated by TEA)	Proficiency (Designated by ACTFL and followed by TEA)	Performance Descriptors (Low Range)	Performance Descriptors (High Range)
Level II	Novice High to Intermediate Low	see Level I High Range Performance Descriptor	Straightforward and personal contexts. Combining and recombining what they know, what they read, and what they hear in short statements and sentences. Understand some information from simple connected statements in oral or written sources. Generally understood by sympathetic listeners and readers accustomed to dealing with language learners. Inconsistently successful when performing Intermediate-level tasks.
Level III	Intermediate Low to Intermediate Mid	see Level II High Range Performance Descriptor	Straightforward and personal contexts. Easily combining and recombining what they know, what they read, and what they hear in short statements and a mixture of sentences and strings of sentences. Understand some information from connected statements in oral or written sources. Generally understood by sympathetic listeners and readers accustomed to dealing with language learners. Consistently successful when performing Intermediate-level tasks.
Level IV	Intermediate Mid to Intermediate High	see Level III High Range Performance Descriptor	Variety of contexts. Easily combining and recombining what they know, what they read, and what they hear in a mixture of sentences and connected discourse. Understand information from connected statements in oral or written sources. Generally understood by listeners and readers unaccustomed to dealing with language learners. Consistently successful when performing Intermediate-level tasks. Evidence of Advanced Low proficiency but lack consistency.

(Texas Education Agency, 2017)

Like ACTFL, the TEA includes low, mid, and high distinctions for Novice, Intermediate, Advanced, and Superior. For example, according to ACTFL and the TEA, a Novice Mid student is distinguished between a Novice High student in proficiency skills. My methodology does not include these distinctions.

Performance descriptors for levels V-VII are reduced to a single sentence: “the [proficiency level] student communicates in a language other than English using all three modes and all four skills,” described here:

Table 4.2: Essential skills descriptions for levels V-VII from LOTE TEKS

Mode of Communication	Description	Essential Skills
Interpersonal	Speaking and writing. The student communicates in the interpersonal mode using appropriate and applicable grammatical structures and processes in the target language at the specified proficiency levels. The interpersonal mode is the ability to understand and exchange information in the target language.	Engage in conversations with consistent use of register in all time frames. Verbally exchange information with consistent use of register on a variety of geographic, scientific, historical, artistic, social, or political features of target culture communities. Write with consistent use of register in all time frames and with elaboration items such as correspondence, narratives, descriptions, and summaries of a factual nature. Produce, with consistent use of register, written exchanges that provide information on a variety of geographic, scientific, historical, artistic, social, or political features of target culture communities.
Interpretive	Reading and listening. The student uses the interpretive mode in communication using appropriate and applicable grammatical structures and processes in the target language at the specified proficiency levels. The interpretive mode focuses on comprehending main ideas and identifying some supporting details in the target language.	Read and synthesize information from a variety of authentic print and electronic resources such as artwork, graphs, media, narratives, and descriptions in various literary genres, including texts about past, present, and future events that communicate information on a variety of geographic, scientific, historical, artistic, social, or political features of target culture communities. Compare, contrast, and synthesize cultural practices and perspectives from authentic print and electronic resources. Listen to and synthesize information from a variety of authentic audio and audiovisual resources from the target culture that communicate information in the past, present, and future on a variety of geographic, scientific, historical, artistic, social, or political features of target culture communities. Compare, contrast, and synthesize cultural practices and perspectives from authentic audio and audiovisual resources.

Table 4.2: Essential skills descriptions for levels V-VII from LOTE TEKS

Presentational	Speaking and writing. The student communicates using appropriate and applicable grammatical structures and processes in the target language at the specified proficiency levels. The presentational mode refers to the creation of oral and written messages in the target language. The student's presentation is comprehensible to an audience unaccustomed to interacting with language learners.	Plan, produce, and present, with consistent ease and clarity of expression, spoken presentational communications that are supported with cited examples in multiple paragraph length discourse to explain, express opinions, describe, and narrate on topics that communicate information on a variety of geographic, scientific, historical, artistic, social, or political features of target culture communities. Plan and produce, with consistent ease and clarity of expression, written presentational communications that are supported with cited examples in multiple paragraph length discourse to explain, express opinions, describe, and narrate on topics that communicate information on a variety of geographic, scientific, historical, artistic, social, or political features of target culture communities.
----------------	--	--

(Texas Education Agency, 2017)

These guidelines help educators gauge student progress in LOTE by identifying the characteristics of a speaker at each proficiency level. It is important to note that students without prior exposure to Spanish will complete levels I and II and demonstrate between Novice High and Intermediate Low proficiency.

Other Programming

The elementary and middle school LOTE TEKS are brief. Though elementary education in LOTE is not required or widely offered, districts are “strongly encouraged to offer [it]...with frequent exposure.” If a school district offers elementary LOTE instruction, the TEKS state that they will be held to “expected outcomes...as those indicated in levels I-IV,” or the LOTE levels for high school (Texas Education Agency, 2017).

The middle school TEKS include this expected outcomes statement as well. However, in middle school, students may be awarded one unit of high school credit per successful completion of a corresponding level (Texas Education Agency, 2017). To clarify this, if a student were to successfully complete Spanish I in middle school, they would earn one credit toward their two required high school graduation credits.

Students may also earn one half to one full elective credit for completion of a non-sequential course, such as the Discovering Languages and Cultures, but this does not count towards their two required high school graduation credits in LOTE. The course enables students to “explore cultures [and] develop language learning and communicative skills.” Students are called to compare and contrast other languages and cultures with their own, apply communication skills through interpreting contextually relevant media such as news pieces, identify cultural practices and products such as foods and way of dress, and develop language learning skills such as identifying cognates and grammar patterns (Texas Education Agency, 2017). The State Board of Education (SBOE) identified the course’s objective as helping students explore a language they are interested in studying for their LOTE graduation requirement and develop career readiness skills in cultural literacy (State Board of Education, 2013).

Dissecting the LOTE TEKS was an important step in investigating my second research question: “(2) What skills do the LOTE TEKS provide that are considered valuable to students?” It gave scope to Texas’ expectations of student progress in LOTE. It is important to reiterate, though, that despite these set expectations, Texas has no way of determining whether or not students meet them. This condition inspired my methods section,

where I collect data to analyze self-reported proficiency ratings among Texas students and how these are impacted by instructional experiences.

Methods

An evaluation of the LOTE TEKS elicits both quantitative and qualitative analyses. Through surveys, participants were asked to self-identify their proficiency in the Spanish language. Some respondents were then interviewed to find commonalities in K-12 Spanish classroom experiences and their relation to reported proficiency.

Quantitative Analysis: Surveys

To my knowledge, very little existing data has been collected on LOTE performance. When reviewing the scope of my topic, I reached out to school districts, including Northside ISD (NISD) in Bexar County, to request any data collected on student performance in the Spanish language. Representatives from NISD explained that because there was no state-mandated assessment for Spanish as a graduation requirement, they did not have any. They also explained that most of their language learning research was dedicated to English learners, a population they serve heavily. Quantifying student performance enables educators and researchers to verify that students are performing in accordance with the TEKS. This is typically achieved through standardized testing data. To this point, I decided to conduct my own survey to simulate the process of assessing student progress in LOTE.

The targeted communities for this survey were former K-12 students who attended public school in Texas and took courses in Spanish as part of their graduation requirements.

However, any respondents that did not fall under these categories were also welcomed to take the survey so that I may have a control group to compare to. For example, I accepted answers from students who had a private education, or attended school outside of Texas. However, respondents that have identified that they have never been in a Spanish classroom were not factored into statistical tests conducted in my findings to stay consistent with the research question at hand.

Respondents were primarily recruited through social media. The survey link was posted to my personal Instagram, Facebook, and LinkedIn pages. Between these platforms, I have approximately 4,000 followers and connections. It was also shared to twenty-five Facebook groups. I joined parent groups, language learning groups, Texas educator groups, college student groups, Texas residency groups, and neighborhood community groups. One example of a group I posted in was called “Parents of current and prospective university students.” I then contacted two Texas community centers, Alamo Recreation Center and Gulf Bend Center, and asked that they share my survey in their newsletters or other group communications. Finally, I solicited responses by approaching civilians in community centers in Austin, Texas, such as the Austin Public Library. From these methods, I collected 325 responses. Survey questions, which are reported under my findings section, were designed to gauge identifying characteristics, education level, K-12 instructional experiences, and self-reported proficiency.

Students assessed proficiency using a 1-4 rating metric. The metric ascends in proficiency level; it rates a 1 as *Novice*, 2 as *Intermediate*, 3 as *Advanced*, and 4 as *Superior*. These rating categories mirror the proficiency scale designed by ACTFL and referenced by TEA in the TEKS. Students were asked to rate their proficiency in six categories: oral

speaking, reading, writing, listening, proficiency upon completing K-12 Spanish, and current proficiency. These questions were provided with a description of each level to aid respondents in selecting a proficiency that best describes them:

1. **Novice**; can communicate in short messages on predictable, everyday themes that affect them directly; memorize single words or phrases that have been encountered; may be difficult to understand.
2. **Intermediate**; can utilize learned material to create personal meaning; communicate in sentences, ranging from single sentences to strings of sentences, in the present tense; understood by speakers who are accustomed to communicating with non-native Spanish language learners.
3. **Advanced**; can communicate on autobiographical topics, as well as topics of community, national, or international contexts; topics are communicated through narration; command of past, present, and future tenses; control of basic structures and generic vocabulary.
4. **Superior**; can communicate both in concrete and abstract contexts with accuracy on a range of topics; culturally authentic; can provide lengthy narrations on complex matters in detail; can articulate their opinions in real-world contexts, such as social or political issues, as a coherent, persuasive argument

(American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, 2012).

Advanced and Superior Spanish learners are competent in abstract, culturally authentic communication using relevant social contexts, such as developing a position on

social issues, whereas Novice and Intermediate Spanish learners use predictable communication methods that serve classroom contexts, such as discussing classroom objectives for the day.

It is important to note that the ACTFL includes a 5th category of proficiency entitled *Distinguished*. I did not include this category because I found the differences between Superior (4) and Distinguished (5) to be arbitrary and not a necessary distinction for the purposes of my research. This way, my scale was simplified to reduce user misunderstanding.

Qualitative Data: Interviews

After answering the survey questions, respondents were invited to include their contact information for a brief interview to further elaborate on their Spanish K-12 experiences.

Not all respondents were contacted for an interview. Rather, using the responses I collected, I organized respondents into strata where representative candidates were interviewed. This was done with the intention including all ranges of experience, education, and proficiency in qualitative assessments.

Each of these criteria were represented by at least one candidate. Respondents were organized into the following strata:

Table 5.1: Representative Categories for Interview Selection

Criterion	Categories
Out of School Exposure to Spanish	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● None, exposure was through K-12 ● Household ● Traveling
Enrolled in a Spanish course	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Currently enrolled, or took a course less than a year ago ● 1-2 years ago ● 3-4 years ago ● 5+ years ago
Associations with K-12 Spanish class	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Positive ● Negative ● Neutral or Varied
Educational Type	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Texas public education ● Private education ● Education outside of Texas
Years enrolled in a K-12 Spanish course	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 3-5 ● 6+
Spanish language proficiency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Novice ● Intermediate ● Advanced ● Superior

I contacted fifteen candidates and ultimately interviewed the seven that responded to my request. Interviews were conducted via Zoom or over the phone, and their typical length was fifteen minutes. Interviews were recorded at the consent of interviewees and transcribed. I assigned each respondent a pseudonym to protect their identity. Transcripts were then compared to find patterns between respondents; in other words, which concepts, comments, or language used was common to all interviewees.

Interviewees were asked the following questions. However, based on their answers, some respondents were asked follow-up questions that built on their personal experiences.

1. What schools did you attend throughout your K-12 education? Where were they located? Were they private or public?
2. Reflect on your Spanish instruction. How did your instruction impact your Spanish acquisition?
3. What motivated you to take Spanish courses?
4. What skills did you walk away with from your Spanish instruction?
5. What is your relationship with the Spanish language? How did your Spanish instruction impact it? Do you continue to practice the Spanish language, and if yes, how so?
6. Reflect on your exposure to the Spanish language. Where are you primarily exposed? What spaces or experiences contributed to your acquisition?

Methods Limitations

When recruiting participants to survey and interview, I was faced with the challenge of incentivizing participation since I could not provide financial compensation. Responses were entirely dependent on willingness to participate without incentives. Because of this, responses are disproportionately within my network and community spaces, especially among UT faculty and students. This means that final results may not be wholly representative of Spanish education in Texas, but rather, the experiences of those in my network. However, the practice of soliciting survey data was a symbolic step in promoting quantitative investigations of LOTE within state agencies and among education policy

researches. Additionally, these responses were reported by the student rather than a proficiency or skills test, so self-reporting bias is plausible. However, this survey is not meant to accurately determine proficiency, but rather, what students *perceive* as their proficiency level.

Findings

After evaluating this data, I condensed my findings into two analyses: quantitative, where I conducted statistical tests to find trends in former student surveys, and qualitative, where I codified student interviews into three common themes.

Quantitative Analysis: Surveys

325 survey responses were collected over the course of three months. To analyze these data, I first found the percentage and frequency of responses to each question in order to identify trends in this survey sample. The following tables divide the questions into four types: identifying characteristics, educational level, experience, and proficiency rating. Highlighted rows represent the most selected response.

Table 6.1: IDENTIFICATION

Description	Frequency	Percentage
<u>What is your age?</u>		
16-21	109	33.5%
22-27	66	20.3%
28-33	27	8.3%
34-39	32	9.8%
40+	91	28%
<u>What is your gender identity?</u>		
Female	267	82.2%
Male	53	16.3%
Non-binary	5	1.5%

Table 6.2: EDUCATION LEVEL

Description	Frequency	Percentage
<u>What is your highest completed level of education?</u>		
Some high school	4	1.2%
High school graduate	15	4.6%
Some college	122	37.5%
College graduate	100	30.8%
Post-graduate	84	25.8%
<u>Did you complete your K-12 education in Texas?</u>		
Yes	218	67.1%
No	71	21.8%
Partially	36	10.8%

Table 6.2: EDUCATION LEVEL [Continued]

Description	Frequency	Percentage
<u>Was your K-12 education public or private?</u>		
Public	249	76.6%
Private	19	5.8%
Other (I attended both public and private schools; I attended a program equivalent such as home school)	57	17.5%
<u>Did you take courses in Spanish in your K-12 education?</u>		
Yes	293	90.2%
No	30	9.2%
Not Applicable	2	.6%
<u>In what educational levels have you taken courses in Spanish? Select all that apply.</u>		
Elementary	77	23.7%
Middle School	132	40.6%
High School	268	82.5%
College	152	46.8%
Post-graduate	21	6.5%
Not Applicable	12	3.7%
<u>How long ago did you complete your last Spanish course?</u>		
I am currently enrolled	19	5.8%
Less than a year ago	21	6.5%
1-2 years ago	29	8.9%
3-4 years ago	62	19.1%
5+ years ago	194	59.7%

Table 6.2: EDUCATION LEVEL [Continued]

Description	Frequency	Percentage
<u>How many years did you take Spanish in your K-12 education?</u>		
1	21	6.5%
2	63	19.4%
3	72	22.2%
4	55	16.9%
5	25	7.7%
6+	64	19.7%
Not Applicable	25	7.7%

Table 6.3: EXPERIENCE

Description	Frequency	Percentage
<u>Rate your experience in your K-12 Spanish education.</u>		
Overall Positive	144	44.3%
Overall Negative	32	9.8%
Overall Neutral	94	28.9%
Varied	32	9.8%
Not Applicable	23	7.1%
<u>Where have you been primarily exposed to Spanish learning?</u>		
In my household	94	28.9%
In a K-12 Spanish class	145	44.6%
In a Spanish class outside of my K-12 education	20	6.2%
Media or literature	8	2.5%
Post-graduate	21	6.5%
Not Applicable	12	3.7%

Table 6.3: EXPERIENCE [Continued]

Description	Frequency	Percentage
<u>What is your primary motivation for taking Spanish courses?</u>		
Academic Requirement	94	28.9%
Personal Interest	61	18.8%
Both	137	42.2%
Not Applicable	22	6.8%
Other	10	4.3%

Table 6.4: PROFICIENCY

Description	Frequency	Percentage
<u>Rate your oral speaking proficiency in the Spanish language.</u>		
1- Novice	126	38.8%
2- Intermediate	86	26.5%
3- Advanced	52	16%
4- Superior	61	18.8%
<u>Rate your writing proficiency in the Spanish language.</u>		
1- Novice	143	44%
2- Intermediate	82	25.2%
3- Advanced	53	16.3%
4- Superior	45	13.8%
<u>Rate your listening proficiency in the Spanish language.</u>		
1- Novice	108	33.2%
2- Intermediate	78	23.4%
3- Advanced	66	20.3%
4- Superior	75	23.1%

Table 6.4: PROFICIENCY [Continued]

Description	Frequency	Percentage
<u>Rate your reading proficiency in the Spanish language.</u>		
1- Novice	110	33.9%
2- Intermediate	80	24.7%
3- Advanced	72	22.2%
4- Superior	63	19.4%
<u>Reflect upon your Spanish level at the time you finished your last Spanish course. Rate your overall proficiency in the Spanish language that you believe that you had at that point.</u>		
1- Novice	82	25.2%
2- Intermediate	110	33.8%
3- Advanced	83	25.5%
4- Superior	50	15.4%
<u>Rate your overall proficiency in the Spanish language.</u>		
1- Novice	127	39.1%
2- Intermediate	87	26.8%
3- Advanced	59	18.2%
4- Superior	52	16%

The typical respondent was a female, aged 16-21, who attended a Texas public school and completed a high school sequence of Spanish. Interestingly, respondents commonly selected Novice level for all proficiency categories except for their proficiency upon completing K-12 Spanish, which was Intermediate. This trend aligns with the LOTE TEKS which claim that students should be poised to demonstrate an Intermediate level of Spanish after finishing their required two years of LOTE.

After gathering a profile of this survey sample, I conducted a descriptive statistics test to find the mean proficiency rating among respondents in each proficiency category:

Table 6.5: Descriptive statistics of proficiency categories

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard Deviation
Oral	284	1	4	2.17	1.114
Writing	284	1	4	2.01	1.072
Listening	284	1	4	2.35	1.147
Reading	284	1	4	2.27	1.116
Post K-12 Proficiency	284	1	4	2.33	.997
Current Proficiency	284	1	4	2.12	1.078

The average proficiency rating in all categories was Intermediate (2). Students in this survey sample are reporting a perceived retention level that aligns with the standards set by the LOTE TEKS.

I next performed multiple comparative tests to determine the relationship between a specified variable and reported language proficiency for this survey sample. In all statistical tests, I omitted respondents that have never taken a Spanish course to perform within the scope of the research question, reducing the sample size to 284. The first test compares proficiency with respondent attitudes toward their K-12 Spanish educational experience:

Table 6.6: Attitude toward K-12 Spanish against average proficiency rating

Attitude	Mean	N	Standard Deviation
Negative	1.63	30	.850
Neutral	2.08	86	.973
Positive	2.63	139	.935
Varied	2.41	29	.983
Total	2.33	284	.997

Sig. < .001

Former students who had a negative experience in their Spanish classroom averaged at a lower proficiency level than those who had a positive experience by one point.

The second comparative means test compares proficiency with motivation for taking a Spanish K-12 course:

Table 6.7: Motivation for taking K-12 Spanish against average proficiency rating

Motivation	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
Academic	1.97	87	.970
Academic & Personal	2.44	122	.844
Other	2.50	20	1.235
Personal	2.62	55	1.114
Total	2.33	284	.997

Sig. < .001

Students who expressed intrinsic interest in taking a Spanish course reported higher proficiency levels than those who took them solely because of academic requirements.

I conducted a final comparative means test between reported proficiency and years of coursework taken for student’s whose primary exposure to Spanish was in their K-12 classroom.

Table 6.8: Years of Spanish taken against average proficiency rating for students primarily exposed through K-12 Spanish

Years	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
1	1.50	2	.707
2	1.32	22	.477
3	1.73	37	.693
4	2.36	28	.678
5	2.00	14	.877
6+	2.65	37	.824
Total	2.06	140	.855

Sig. < .001

I focused this analysis on students who were primarily exposed to Spanish through their K-12 education to see whether reported proficiency ascended with instructional experience. Interestingly, the lowest average proficiency rating reported was students who took Spanish for two years in their K-12 education.

Each of these comparative means tests illustrates a relationship between engagement and proficiency. Students who had a negative experience in their Spanish class or took Spanish out of academic requirement demonstrated, on average, lower long-term retention rates of the language than those who had a personal investment and positive learning experience in their K-12 Spanish class. This assumption can be seen in Table 6.8, where students who took the minimum LOTE required reported a lower proficiency rating because they were not intrinsically motivated to take Spanish courses or retain their language learning skills once they completed their graduation requirements.

Student engagement is a powerful tool in fostering valuation of LOTE because it appears to be an indicator of long-term proficiency. While quantitative analyses illustrated this relationship, I conducted qualitative analyses to understand *how* former students engaged with Spanish in their K-12 classrooms; what experiences impacted their valuation of the LOTE curriculum and what skills they retained in post-K-12.

Qualitative Analysis: Interviews

Seven respondents were interviewed. The following are the demographics of the selected interviewees, each with a pseudonym name to protect their identity.

Table 6.9: Interview Participants, Demographics

	Identification	K-12 Education & Education Level	Acquisition & Exposure	Spanish K-12 Education	Proficiency Levels Indicated
Christopher	Male, 22-27	-Texas public schools -Currently in college	-Native speaker -Household.	-6 years of courses, elementary through high school -Last taken 5+ years ago -Overall neutral associations	Overall: 4 After instruction: 4 Speaking: 4 Writing: 3 Listening: 4 Reading: 3
Amy	Female, 22-27	-Texas public schools -Currently in college	-K-12 course	-3 years of courses, high school -Last taken 5+ years ago -Overall positive associations	Overall: 1 After instruction: 2 Speaking: 1 Writing: 1 Listening: 1 Reading: 2
Isabella	Female, 40+	-Texas public schools -Post-graduate	-Traveling -Household -K-12 course	-3 years of courses, high school -Last taken 5+ years ago -Overall negative associations	Overall: 3 After instruction: 2 Speaking: 3 Writing: 3 Listening: 3 Reading: 3
Kurtis	Male, 16-21	-Attended schools in Texas and outside of Texas, both public and private -Currently in college	-Household -K-12 course	-Took 6+ years of courses, elementary through high school, -Currently enrolled -Varied associations with courses	Overall: 3 After instruction: 3 Speaking: 3 Writing: 4 Listening: 3 Reading: 3

Table 6.9: Interview Participants, Demographics [Continued]

Liam	Male, 16-21	-Attended schools in Texas and outside of Texas, both public and private -Currently in college	-K-12 course	-Took 6+ years of courses, elementary through high school -Last taken 1-2 years ago -Overall positive associations with courses	Overall: 1 After instruction: 2 Speaking: 1 Writing: 1 Listening: 1 Reading: 1
Ivy	Female, 22-27	-Texas public schools -College graduate	-Native Speaker -Household -K-12 course	-Took 6+ years of courses, elementary through high school -Last taken 3-4 years ago -Overall positive associations with courses	Overall: 4 After instruction: 4 Speaking: 4 Writing: 3 Listening: 4 Reading: 3
Kelly	Female, 16-21	-Texas public schools -Some high school	-K-12 course	-3 years of courses, elementary through high school -Last taken 3-4 years ago -Overall neutral associations with courses	Overall: 2 After instruction: 1 Speaking: 2 Writing: 1 Listening: 2 Reading: 1

Interviews were recorded, transcribed, then codified into themes that correspond to common experiences between respondents that impacted their language retention and valuation: 1) accessibility of programming, 2) transferable skills, and 3) cultural literacy.

Accessibility of Programming

This theme refers to respondent descriptions of what formats their courses were offered in, whether these were ideal formats, and how this impacted their opportunity to learn Spanish.

Though Christopher and Amy attended the same San Antonio high school, they had vastly different Spanish curriculum experiences. Christopher, a native Spanish speaker, was enrolled in public, dual-immersion courses throughout elementary and middle school. His classes were taught in both Spanish and English to cultivate peer-to-peer learning between native English and Spanish speakers. He enrolled in this program to learn English, stay in the same school, and connect with the Spanish language. Conversely, Amy did not have the opportunity to take Spanish until she attended high school when it was required as part of her degree plan. Her first exposure to the Spanish language was in this coursework. Both Amy and Christopher took at least three years of Spanish in high school, but Christopher continued his education with one additional year of AP coursework.

Despite their diverse experiences, both interviewees had the same parting thought when asked for additional comments: they both believe that LOTE, Spanish in this case, should be integrated into required curriculum before high school. Amy said she “[wished] Spanish was built into the curriculum from a young age” because language acquisition is easiest in earlier stages of brain development. Additionally, she commented that language learning programs were oftentimes offered on a lottery basis or with cost. This inhibited her ability to participate in these programs, which she cited as the reason she did not have a stronger command of the language.

Christopher made the following comment on his dual-immersion courses:

“Having seen people not take a second language until high school, I think most people would benefit from learning a second language way earlier on [than high school]...very few of my peers in high school actually learned Spanish whereas I observed more [acquisitional] success in my dual-immersion courses.” -Christopher

Other respondents expressed interest in early language programming. Isabella, a bilingual educator and mother, said that she wants her son, a kindergartener, to be “...in a classroom where they speak Spanish...[so that] he can be fluent” to capitalize on “cognitive advantages” of bilingualism from an early age.

Texas currently only mandates public LOTE coursework for high school students. However, it seems many respondents would benefit from a wider variety of idealized formats for language learning, particularly those where students can be exposed to a language at an earlier age.

Transferable Skills

This theme refers to respondent interest in language learning formats that fostered widely-applicable skills, in and outside of a Spanish classroom.

While Amy felt that she did not have much language retention from her Spanish classes, she did acquire useful skills from her coursework. Her Spanish classes improved her public speaking confidence, which she suggests is because of the challenge of presenting in a language that is not your own. Additionally, she learned skills that improved her language learning of her family’s native language of Tagalog, a dialect from the Philippines. The

process of learning Spanish helped her “approach learning and speaking Tagalog” and learning other languages. In other words, learning how language is best acquired enabled her to apply these skills to learning other languages besides Spanish, a form of metacognitive learning.

Liam, on the other hand, said that this applicability was something his Spanish education lacked, which affected his interest and proficiency in language learning. While Liam took Spanish consistently throughout his K-12 education, he says that he has virtually no retention of and relationship with the language. There were even several instances in the interview where Liam suggested he was “bad” at learning Spanish. When I asked him why he felt this way, he responded with the following:

“As an engineer, I’ve learned to be very aware of how my brain works. [My learning] is much better with, say, natural sciences and seeing something in front of me that I can learn from with my hands. Language learning is just different from that [mode of learning]. It just seemed like a lot of memorization. I really struggled with [Spanish] because there wasn’t a...good way for me to learn Spanish like hands on.”

Liam expressed a need for tangible, hands-on modes of learning which his Spanish coursework did not provide. Of course, there are certain disciplines and subjects that some students naturally prefer, and for Liam, this preference is in the natural sciences. This is an important consideration, however, considering how many years Liam took Spanish and his level of acquisition. Perhaps this is an indication that language learning should emphasize learning mode variety and how these skills can be applied to other disciplines.

The TEA cites college and career readiness as an objective of LOTE coursework. This was true of Kurtis, who was able to apply his language learning to a career in natural sciences. Kurtis learned Spanish from his household as well as his K-12 Spanish courses, which he took all throughout school. He was able to develop a proficiency in the language to speak in a medical setting as a healthcare professional, speaking with patients who visited the clinic he worked at. In this example, Kurtis successfully applied his language learning to contexts that served his career aspirations, enabling to support more patients in his practice and recognize the value of a language education.

Cultural Engagement

This theme refers to the cultural connection and exploration that former students engaged in throughout their Spanish learning.

While Kurtis was able to apply his Spanish studies outside of the classroom, he was not initially interested in Spanish language learning. He explained that he did not appreciate his heritage until later in his life as a sophomore in high school, which he attributes to cultural learning in his high school Spanish classroom. This particular instructor introduced their students to popular Latin pop songs, using music and pop culture to foster cultural engagement. It was this classroom experience that made Kurtis more interested in Spanish language learning, connecting with his heritage and appreciating its cultural contributions.

Though she is much older than other interviewees, Isabella had a nearly identical experience. Isabella grew up in a household where Spanish was spoken and attended K-12 Spanish courses throughout high school. However, it wasn't until much later in her adulthood

that she would be proficient in the language. Isabella was not interested in the Spanish language or her heritage, which she attributes to the homogenous community she grew up in.

“I grew up in a predominantly white, English-speaking community [in Texas]. I was not confident and not necessarily proud of Spanish or my heritage. I grew up very sheltered and [had to] outgrow that hesitancy to speak [Spanish].”

Isabella explains that she was not challenged to use her family’s native language despite her opportunities to do so, and that she did not appreciate the value of her heritage or diversity. She would acquire this appreciation much later in life after she completed her college degree.

“I became fluent later in life after I joined the Peace Corps and lived in South America for two-and-a-half years. I grew into feeling appreciative of my culture during that time.”

Isabella, like Kurtis, did not appreciate her heritage until she had an opportunity to explore and connect with the language through cultural immersion. This experience emphasizes the importance of instilling cultural competence in students, guiding students through an exploration of global learning where they may learn a great deal about their own identity.

Students whose native language was Spanish took courses to refine their Spanish language skills. After completing their required LOTE credits, Christopher and Ivy both enrolled in AP Spanish coursework. Christopher called it an opportunity to “connect with his native tongue” and develop his writing skills in an academic setting through essay prompts.

Ivy took AP courses to “perfect her Spanish” in a cultural context to have better conversations with her family members in Mexico. In addition to her refined grammar and vocabulary skills, she had the opportunity to read poems, folklore, and literature in the Spanish language while getting college credit:

“[The stories] stuck with me...we read books that are known stories and my parents actually knew them, but I never did. I guess I never really grew up with [them].”

Former students enjoyed learning their native language in an academic context because it gave them new ways to connect with their culture. These stories emphasize the importance of instilling cultural literacy in students. Culturally authentic language learning not only asks students to expand their global perspectives, but empowers them to explore and appreciate their own cultural identity.

Limitations

Under preferred conditions, I would have collected a larger, more representative, and randomized sample to conduct my analyses. The range of my survey sample However, as aforementioned, my recruitment procedures limited my capacity to collect an ideal sample. Any conclusions I draw can only be said of my survey and interview sample as a result. This does not mean that these conclusions are not useful or are in some way related to larger trends among Texas public school students. Rather,

Conclusion

Former Spanish students in this survey sample met the standards set by TEA: they averaged an Intermediate level, or 2, in all proficiency categories. However, student engagement indicators, such as motivations for taking Spanish courses or attitudes towards their Spanish instruction, influenced reported proficiency for former students. Interviewees shared valuable insight into the modes with which they felt engaged in Spanish and how classroom experiences impacted their long-term retention. Common interview themes demonstrate that K-12 Spanish can benefit from LOTE curriculum adjustments to enhance their potential for language retention and real-world application.

Using my original research questions, I offer the following policy and curriculum suggestions informed by respondent data and idealized learning models.

(1) In what ways can LOTE curriculum standards be revised to foster higher rates of multilingualism among Texas residents?

Programming Incentives

Dual-language (DL) programs offer promising results for language retention. In these classrooms, instruction is taught equally between two languages to foster two-way immersion. Most Texas DL programs are taught in Spanish and English since 88.9% of all English learners (ELs) are native Spanish speakers. This innovative classroom design enables students to “support and assist one another” through paired learning, boosting social competency and cognitive function, all the while integrating two different language learning communities (Arreguín, 2019). When instruction is equalized, and programming is

developed gradually, DL programs are the optimal mode of language learning because it promotes peer-to-peer engagement.

HB3, an overarching education finance bill passed in the 2019 Texas Legislature, provided funding incentives for districts that implemented DL programs to support ELs under the Bilingual Education Allotment. However, the amount allocated is dependent on classroom composition. For each EL served in a DL program, the district receives \$924 in additional funding, whereas for each non-EL served, \$308 is provided (Texas Education Agency, 2019). This discrepancy in funding is likely meant to prioritize ELs, however, it incentivizes English learning over integrated DL programs and can deter districts from implementing these sustainable, successful learning models. It is recommended that the TEA invest more funding towards the Bilingual Education Allotment to incentivize integrated language learning programs that serve both ELs and non-ELs. To foster higher rates of multilingualism among Texans, This will provide districts with the funding necessary to optimally implement these programs, make language learning opportunities more accessible to students, and foster higher rates of multilingualism.

(2) What skills do the LOTE TEKS provide that are considered valuable to former students?

Emphasis on Applicable Skills

Former students interviewed had a difficult time articulating the skills they learned from their language classrooms and how they still employ them today. However, respondents commonly expressed value in a Spanish education that emphasizes transferable and

applicable skills. One valued skill among interviewees was metacognitive language learning, where students not only learn a second language, but *how to approach* language learning. In other words, they acquire an understanding of the language learning process through listening comprehension, vocabulary, grammar, and reading strategies that can be employed in language learning and beyond (Wenden, 1998).

Additionally, students can benefit from applying their language learning to a career. Students should be challenged to learn contexts that are practical in their field of interest, such as Kurtis who applied his Spanish to his job at the emergency room. This will instill the value of Spanish learning by bridging learning with direct application while also fostering college and career readiness skills. While not all students are interested in language learning studies, such as Liam who preferred hands-on modes of learning and the applicative sciences, many students can find relevance when their education is “career-oriented” and explorative of their specific discipline of interest (Oxford, 1989).

(3) How does the way that K-12 LOTE TEKS are written relate to language ideologies among Texas residents?

Cultural Competency

Culture is inherently connected to language. This is why culturally authentic learning is an important consideration in developing an appreciation of the Spanish language. Interviewees who were exposed to Spanish music, films, and literature explored a variety of cultural perspectives and even their own heritage. This cultivated interest in Spanish for these

students by broadening their learning beyond the classroom and into global, real-world contexts.

To this point, it is my recommendation that the Discovering Languages and Cultures (DLC) course be abolished and its curriculum be integrated into the general LOTE levels. The course objectives, to “explore culture, develop language learning and communicative skills,... identify cultural practices,...and interpret contextually relevant media,” should be inherent to authentic language learning. Former student accounts also cited these skills as directly within their Spanish language learning experiences, suggesting that DLC coursework is not so different than that of the LOTE levels. Integration would incorporate cultural competency into LOTE graduation standards rather than labeling this as an “other,” non-sequential elective.

Curriculum is impactful on student perspectives because it deems what is and is not important in educational success. The scope of Spanish language learning standards, the emphasis on English language learning, and the limited opportunities for long-term retention is internalized in students as a devaluation, encouraging disinterest, disengagement, and a monolingual norm among Texas residents. This study was conducted under the belief that the merit of a bilingual education is not limited to English learners, that *all* students gain from a culturally-informed and global perspective, enhancement of cognitive function, skill-based learning, peer socialization, and connection to identity. A multilingual education is not only possible, but valuable.

References

American Councils (2017). The National K-12 Foreign Language Enrollment Survey Report.

The Language Flagship.

<https://www.americancouncils.org/sites/default/files/FLE-report-June17.pdf>.

Anderson, N. J. (2002). The Role of Metacognition in Second Language Teaching and Learning. ERIC Digest.

Ariza, E. N. (2010). Torn between Two Worlds: Overcoming Resistance to Second-Language Learning. *The Clearing House: A Journal of Educational Strategies, Issues and Ideas*, 77(3), pp. 105-120.

Arreguín, I. G. (2019). Paired Learning: Strategies for Enhancing Social Competence in Dual Language Classrooms. *Young Children*, 74(2).

Bley-Vroman, R. (1990). The Logical Problem of Foreign Language Learning. *Linguistic Analysis*, 20(1), pp. 3-60.

Brem, N. (2021). Diagnosing Barriers In Foreign Language Acquisition. Submitted to The International Conference on Language and Technology in the Interdisciplinary Paradigm.

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/356729471_Diagnosing_Barriers_In_Foreign_Language_Acquisition

Chiarelott, L. (2006). *Curriculum in Context*. Cengage Learning.

Flude, M. & Ahier, J. (1976). Curriculum as Ideological Selection. *Comparative Education Review*, 20(2), pp. 19-76.

Ganschow, L. & Sparks, R. (2009). Learning difficulties and foreign language learning: A review of research and instruction. *Language Teaching, Surveys and Studies*, 55(2), pp 79.

Hismanoglu, M. (2000). *Language Learning Strategies in Foreign Language Learning and Teaching*. Hacettepe University.

Jasmin, Y. (2021). *Benefits of Learning A Second Language*. Cihan University-Erbil.

Migration Policy Institute (2019). *State Immigration Data Profiles*. The Migration Policy Institute. <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/data/state-profiles/state/language/TX>.

Norton, B., & Toohey, K. (2011). Identity, language learning, and social change. *Language Teaching, Surveys and Studies*, 44(4), pp. 412-446.

Scott, V. M., & Blyth, C. (2009). *Principles and Practices of the Standards in College Foreign Language Education*. Cengage Learning.

Shannon, S. M. (1995). The hegemony of English: A case study of one bilingual classroom as a site of resistance. *Linguistics and Education*, 7(3), pp 175-200.

State Board of Education (2013). DRAFT: Proposed Revisions for Languages other than English, Elementary and Middle School.

Texas Education Agency (2017). Chapter 114: TEXAS ESSENTIAL KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS FOR LANGUAGES OTHER THAN ENGLISH. Office of the Secretary of State.

[https://texreg.sos.state.tx.us/public/readtac\\$ext.ViewTAC?tac_view=5&ti=19&pt=2&ch=114&sch=C&rl=Y](https://texreg.sos.state.tx.us/public/readtac$ext.ViewTAC?tac_view=5&ti=19&pt=2&ch=114&sch=C&rl=Y).

Texas Education Agency (2019). Bilingual Education Allotment. TEA.

<https://tea.texas.gov/sites/default/files/HB3-Video-Series-Bilingual-Education-Allotment.pdf>.

Texas Education Agency (2020). Languages Other Than English: Frequently Asked Questions. Curriculum Standards and Support Division.

<https://tea.texas.gov/sites/default/files/Languages%20Other%20Than%20English%20FAQs.pdf>.

The American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (2012). ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines for 2012. ACTFL: Language Connects.

<https://www.actfl.org/resources/actfl-proficiency-guidelines-2012>.

The Texas Tribune (2020). The State of Texas. *The Texas Tribune*.

<https://schools.texastribune.org/states/tx/>.

Valdes, G. (1997). Dual-Language Immersion Programs: A Cautionary Note Concerning the Education of Language-Minority Students. *Harvard Educational Review*, 67(3), pp. 391–430.

Wenden, A. L. (1998). Metacognitive Knowledge and Language Learning. *Applied Linguistics*, 19(4), pp. 515–537.

Acknowledgement

This study would not be possible without the guidance of my advisors. I want to first thank Dr. Sarah Jey Whitehead for her unwavering support throughout my project. Dr. Whitehead is not just a researcher, professor, or teacher: she is the definition of an educator. She shared my enthusiasm for language education, affirmed the importance of this research topic, and was a great source of inspiration. I also want to acknowledge the work she dedicated to my project despite her other obligations: a professorship, K-12 teaching, and becoming a mother. I dedicate this work to her and her child, who will surely know the power of an education. Dr. Whitehead, I could not have imagined a better experience for my project and that is all thanks to you. I strive to one day be the educational leader you are. Barley Bean Coffeehouse has a special place in my heart.

I also want to thank Dr. Monique Pikus, my Second Reader. Her patience and wisdom encouraged me to critically analyze my writing and think like a researcher. Dr. Pikus has been a constant source of support throughout my time at UT, and she too wears many hats: educator, professor, director, sociology researcher, forever LAHer, and mother. And even so, Dr. Pikus has demonstrated that she will always make time for her students and their educational success. Thank you, Dr. Pikus, for your service to equitability in higher education and for the countless SPSS tutorials.

I also want to thank Dr. Linda Mayhew and the Humanities Department. Dr. Linda Mayhew was the first faculty member I met at UT. She has been my advisor, professor, supervisor, essay-editor, and most of all, dedicated mentor. Applying to the Humanities program was the best choice I made in my time at UT. The privilege I have to study a

discipline I am so passionate about, to design an education that is mine alone, is not lost on me, and I am proud to soon be a Humanities Honors Alumni. Thank you, Linda, for the hard work you pour into this program. There is no Humanities without you.

As this chapter of my educational career comes to a close, I finally want to thank the support systems that made me into the life-long learner I am today. Thank you to Mom and Dad, for your selflessness, compassion, and guidance. It is because of your dedication to Texas public school students that I have discovered education advocacy to be my life's purpose. Thank you to UT for giving me a network of friends, mentors, and change-makers that makes graduation so bittersweet. I take a piece of each of you with me, and promise that I will not let you down.

"The limits of my language mean the limits of my world."

-Ludwig Wittgenstein