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## Recently Graduated U.S. High School Students' Perspectives of Critical Standards in Languages Other Than English

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# Walden University

College of Education and Human Sciences

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Diane Bosilevac

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Walden University

2023

Abstract

Recently Graduated U.S. High School Students' Perspectives of Critical Standards in  
Languages Other Than English

by

Diane Bosilevac

MA, Baker University, 2009

BS, University of Kansas, 1992

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Education: Policy, Leadership, and Management

Walden University

May 2023

## Abstract

The national world language standards created in 1996 to represent critical concepts in world languages were modified in 2015 to include real-world applications but were not developed with student input. Guided by a framework of critical theory and critical pedagogy, which gave voice to the people most affected by the standards, the purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore the perspectives of recently graduated high school students regarding the critical concepts and needed changes to the national world language standards. Interviews with nine recently graduated high school students from a Midwest U.S. public school district regarding the critical concepts and needed changes to the national world language standards were analyzed through inductive coding. Findings revealed six themes: conventions, criticality, exposure to global opportunities, inclusion, inclusive knowledge, and unification. Positive social change may occur through further modification of the national world language standards to better reflect the viewpoints of those the standards were designed to serve.

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## Dedication

I dedicate this work to my best friend, Brad, who passed away during my journey to obtain a PhD in education. Brad would have been an incredible teacher. He reminded me daily of the beauty and intelligence of each child; he was an advocate for all. On my toughest days, Brad always knew what to say to help me make the right decision, make me feel better, and make me feel valued and respected. Every student needs a Brad. May education improve so that each child feels welcomed, heard, and honored in our systems.

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Thank you to my brother and his family, my sister and her family, and all my friends and their families. A special thank you to Cynthia and her family who always believed in me, and I am sending her the same gift. We are one family. I love you, all!

I would like to thank my committee, the staff at Walden (Jennifer, Lindsay, and the editors), my school district and our students, my world language colleagues, and every single academic in world languages, past and present. Thank you for explaining the incomprehensible and for teaching me what I needed to do and learn to finish this work. It was a formidable learning experience and now a *fait accompli* thanks to you all!

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## Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

In 1996, national standards for languages other than English (LOTE) were published without student input (Davis, 1997; Diegmeuller, 1995; Phillips & Terry, 1999). The national standards for LOTE, also referred to as foreign or world languages, outline what students should know and be able to do in language studies (National Standards in Foreign Language Education Project [NSFLEP], 1996). In 2015, the modified version of the national world language standards, known as the World-Readiness Standards for Learning Languages (W-RSLL), were published by a larger task force (National Standards Collaborative Board [NSCB], 2015) and continue to be promulgated in school districts around the United States. “The World-Readiness Standards for Learning Languages define the central role of world languages in the learning career of every student” (NSFLEP, 2015, p. 11). The W-RSLL are also reflected in curricula, textbooks, professional development, and the preparation of teachers (Reagan & Osborn, 2021). Although the national world language standards were revised with an unprecedented consensus among educators (NSCB, 2015), the perspectives of students were never included (NSFLEP, 2015). Researchers in world languages have expressed the need to reexamine the standards (Cox et al., 2018; Magnan et al., 2012; Miller, 2019; Reagan & Osborn, 2021) with student input that communicates student perspectives (Cook-Sather, 2020) on the critical concepts and needed changes to the national world language standards (Miller, 2019) to produce knowledge that can be transformative (Pearce & Wood, 2019).

Chapter 1 includes an introduction to the study with the following sections: the background, problem statement, purpose, research questions, conceptual framework, and nature of the study. To avoid ambiguity, I present explanations of key terms in a stand-alone section called definitions. To clarify contexts, I analyze assumptions and outline the scope of the study along with its limitations and delimitations. I conclude the chapter with a summary of the topic and why the study was needed.

### **Background**

Students are central stakeholders in education (Davin & Heineke, 2018), yet the W-RSLL were created without student perspectives (NSFLEP, 2015); it is assumed the national world language standards reflect student needs and desires (Magnan et al., 2014). In world language education, Bloemert et al. (2020) advocated for student perspectives at the forefront while developing a “knowledge base” (p. 429). Bettencourt (2020) advocated for a collaborative approach between adults and students as pedagogical partners (Cook-Sather, Addy, et al., 2021; Cook-Sather, Allard, et al., 2021). Hancock and Davin (2020) analyzed differing perspectives between adults and students and found that working together produced fewer misunderstandings regarding student perspectives. Jones and Bubb (2021) posited that children should influence their own education; when cocreation occurs, it can be transformational (Pearce & Wood, 2019). Miller’s (2019) and Magnan et al.’s (2012) research on university students’ perspectives of the national world language standards resulted in divergent findings, which supported the need for my study. As states reexamine the W-RSLL, students’ perspectives must be

included (Schwieter & Iidab, 2020) to communicate knowledge that may have been overlooked by those who created and recreated world language standards.

### **Problem Statement**

The problem addressed in this study was a gap in the literature related to recently graduated high school students' perspectives on the critical concepts and needed changes to the national world language standards (NSFLEP, 2015). The W-RSLL that comprise the framework for teaching languages other than English in the United States were created without student input (NSFLEP, 2015). Excluding students' perspectives created an "incomplete picture of the educational system" (Bloemert et al., 2020, p. 429) and reinforced hegemonic systems in education (Pearce & Wood, 2019). Cocreation of educational practices among educators and students can be transformative, generating an ability to change traditional systems (Pearce & Wood, 2019). Schwieter and Iidab (2020) suggested that in language studies, there is a need for research that explores power and social practices and the voices of those most affected, reflections of critical theory and critical pedagogy. Cook-Sather (2002) advocated for students to become cocreators of education because, as Jones and Bubb (2021) found, teachers and students had differing opinions regarding education and school improvement. Davin and Heineke (2018) stressed the importance of the student voice in world language policy, as did Hancock and Davin (2020) who studied differing perspectives between students and adults in world language policy. Because U.S. states continue to modify and develop world language policies without student voice, there is a need to reexamine the standards by

placing student perspectives at the forefront regarding the critical concepts and needed changes to the national world language standards (Cox et al., 2018; Miller, 2019).

The national world language standards are divided into five goal areas: communication, cultures, communities, comparisons, and connections (NSCB, 2015; NSFLEP, 1996); however, disaccord of the importance of individual goals and the possibility of missing concepts in world language standards exist. University students identified communication and culture goals as the most important when questioned on critical concepts to study (Miller, 2019). Wassell et al. (2019) advocated for a change from a focus on communication and culture in world languages to incorporation of social justice. Randolph and Johnson (2017) recommended social justice as the thread linking the goal areas for standards in world languages. Additionally, various U.S. states modified the national world language standards (e.g., California State Board of Education, 2019; Nebraska Department of Education, 2019; New York State Education Department, 2021). Due to the overall inconsistency of agreed-upon goal areas for standards in world languages, White (2016) suggested additional research of participants from different instructional levels. The problem addressed in the current study was a gap in the literature related to recently graduated high school students' perspectives on the critical concepts and needed changes to the national world language standards.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore the perspectives of recently graduated high school students regarding the critical concepts and needed changes to the national world language standards. National standards in world languages

(NSCB, 2015; NSFLEP, 1996) were created without student input (Davis, 1997; Diegmeuller, 1995; NSFLEP, 2015; Phillips & Terry, 1999), and it is assumed that the standards reflect what is best for students (Magnan et al., 2014). The current qualitative study provided valuable insight for educators and policy makers in world languages by representing the perspectives of recently graduated high school students on the critical concepts and needed changes to the national world language standards.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions were developed to address a gap in the literature regarding recently graduated high school students' perspectives on the critical concepts and needed changes to the national world language standards:

RQ1: What are the perspectives of recently graduated high school students who completed world language classes from a large public school district in the Midwest regarding the critical concepts of the World-Readiness Standards for Learning Languages?

RQ2: What are the perspectives of recently graduated high school students who completed world language classes from a large public school district in the Midwest regarding needed changes to the World-Readiness Standards for Learning Languages?

### **Conceptual Framework**

The conceptual framework for this qualitative study was critical theory and critical pedagogy with a constructivist epistemology. Critical theory was developed by theorists of Germany's Frankfurt School in the 1930s (Frymer, 2020). The term "critical" acknowledges the role of power (Ravitch & Mittenfelner Carl, 2016) and is found in the



works of Freire (1968/1970, as cited in Bettencourt, 2020) who challenged “traditional conventions of education and justice to advocate for equal power dynamics across constituents” (p. 157). Meadows (2019) discussed the educational power of teachers through critical theory and critical pedagogy in teacher candidates. Randolph and Johnson (2017) addressed critical pedagogy through social justice in world languages, and Pearce and Wood (2019) stated that the student voice can contribute to transformative educational practices. Allowing student voices to be heard and acted on regarding standards that frame world language studies is a needed disruption of the status quo of the educational system and an integral component of critical work (Reagan & Osborn, 2021). This conceptual framework, grounded in critical theories, was used to develop interview questions and analyze interview transcript data to explore recently graduated high school students’ perspectives on the critical concepts and needed changes to the national world language standards. A more detailed description of the conceptual framework is provided in Chapter 2.

### **Nature of the Study**

The approach for this study was basic qualitative because the research provided new knowledge from experiences (see Merriam & Grenier, 2019). Based on a nonpositivist perspective, interviews were conducted to explore the perspectives of nine recently graduated high school students who had previously enrolled in world language classes from a large public school district in the Midwest United States. Data were analyzed through coding and reflection to uncover recurring themes. This study clarified

the experiences of recently graduated high school students related to national world language standards.

To address the research questions, I interviewed recent graduates 18 years of age and older selected through purposeful sampling regarding their perspectives on the critical concepts and needed changes to the national world language standards. Students 18 years and older were chosen to obtain the perspectives of recently graduated high school students while protecting the vulnerable population of minor-age students. Recently graduated high school students were chosen to preclude any concerns related to my role as an administrator in the school district.

To recruit participants for the study, I asked the manager of the Department of Research and Accountability in the school district to send emails to students who were 18 years of age or older at the time of the email correspondence, who had completed a minimum of 2 years of studies in world languages in the school district, and who had graduated in 2022 from the district. The emails (see Appendix B) included information regarding the study and information to contact me if the student desired to participate in the study.

### **Definitions**

The following terms and definitions informed my study:

*American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL)*: ACTFL (n.d.) is the national organization for teachers of world languages in the United States that provides a “vision, leadership, and support for quality teaching and learning of languages” (para. 1). Currently, there are more than 13,000 members of the organization

encompassing instructors of world languages and administrators from elementary to postsecondary and members of the government and business that support studies in world languages (ACTFL, n.d.).

*Critical:* The definition of critical might infer the recognition of power (Ravitch & Mittenfelner Carl, 2016) and could also be used to describe indispensable concepts.

*Critical pedagogy:* As applied in education, critical pedagogy is used to examine power in the classroom (Johnson & Randolph, 2015) by encouraging students to become coconstructors of their education as opposed to receivers of the knowledge chosen by the educator (Cook-Sather, 2020; Freire, 1968/1970; Melo, 2019).

*Critical theory:* The aim of critical theory is to create a fairer, more just society (Sato et al., 2017) by examining and dismantling power in relationships.

*Educator:* In the academic setting, an educator provides the instruction of a skill or concept, and in the classroom, an educator is commonly called a teacher but can also be referred to as an instructor (Educator, 2023).

*Languages other than English (LOTE):* LOTE was chosen in the title to differentiate world languages from classes that are provided to students for additional academic support in English (Reagan & Osborn, 2021).

*Pedagogical partnership:* Collaborative work in which students are given the opportunity to contribute equally in decision making to affect teaching and learning (Cook-Sather, Addy, et al., 2021; Cook-Sather, Allard, et al., 2021).

*Recently graduated high school students:* Students who have graduated from high school within 1 year of finishing their senior year of high school.

*Standards:* Standards streamline language learning and provide a shared framework for effective learning (Cox et al., 2018).

*Student perspective:* Student perspectives may differ from the perspective of an adult of another generation because students possess unique thoughts based on age and generational differences (Konrath et al., 2011).

*Student voice:* Students exert influence on decisions to provide perspectives on their education. Student voice is a concept and practice that includes the student as a cocreator in educational decisions (Cook-Sather, 2020).

*World language:* The term is synonymous with LOTE, foreign language, modern and classical language, second language, and/or target language (Reagan & Osborn, 2021).

*World language standards:* Standards in world languages are referred to as the roadmap, the framework, and/or the policy for world language instruction. In 1996, standards for world languages were published in *Standards for Foreign Language Learning: Preparing for the 21st Century* and were called National Standards (NSFLEP, 1996). In 2015, the National Standards were revised to focus on real-world applications (NSCB, 2015) and the prefix World-Readiness was added to emphasize the “knowledge, skills, and dispositions” (NSCB, 2015, p. 16) necessary to achieve in a postsecondary study or a career. The removal of foreign languages in the title of the recent standards for world languages promotes the acceptance of all languages and the idea that languages taught in an academic setting are not foreign in the United States (NSFLEP, 2015).

*World languages*: World languages may be referred to as the department housing languages that are taught within the academic setting. For the purpose of the current study, languages other than English was used for the title, but the term world languages was adopted throughout the paper. World languages is an inclusive term recognizing that the language studied at school (e.g., Chinese, French, Spanish, Swahili) could be the language spoken within the community (Reagan & Osborn, 2021).

*W-RSLL*: The W-RSLL “create a roadmap to guide learners to develop competence to communicate effectively and interact with cultural competence to participate in multilingual communities at home and around the world” (NSFLEP, 2015, p. 11). The W-RSLL can be referred to as a roadmap, framework, or policy for world language instruction and learning. The W-RSLL are commonly referred to as the national world language standards.

### **Assumptions**

I had several assumptions for this study. I assumed that the participants would answer the questions to the best of their abilities and would not be hindered by the fact that I was an administrator at the central office. Because all of my participants were graduates, I had no power over them. My goal was to create a qualitative study that was nonbiased, and I used bracketing to minimize researcher bias (see Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Reagan and Osborn (2021) posited that positionality affects how reality is constructed; I was born in the United States and English is my first language. As a researcher, I understood that qualitative research encompasses the concept of ontology by embracing “multiple realities and truths” (see Ravitch & Mittenfelner Carl, 2019, p. 5). I

also understood that “knowledge is developed from individuals’ subjective experiences” (see Ravitch & Mittenfelner Carl, 2019, p. 5), which became my epistemological approach and the assumptions made in this study.

### **Scope and Delimitations**

This study was designed to capture the perspectives of recently graduated high school students regarding the critical concepts and needed changes to the national world language standards from a large public school district in the Midwest United States. Perspectives of recently graduated high school students were chosen due to a gap in the literature on their perspectives on the critical concepts and needed changes to the national world language standards. Recently graduated high school students age 18 and over were interviewed as a means of protecting the vulnerable population under 18. Although students under the age of 18 were excluded from this research, results have the potential to transfer to all students regardless of age because the world language standards represent what students should know and be able to do from prekindergarten to postsecondary levels (NSFLEP, 2015).

### **Limitations**

A potential challenge was the time frame for interviewing recently graduated high school students 18 years and older. Recent graduates were preferable to currently enrolled students because graduates had received grades from their instructors of world languages. Ideally, graduates would not have moved out of the region. Interviews could have taken place within weeks after graduation. The number of potential participants was

about 250 graduates who had enrolled for a minimum of 2 years in world languages, so it was feasible to anticipate nine volunteers for the study.

Personal bias was minimized to not influence the study outcomes. One personal bias was an assumption that the national world language standards should change. Bracketing was used to address biases of preconceived notions or thoughts. The process of bracketing involves identifying personal experiences concerning the phenomenon and interpreting those experiences before the interview takes place to avoid influencing data interpretation (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Bracketing is a common practice for researchers of qualitative studies to examine biases before beginning the study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

### **Significance**

The findings of this study made an original contribution to reducing the identified gap in the literature by exploring recently graduated high school students' perspectives on the critical concepts and needed changes to the national standards in world languages. Students recommended modifications to the standards; therefore, a change in the curriculum might occur that could drive instructional decisions and policy implementation. Student input on the national world language standards will be available to educators and policy makers, which may influence new development of standards. Positive social change may occur because recently graduated high school students were given the opportunity to report opinions on education by providing perspectives on the critical concepts and needed changes to the national standards in world languages.

## Summary

Students should be included in educational decisions (Bloemert et al., 2020) to promote their “worth, dignity, and development” (Walden University, 2020, p. 5), yet national standards in world languages were created without student input (Davis, 1997; Diegmeuller, 1995; NSFLEP, 2015; Phillips & Terry, 1999). It is assumed that the standards reflect what is best for students. Excluding students’ perspectives reinforces systems of power (Pearce & Wood, 2019) in education, whereas the cocreation of educational practices among educators and students can be transformative (Pearce & Wood, 2019). Therefore, as states continue to modify and develop national world language standards, student perspectives should be included (Schwieter & Lidab, 2020) to effect positive change in world language studies (Davin & Heineke, 2018). Findings obtained from the current study could lead to modifications of the standards in world languages locally and regionally and could improve the student experience as positive influencers of their education.

In Chapter 1, I provided an overview of the problem that students have not been included in the development or revision of national standards in world languages; therefore, a gap existed in the literature related to recently graduated high school students’ perspectives on the critical concepts and the needed changes to the national world language standards. I outlined the purpose of the study, which was to explore the perspectives of recently graduated high school students on the critical concepts and needed changes to the national world language standards. I also provided background information on the conceptual framework, which was rooted in critical theories. Lastly, I



included the research questions, assumptions, scope and delimitations, limitations, and the significance of the study that created a foundation for the conceptual framework and literature review covered in Chapter 2.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

The problem addressed in this study was a gap in the literature related to recently graduated high school students' perspectives on the critical concepts and needed changes to the national world language standards. The W-RSLL, considered the national world language standards and the roadmap for world language studies in the United States, were created without student input. Cook-Sather (2020) advocated for student input that communicates perspective and positive change in educational decisions. Bettencourt et al. (2020) studied how students could effectively address inequalities in their education and found that recently graduated high school students need opportunities to affect their learning as knowledgeable assets as opposed to the typical expectation of being simple receivers of knowledge. Researchers revealed conflicting viewpoints, however; Jones and Bubb (2021) found differing perspectives between students and teachers on the parameters of student voice, and Miller's (2019) and Magnan et al.'s (2012) research on university students' perspectives of the national world language standards resulted in divergent findings. National world language standards continue to be updated and redeveloped without the perspectives of a key stakeholder: the student (Davin & Heineke, 2018). Few researchers explored the student perspective on the W-RSLL, yet pedagogical partnerships in which students are given the opportunity to contribute equally to decision making (e.g., Cook-Sather et al., 2014) can be transformative (Pearce & Wood, 2019).

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore the perspectives of recently graduated high school students regarding the critical concepts and needed changes to the national world language standards. The research that most closely aligned

with the purpose of this study was Miller's (2019) work with university students. Students indicated their perspectives on national world language standards were different than previously thought by choosing communication as the primary goal of studying a language instead of communities, the primary goal found in Magnan et al.'s (2012) study. Cook-Sather's (2020) research also established the relevance of the current study by focusing on student partnerships in education that provide opportunities for student input and action to "democratize education for all involved" (p. 183). The current qualitative study provided critical information in world language studies by incorporating student perspectives on the critical concepts and needed changes to the national world language standards.

This chapter is organized into three sections: a description of search strategies used to develop the literature review, the conceptual framework based on critical theory and critical pedagogy, and the concepts surrounding the national world language standards and students' perspectives on the national world language standards. In my research, students were interviewed about whether there is a need to change the national world language standards; therefore, a brief background and history of standards and world languages is provided in this chapter. The chapter concludes with research concerning student perspectives in world languages.

### **Literature Search Strategy**

To find relevant research for my topic of recently graduated high school students' perspectives in world languages, I searched databases through the Walden University Library, the ACTFL database, Google Scholar, and various websites. The following

databases were used with unlimited date ranges: Education Commission of the States, Education Source, ERIC, NCES publications, ProQuest Central, and Taylor & Francis Online. The following databases were used with a limitation of research from 2019–2022 except for seminal works. Where no current research was found, the search was expanded to include older publications: OECD iLibrary and OECD’s working papers, Sage Journals, Teacher Reference Center, and UNESCO documents database.

I combined keywords and Boolean phrases such as *adolescent, adolescent development, banking model of education, bilingual, bilingual education, Common European Framework for Languages, critical, criticality, critical pedagogy, critical theory, curriculum, debate, duties, education, educational policy, foreign language, framework, Frankfurt School, Freire, generational differences, language policy, languages, learning standards, modern language, pedagogy, policy, policy implementation, proficiency, professional development, professional learning, pupil, responsibilities, standards, standards based instruction, state policy, state policies, student input, student perceptions, student perspectives, student perspective debate, student voice, student voice debate, teacher development, theories, world language, and youth*. I selected articles that provided an overall understanding of world languages. Next, I created an Excel document of pertinent articles to develop a problem statement and purpose. From references in professional journals, I identified seminal works of interest to inform my study and methodology.

## **Conceptual Framework**

Critical theory and critical pedagogy were used as the framework to understand the context of this study. Critical theory is explained as it relates to power in the educational system (Pearce & Wood, 2019). Given that national world language standards were created and redeveloped without the input of recently graduated high school students, a power structure has been developed with the decision makers as those with the power (Pearce & Wood, 2019). Asking recently graduated high school students their perspectives on the national world language standards and working with students to improve the national world language standards goes against the standard practice in education (Magnan et al., 2014). Challenging the power structure and changing the status quo in education by asking students their perspectives regarding their education and acting upon it (Bettencourt, 2020) is a praxis of critical pedagogy (Freire, 1968/1970) and the basis for the conceptual framework for the current study.

### **Critical Theory**

Developed at the Frankfurt School in Germany in the early 20th century by Max Horkheimer, Erich Fromm, and Herbert Marcuse, critical theory was created to identify liberatory practices from inequitable social systems (Govender, 2020). Hawkins and Norton (2009) defined critical theory in the following way:

It enables us to see that our ideas, interactions, language use, texts, learning practices, and so forth, are not neutral and objective, but are shaped by and within social relationships that systematically advantage some people over others, thus producing and reproducing inequitable relationships of power in society. (p. 31)

The aim of critical theory is to examine power relationships to create a fairer, more just society (Sato et al., 2017).

The concept of critical theory has been seen in education when examining power structures. Cook-Sather, Allard, et al. (2021) explored critical theory by advocating for students to become cocreators of education. De Costa et al. (2019) posited power as a central element in language studies from exploring preferred language choices based on neoliberalism and top-down language policies comparable to the W-RSLL. Pearce and Wood (2019) referred to critical theory in reference to student voice as a resource that is underutilized due to the power structure between the student and the education system. In the current study, obtaining the perspectives of recently graduated high school students regarding the national world language standards was an example of the application of critical theory in research.

Ravitch and Mittenfelner Carl (2019) described critical theory as “somewhat amorphous, as it is a self-critical tradition and thus constantly developing and filled with significant disagreement among its scholars” (p. 413). Ravitch and Mittenfelner Carl listed power as a general theme “specifically related to systemic inequalities and possibilities for transformative change” (p. 413). Power issues are considered “strongly critical” (Wallace, 2003, p. 27) with the understanding that being critical indicates going against the standard practice (Ravitch & Mittenfelner Carl, 2016). In languages, critical includes analyzing power structures by questioning those in authority (Pessoa & Viana Silvestre, 2016) and practices such as critical pedagogy (Kubota & Austin, 2007) by providing an opportunity for students to cocreate their educational framework.

## **Critical Pedagogy**

Critical pedagogy originated from critical theory (Randolph & Johnson, 2017). Johnson and Randolph (2015) defined critical pedagogy as “any classroom practice that addresses difference, power, or social stratification in the classroom or in the world” (p. 36). Critical pedagogues analyze curriculum, content delivery, and the educational system and instruct students to investigate, inquire, and dialogue (Dover, 2013). In critical pedagogy, students become critical coinvestigators with teachers (Bettencourt, 2020) and power structures are removed through a collaborative use of power (Yang, 2020).

Freire is considered a founder of critical pedagogy (Giroux, 2020) who coined the term “banking system,” a concept that is prevalent in the educational system (Govender, 2020) in the United States. The banking system metaphor describes the lack of critical practices in schools (Melo, 2019) in which students serve as “empty containers” who receive passively from teachers (the knowledge holders) who deposit information into their students (Melo, 2019). Freire (1968/1970) advocated for students to examine power and inequality within the status quo.

Power informs the knowledge produced in education (Melo, 2019; Pennycook & Makoni, 2020). Giroux (2020), a contemporary to Freire, questioned the knowledge transmitted in the classroom and how power produces specific conditions for learning and producing information as opposed to simply transmitting knowledge within power structures (Giroux, 1992). To shift the power from the teacher who decides the knowledge distributed in the classroom (Tedick & Cammarata, 2012) and who reinforces

the power structures in education, more studies are needed on students in critical pedagogy (Glynn & Spenader, 2020). Exploring recently graduated high school students' perspectives on critical concepts and needed changes to the national world language standards allows students to provide input on their education.

### **Literature Review Related to Key Variables and Concepts**

The purpose of this study was to explore the perspectives of recently graduated high school students regarding the critical concepts and needed changes to the national world language standards. Since world language standard creation in 1996, the national standards for world languages have been revised, but student input has not been incorporated into the decision-making process. This study may impart knowledge for the development of standards in the future.

### **Standards**

Standards were created to identify what students should know and be able to do (Marzano & Kendall, 1997) and are considered a reflection of what is valuable knowledge in education (Train, 2002). *A Nation at Risk* (Gardner et al., 1983) spurred the creation of standards that were funded by the United States Department of Education. The demand for standards derived from a common vision of curriculum, a perceived improvement for education in the United States, and a concern for undesirable variation of content taught in school (Barton, 2009). Standards shaped the curriculum in the United States (Liebttag, 2013) and are the roadmap in world languages (NSCB, 2015).



### ***World Language Standards***

The national standards in world languages were created in 1996 by a group of language educators and community members to reflect the overarching direction for language learning (NSFLEP, 1996). The national standards in world languages are referred to as the roadmap or framework (Cox et al., 2018; NSCB, 2015) and at times the policy for world language instruction. In the current study, the national world language standards were referenced as the framework for world languages.

The standards encompass the knowledge that students should acquire in world languages (Curtain & Dahlberg, 2016). The goal of the standards is “to link communication and culture by applying connections and comparisons to both local and global societies in order to prepare learners for successful careers in a global society” (NSFLEP, 1996). In 2015, the national standards were revised to reflect 21st century applications (NSBC, 2015) and were renamed the W-RSLL. The W-RSLL are classified into five goals, which include a total of 11 standards. The five goals are communication, cultures, comparisons, connections, and communities:

**Communication.** Communicate effectively in the target language in order to function in a variety of situations and for multiple purposes.

**Interpersonal.** Learners interact and negotiate meaning in spoken, signed, or written conversations to share information, reactions, feelings, and opinions.

**Interpretive.** Learners understand, interpret, and analyze what is heard, read, or viewed on a variety of topics.

***Presentational Communication.*** Learners present information, concepts, and ideas to inform, explain, persuade, and narrate on a variety of topics using appropriate media and adapting to various audiences of listeners, readers, or viewers.

**Cultures.** Interact with cultural competence and understanding.

***Relating Cultural Practices to Perspectives.*** Learners use the language to investigate, explain, and reflect on the relationship between the practices and perspectives of the cultures studied.

***Relating Cultural Products to Perspectives.*** Learners use the language to investigate, explain, and reflect on the relationship between the products and perspectives of the cultures studied.

**Connections.** Connect with other disciplines and acquire information and diverse perspectives in order to use the language to function in academic and career-related situations.

***Making Connections.*** Learners build, reinforce, and expand their knowledge of other disciplines while using the language to develop critical thinking and to solve problems creatively.

***Acquiring Information and Diverse Perspectives.*** Learners access and evaluate information and diverse perspectives that are available through the language and its cultures.

**Comparisons.** Develop insight into the nature of language and culture in order to interact with cultural competence.

***Language Comparisons.*** Learners use the language to investigate, explain, and reflect on the nature of language through comparisons of the language studied and their own.

***Cultural Comparisons.*** Learners use the language to investigate, explain, and reflect on the concept of culture through comparisons of the cultures studied and their own.

***Communities.*** Communicate and interact with cultural competence in order to participate in multilingual communities at home and around the world.

***School and Global Communities.*** Learners use the language both within and beyond the classroom to interact and collaborate in their community and the globalized world.

***Lifelong Learning.*** Learners set goals and reflect on their progress in using languages for enjoyment, enrichment, and advancement. (NSFLEP, 2015, pp. 9-10)

In the field of world languages, the standards are what “we believe is important” (Shrum & Fox, 2010, p. 6), but the “we” in the quote has not included the student in the development of national world language standards (NSFLEP, 2015). Furthermore, it is unknown if recently graduated high school students’ perspectives have been considered as national world language standards continue to be adapted and changed in various states (e.g., California State Board of Education, 2019; Nebraska Department of Education, 2019; New York State Education Department, 2021). Given that standards have been previously revised at the state and national levels, national world language

standards could be redeveloped incorporating the perspectives of recently graduated high school students based on their needs and desires.

### **World Languages**

There is no national, official policy for learning world languages in the United States (O'Rourke et al., 2016). Additionally, there is no agreed upon purpose for world language learning. Sato et al. (2017) posited that the key to a comprehensive vision of world language studies is to “situate foreign language education within a bigger frame and in multiple layers of different educational areas” (p. 64). A policy implementation can lead to empowerment (Ozer et al., 2020), such as a consensus among world language teachers and students of the framework in world languages.

### ***World Language Curriculum***

Researchers have asked for more critical approaches to the world language curriculum (Osborn, 2006; Randolph & Johnson, 2017; Reagan et al., 2021). Although national standards provide the framework for the world language curriculum, the standards “present challenges for critical pedagogy” (Reagan & Osborn, 2021, p. 285) due to the overemphasis on communication over the other goal areas of the standards (Sato et al., 2017). Educators may only focus on communication and cultures (Wassell et al., 2019) with a possibility of excluding important goals and concepts in world languages. Wassell et al. (2019) advocated for a shift from communication and culture to incorporation of a critical concept such as social justice. Reagan et al. (2020) advocated for critical perspectives in education:

Critical pedagogy requires that we re-examine not only the purposes of world language instruction, but even more, that we identify the hidden (and often not-so-hidden) biases about language, social class, power, and equity that underlie language use. From a critical perspective, world language education is thus not only about the teaching and learning of a second or additional linguistic system, but is also about social and cultural knowledge, and, perhaps even more, with helping students develop critical approaches to examining and understanding such knowledge. (p. 272)

Sato et al. (2017) also advocated for world language instruction that informs students about “education in general, lifelong education, higher education, and world languages education” (p. 64). Given that various states in the United States have modified the national standards (e.g., California State Board of Education, 2019; Nebraska Department of Education, 2019; New York State Education Department, 2021), research is needed to address the possibility of change to the national world language standards and consequently, a change in curriculum. Adding recently graduated high school students’ perspectives on the critical concepts and needed changes to the national world language standards could lead to a more purposeful direction in world language teaching and learning.

### **Students’ Perspectives: Absence of Student Voice**

Educational researchers began to note the exclusion of student voice in the early 1990s in education (Cook-Sather, 2006). Student voice is a concept and practice that includes the student as a cocreator in educational decisions (Cook-Sather, 2020) through

power sharing (Cook-Sather, 2006). Students exert influence on decisions, not to replace the authority of their educators (see Cook-Sather, 2020), but to provide legitimate perspectives on their education (Cook-Sather, 2014). The absence of student voice in educational decisions is due to a struggle within power structures (Giroux, 1992), which has become a central element in language studies and policies (De Costa et al., 2019).

National world language standards are considered the framework in language education (NSCB, 2015). For some, the world language standards serve as a world language policy for local school districts and for others, a framework of best practices for teaching content in world languages (American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages Task Force on Decade of Standards Project, 2011). The W-RSLL (NSCB, 2015), the latest version of the national standards in world languages, and each previous version, were created without student perspectives (NSFLEP, 2015). It has been assumed the standards reflect student needs and desires (Magnan et al., 2014) by the creators of the national world language standards. Because of the significance of the standards in world language education, it is time to reexamine the world language standards with students (Cox et al., 2018; Miller, 2019) by interviewing recently graduated high school students on their perspectives of the critical concepts and needed changes to the national world language standards.

### **Students' Perspectives: University Students' Perspectives**

Previous research on world language standards has been conducted on the perspectives of university students (Magnan et al., 2012). Magnan et al. (2012) conducted the first multisite study of 16,529 post-secondary students enrolled in 11 institutions in

the United States. Research questions included student perspectives on the five goal areas of the world language standards: communication, cultures, connections, comparisons, and communities. Student responses reflected that the five goal areas were important to university students, with communities being perceived as the most critical goal area.

Magnan et al.'s (2012) research has since been refuted. Miller (2019) questioned Magnan et al.'s (2012) findings because Magnan et al. distributed a list of premade goals and the ranking of their importance rather than asking students to provide important concepts of world languages that might create new goals. By asking the perspectives of university students without distributing a list of goals, Miller found the communication goal to be the most important as opposed to Magnan et al.'s previous findings of the communities goal. Miller (2019) and Magnan et al.'s (2012) unit of analysis was university students; my qualitative research study addressed the missing perspective of recently graduated high school students on the critical concepts of the national world language standards as well as their input on needed changes to the national world language standards.

### **Students' Perspectives: Absence of Recently Graduated High School Students' Perspectives**

Recently graduated high school students' perspectives of world language standards were not found despite a comprehensive review of the literature. Recently graduated high school students' perspectives of world language standards could be different than university students and the adults who created and recreated the national standards in world languages. White (2016) posited that student perspectives are

imperative in the development and creation of world language standards and called for research on additional age ranges. Adults tend to have different perspectives than students regarding world language policy (Hancock & Davin, 2020), school improvement (Jones & Bubb, 2021), and world language course objectives (O'Rourke & Zhou, 2018); therefore, a need was established for research exploring recently graduated high school students' perspectives of standards in world languages (Cox et al., 2018; Miller, 2019).

### **Students' Perspectives: Transformational**

Students possess essential and invaluable insights into their education (Bettencourt, 2020; Cook-Sather, Addy, et al., 2021). Through pedagogical partnerships between students and educators, shifts in practices and changes in thinking can occur (Marquis et al., 2021). In a study situated in Canada and the United States, by Marquis et al. (2021), 41 students were interviewed regarding transformational practices for classroom equity. Students and faculty collaborated on teaching and learning initiatives concerning challenges for marginalized groups such as LGBTQ+ students, students from religious minorities, etc. The authors found that pedagogical partnerships can have equity-related and impactful effects on teaching practices and student experiences in school.

Perspectives can differ between adults and students when making educational decisions. Hancock and Davin (2020) interviewed seven administrators and conducted student focus groups of 24 students total in a comparative case study of two high schools in the same district in the United States regarding a policy implementation of the Seal of Biliteracy. The Seal of Biliteracy is a policy that promotes the appreciation of all



languages, not just languages studied in school, by placing a seal on the graduates' diploma declaring the graduate proficient in English and a language other than English. The authors explored the perceptions of the value of the Seal of Biliteracy among stakeholders, administrators, and students and found that perspectives regarding the importance of the Seal of Biliteracy differed between students and adults. Collaboration is critical to increase access to the Seal of Biliteracy and the opportunities the award provides and may be accomplished by students and administrators working together on the purpose and the pathway of the Seal of Biliteracy.

In a mixed-methods case study using surveys of 215 recently graduated high school students and 47 focus group interviews in the United States, Davin and Heineke (2018) analyzed 12th grade students' perceptions of the Seal of Biliteracy. Davin and Heineke added to the literature of student voice in educational policy by studying the challenges of students in obtaining the Seal of Biliteracy. Students "described barriers, centering on lack of confidence in their language abilities, as well as unavailability of extended sequences of study, insufficient information and advertising, and the price and timing of language assessments" (p. 13). This research provided additional information on student perspectives regarding world language policies to improve adults' actions and decisions alongside students.

Ozer et al. (2020) posited that powerful things happen when teachers and students come together. Bloemert et al.'s (2020) research in world languages identified the perspectives of students as active and unique participants in their education as learners who provide data, learners in dialogue, and learners as initiators. The authors studied 268

students from three secondary schools in Denmark, used an open-ended questionnaire, unguided focus group, and written reflective accounts to explore the inclusion of students as cocreators and collaborators regarding literature teaching and learning in world language classes. As a result of student input on the teacher-developed framework, *Comprehensive Approach*, teaching and learning were modified. Although the process did not include the learners as initiators' perspective, Bloemert et al. called for future research for students as data source, learners in dialogue, and learners as initiators.

Cocreation among educators and students can be transformative (Pearce & Wood, 2019). Initiated by the misunderstanding of the concept *student voice*, Pearce and Wood first conducted a literature review of student voice before creating a framework to guide teachers and students in transforming institutional structures and practices as well as “informing policymakers, practitioners and researchers” (p. 125). The authors’ framework is based on “building blocks or conditions which together are required for student voice work to be transformative” (p. 114), including dialogic, intergenerational, collective and inclusive, and transgressive attributes. According to Pearce and Wood, student voice work must involve the students (dialogic), include adults (intergenerational), be intentional (collective and inclusive), and provide students with the tools to make impact (transgressive). Results in applying the framework may depend on geographical context and the use of all four attributes.

Current national world language standards may not represent what is best for the needs and desires of the world language student. As Cox et al. (2017) found, “the standards have not quite revolutionized language education” (p. 105) but have affected

“language instruction, curricula, course design, and educational policy” (p. 105).

Exploring the perspectives of recently graduated high school students on the critical concepts and needed changes to the national world language standards may impart new knowledge on the direction for world languages by developing a framework with those it is designed to serve (Cook-Sather, 2002).

### **Summary and Conclusions**

Educators design educational systems according to their beliefs (Freire, 1968/1970), which may not include the beliefs of their students. The lack of students’ perspectives on the critical concepts and needed changes to the national world language standards has led to an “incomplete picture” (Bloemert et al., 2020, p. 429) in world languages and might be caused by power structures in education wherein the adult determines the valuable knowledge. The present study assisted in filling the gap in literature by exploring recently graduated high school students’ perspectives on the critical concepts and needed changes to the W-RSLL through a qualitative methodology and a basic design. Student input can communicate perspective and positive change in educational decisions (Cook-Sather, 2020) and exploring recently graduated high school students’ perspectives on the critical concepts and needed changes to the national world language standards allowed students to provide input on their education. Giving students the opportunity to incorporate their perspectives and input on the national world language standards created positive social change by encouraging active participation of students in their education and creating a complete picture.

### Chapter 3: Research Method

Qualitative methodology and a basic design were used in this study. Qualitative methodology was appropriate for this research due to the nature of the study and the means for data collection. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) reclassified interpretive and common qualitative studies as basic qualitative studies to recognize the process of making meaning of experiences. Recently graduated high school students' perspectives of the critical concepts and needed changes to the national world language standards were explored in this basic qualitative study, and the interpretation of their experiences provided valuable information to influence future world language standard development. The purpose of this study was to explore the perspectives of recently graduated high school students regarding the critical concepts and needed changes to the national world language standards; with feedback from key informants (see Patton, 2015), the students, the aim was to improve world language programming and its framework. In Chapter 3, I explain the research design and rationale, define my role as the researcher, and describe the methodology for this basic qualitative study. Furthermore, I defend the trustworthiness of the research and conclude with a summary of this study on recently graduated high school students' perspectives on the critical concepts and needed changes to the national world language standards.

#### **Research Design and Rationale**

The design used for this study on recently graduated high school students' perspectives on the critical concepts and needed changes to the national world language standards was a basic qualitative design. Basic describes the form of research that is

concerned with the extension of knowledge and creates meaning that can be attributed to experiences (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Basic can also be used to address the sole means of data collection from the participants: interviews. The problem addressed in the current study was a gap in the literature related to recently graduated high school students' perspectives on the critical concepts and needed changes to the national world language standards. The purpose of this study was to explore the perspectives of recently graduated high school students regarding the critical concepts and needed changes to the national world language standards to understand how recently graduated high school students make sense of their world language experiences (see Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

To understand recently graduated high school students' perspectives, I developed two research questions to address a gap in the literature on the critical concepts and needed changes to the national world language standards: What are the perspectives of recently graduated high school students who completed world language classes from a large public school district in the Midwest regarding the critical concepts of the World-Readiness Standards for Learning Languages? What are the perspectives of recently graduated high school students who completed world language classes from a large public school district in the Midwest regarding needed changes to the World-Readiness Standards for Learning Languages? After interviewing the recently graduated high school students, I analyzed their perspectives to find shared perspectives of world language experiences in the school district. Qualitative studies address experiences, the meaning that can be attributed to these experiences, and how they are constructed (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Through a basic qualitative approach, I interviewed students to understand their views and experiences (see Edmonds & Kennedy, 2019). Interviews were chosen to understand recently graduated high school students' experiences in their district and transfer these findings to local and regional settings. The aim of this study was to reduce the complexities of the students' experiences into a few shared commonalities (see Patton, 2015) that can be used to improve the standards in world languages and student experiences in world languages.

### **Role of the Researcher**

Currently, I am the coordinator of world languages, a position that was created in 2020 for a school district in the Midwest United States. My role is to provide leadership essential to maintaining a comprehensive program of world languages. I work with teachers, principals, and administrators to provide support in the development, alignment, and implementation of quality programming in world languages. I want to improve the programming by developing world language standards for the district that incorporate aspects of the national world language standards and honor student perspectives.

Each decision made in the district is expected to benefit students. Interviewing students in a basic qualitative study may provide valuable information that could positively affect their learning. Although I have no authority over students, perspectives of recent graduates of world languages were pursued to protect current students from harmful consequences of answering truthfully while enrolled in a world language class. Additionally, I took care to avoid researcher bias during the interview by not sharing my experiences or pushing students to answer questions that made them uncomfortable. I

made note of answers that were opposite of my beliefs (see Burkholder et al., 2016) to ensure student perspectives were included in the study because researcher bias would not include the perspectives of students in decisions that could affect their education and the educational system. Conversely, incorporating student perspectives in the framework that guides instruction could impact their education by potentially transforming the world language program and improve student learning.

Information obtained from student interviews was used to impart knowledge on the current framework for world languages, but information on students was kept confidential. Individual answers were not shared and will not be shared with the students' teachers. I only interviewed students after their graduation so that they would feel more comfortable sharing their perspectives and would be unhindered by grade modification from their teachers. The benefits of interviewing recent graduates provided perspectives on their thinking; there were no foreseeable disadvantages to interviewing recently graduated high school students in world languages.

### **Methodology**

This study was designed to explore the perspectives of nine recently graduated high school students from a large public school district in the Midwest United States regarding the critical concepts and needed changes to the national world language standards. Students were interviewed upon IRB approval # 08-22-22-1008513 to understand their perspectives on the critical concepts and needed changes to the national world language standards. To reflect the student's active role in the research, the word "participant" was used (see Seidman, 2019). In this section, I describe the reasoning for

the selection of the participants, the procedures for data collection, and the data analysis plan for this basic qualitative study of recently graduated high school students.

### **Participant Selection Logic**

The participants were recently graduated high school students 18 years and older from a large public school district in the Midwest United States. The student population of the school district was approximately 15,000 students. Recently graduated high school students were chosen to obtain the perspectives of recently graduated high school students while protecting the vulnerable population of minor-age students.

Participants were identified by data obtained at the district level, and email invitations were sent to all recent graduates who had taken a minimum of 2 years of world languages in the district. Two years was chosen, as a minimum requirement, to provide differential experiences and quality information. Purposeful sampling (see Patton, 2015) was used to select participants capable of providing data to answer the research questions and who would meet the selection criteria for the study.

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore the perspectives of recently graduated high school students regarding the critical concepts and needed changes to the national world language standards while meeting the sample size requirements of qualitative research. A small sample size of nine participants is sufficient to meet a representation of multiple realities and truths, the key components of qualitative research (Ravitch & Mittenfelner Carl, 2019), and data saturation is the most common method in qualitative studies to determine a sufficient sample size to answer the research questions (Guest et al., 2020). Saturation, the point at which no new information is



established (Creswell, 2007), can occur within the first 12 interviews (Guest et al, 2006). Saturation can be assessed after six interviews (Guest et al., 2020) to determine whether additional interviews are necessary to obtain new information because “statistical significance does not necessarily mean practical significance” (Cobern & Adams, 2020, p. 74). The nine students who met the established criteria were sufficient to make meaning of the national world language standards as opposed to generalizations of large populations. Saturation was achieved; the findings of this study indicated perspectives that can be found in similar situations (Cobern & Adams, 2020) for large public school districts in the Midwest United States.

### **Instrumentation**

Interviews are used in data collection for qualitative studies and provide the depth, detail, and richness that cannot be found in quantitative approaches (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). To provide a thorough explanation of the interview process, I created an interview protocol (see Appendix A) with topics specified in advance, including the introduction, interview questions, and follow-up procedures that would occur. The interview questions were developed to ensure the same lines of inquiry for each student interviewed. Based on Patton’s (2015) guidance on interview questions and Merriam and Tisdell’s (2016) interview approach, the protocol was designed to answer the research questions by eliciting the perspectives of recently graduated high school students through interviews.

The interviews were designed with equity of access in mind (see Seidman, 2019). The benefits of recording virtually on Zoom outweighed the challenges (see Archibald et

al., 2019), and interviews were conducted virtually for the convenience of the student as well as the facility of recording the interview for transcription purposes. Consent was provided in written form via email prior to the interview, and participants could opt out at any time. It was my intention to include recent graduates from the district who took a minimum of 2 years of world languages in the district, who were 18 years of age and older, and who wished to participate in this study.

### **Researcher-Developed Instruments**

This qualitative study included multiple forms of data collection to ensure credibility of the study; researcher-developed interview questions, analytic memos, and journal notes. Interview questions were developed from Patton's (2015) and Merriam and Tisdell's (2016) research on content for interview questions, research in world languages (Reagan & Osborn, 2021), and inquiries regarding changes in national world language standards in various states (see California State Board of Education, 2019; Nebraska Department of Education, 2019; New York State Education Department, 2021). The interview questions were approved by my chair and second member and cross-checked by regional world language coordinators for content validity.

For this study, I took analytic memos during each interview and journaled. Analytic memos are written immediately to make sense of a researcher's thoughts (Ravitch & Mittenfelner Carl, 2019) and to recognize observations of voice tone and facial expressions. Journaling assisted me in establishing data during and after the interviews as opposed to relying solely on memories. As a result of this process, I was

able to formulate the meanings of the student responses more accurately with sufficiency of data to answer the research questions.

### **Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection**

The plan for participant recruitment, participation, and data collection followed a detailed process. Recently graduated high school students were identified through purposeful sampling, a technique used to select participants capable of addressing the research questions (see Patton, 2015). The recruitment of participants first occurred through email from data obtained by the Department of Research and Accountability in the school district. Email invitations (see Appendix B) were sent from the manager of the Department of Research and Accountability to graduating seniors who had taken a minimum of 2 years of world languages in the school district and who were 18 years of age or older at the time of the email correspondence. The email included information from Walden University about the study, information on privacy protections for participation in the study, and information to contact me if interested in the study. Once students contacted me on my Walden email account, I forwarded a consent form to which students responded “I consent” if they wished to become participants in the study. The consent form included all safeguards to protect participants’ information. Participants were asked via email (see Appendix C) which languages they studied in the school district, for how long, and when the interview could take place in July, August, or September of 2022 on Zoom. Interviews of about 45 minutes occurred after the school year ended and were conducted off school property to protect the identity of the participants.

During the interviews, participants were guided through the protocol and were informed that the interviews would be recorded. Participants were informed that they could opt out at any time. After the interview, I asked if the questions were understandable and explained that data would be saved on a password-protected external hard drive up to 5 years. There were no debriefing procedures once the interview was terminated.

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore the perspectives of recently graduated high school students regarding the critical concepts and needed changes to the national world language standards. There were enough students who met the criteria for this study in the school district to provide data on the national world language standards. Additionally, this plan provided enough detail for the study to be replicated while fulfilling its purpose.

### **Data Analysis Plan**

Analyzing data in a qualitative study is not a linear process (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). A cyclical and recursive plan of data collection, coding, and reflecting was developed to capture the essence of the information. The first step in my data analysis plan was to create transcripts of the recorded interviews and code by hand the transcripts, memos, and journal notes to assign meaning to the data (see Ravitch & Mittenfelner Carl, 2016). A code can be a word or a short phrase that analyzes, summarizes, or establishes an essence capturing a small portion of language (Saldaña, 2016). I used an inductive approach to coding (see Ravitch & Mittenfelner Carl, 2016), which allowed me to create meaning from the data from the perspective of the participants (see Burkholder et al.,

2016) by building concepts as opposed to deductively testing hypotheses (see Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). These codes were placed into a Word document to determine patterns of similar or shared meanings. Then, I reread the notes, memos, and transcripts, which allowed me to reflect on my understandings of the data and better comprehend the information to create categories and themes that were “summary statements, causal explanations, or conclusions” (see Rubin & Rubin, 2012, p. 194).

I also reviewed the recordings multiple times to make sure my health or mood did not affect the quality of the data analysis (see Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Although I did not intentionally look for discrepant cases to modify a theory, I paid close attention through reflection and continuous analysis to emerging themes. Codes, categories, and themes can be established after thoroughly analyzing the data to ensure an accurate reflection of the phenomenon. As a result of this in-depth process, I was able to formulate the meanings of the students’ responses more accurately to “uphold a fidelity to the data and therefore to people’s experiences and perspectives” (see Ravitch & Mittenfelner Carl, 2016, p. 219) to answer the research questions.

### **Issues of Trustworthiness**

Qualitative research is developed to “make sense of or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2013, p. 3). Qualitative research is interesting in that it focuses on human behavior, but the studies of human behavior can lead to misinterpretation and weaken the trustworthiness of the research. Consequently, qualitative researchers use credibility, transferability, dependability, and

confirmability to determine trustworthiness (see Patton, 2015) while remaining loyal to the meaning making tenet in qualitative research.

Credibility, or what is commonly referred to as validity in quantitative research, ensures the study measures what is intended (Shenton, 2004). A technique and strategy to increase the quality of the research is iterative questioning. Iterative questioning was used to encourage more participation and increase the amount of detailed data. An analysis of analytic memos, journal notes, and interview documentation was used to ensure the quality in this basic qualitative study.

The findings of a qualitative study might indicate perspectives that can be found in similar contexts (Cobern & Adams, 2020) and is known as transferability (see Patton, 2015). Given that qualitative studies tend to involve few participants, the study must be understood within the context of its organization and geographical area to transfer the findings (Shenton, 2004). The rich descriptions, provided by the participants, were coded into categories and themes, which the reader of this study can use to determine the transferability of the research to other contexts. Transferability, used interchangeably with the term generalizability, increases the trustworthiness of this study as the information can be applied elsewhere (Shenton, 2004).

Dependability shows that similar results would be obtained with the same conditions. To increase the odds of this occurring, the process performed during the study should be detailed enough so that it can be repeated in another context. According to Ravitch and Mittenfelner Carl (2019), vetting the research design with colleagues is a

technique to ensure dependability. In this study, I challenged my research design by conferring with trusted colleagues in a regional, similar setting.

Confirmability refers to the objectivity of the study. Although it is impossible to remain completely objective in qualitative research, there are methods to increase confirmability. Using multiple resources and seeking additional perspectives (Ravitch & Mittenfelner Carl, 2019) is one method of confirmability. Throughout the study, I analyzed and reflected on the interviews, notes, and analytic memos. I also reached out to thought partners to decrease subjectivity. Finally, I kept a journal to note any biases. Due to this in-depth process, I was able to create an objective qualitative study.

### **Ethical Procedures**

Initially, I contacted the Department of Research and Accountability at the school district regarding this study, and the department's manager agreed to send email invitations (see Appendix B) to recently graduated high school students' emails. The manager sent email invitations after I completed a district application outlining the proper procedures to conduct research and gather data. After receiving approval by the school district and the IRB, the manager of the Department of Research and Accountability in the school district sent emails to students who met the research criteria inviting them to reach out to me if there was a desire to participate in the study. A \$25 gift card was mentioned in the email to incentivize students to participate in the study.

Participation in the study remained confidential. Identification of the participants was not shared in the school district to protect the privacy of the students. The manager of the district did not know who participated in the study. Former world language

teachers of the students were not informed of student participation because the students were recent graduates of the school district. Interviews of participants did not occur during their school year in the school district or within earshot of instructors or colleagues. I used a physical space that was private and uninterrupted and suggested to participants to complete the interview in a private area to avoid interruptions. Results of the study will be shared with world language colleagues and teachers, but students' names will not be provided when reporting the results of the study.

I did not have a list of potential participants. Students were asked to contact me if they wished to take part in the study. Once contact was made, I followed-up with an email to the participant, which contained the consent form for the research and a description of the study. Students responded, "I consent" if they wished to participate in the study. Once consent was given, I emailed participants (see Appendix C) asking which languages they had studied, for how long, and asked when an interview could take place in the summer of 2022 via Zoom.

All data collected will be stored in a lock box at my place of residence. The recorded interviews for the current study will be stored on my password protected external hard drive and destroyed after 5 years of the publication of this research study. Paper copies of analytic memos and additional notes will be stored in a lockbox and shredded after 5 years as well.

### **Summary**

Qualitative research provides information from studies of phenomena (Ravitch & Mittenfelner Carl, 2019) to reflect experiences as accurately as possible. A basic



qualitative study was the approach used in this study, and the rationale was provided to ensure the perspective of the participant would be correctly represented. In this chapter, I provided justifications for participant selection, the instruments, the specific data analysis plan, and the ethical procedures used in the study. In Chapter 4, the results of the data analysis will be discussed. I will present the findings of the study to include the themes evolved from the interviews of recently graduated high school students. Given the conceptual framework is based on critical theory and critical pedagogies, I will also include quotes from the participants so that their voices and experiences are accurately represented of the critical concepts and needed changes to the national world language standards.

## Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the perspectives of recently graduated high school students regarding the critical concepts and needed changes to the national world language standards. Two research questions were developed to address a gap in literature regarding recently graduated high school students' perspectives: What are the perspectives of recently graduated high school students who completed world language classes from a large public school district in the Midwest regarding the critical concepts of the World-Readiness Standards for Learning Languages? What are the perspectives of recently graduated high school students who completed world language classes from a large public school district in the Midwest regarding needed changes to the World-Readiness Standards for Learning Languages? In Chapter 4, I explain the setting for the study and the participant demographics. I also report the results of data collection and analysis. Lastly, I present and defend the trustworthiness of the findings and summarize the results of this study on recently graduated high school students' perspectives regarding the critical concepts and needed changes to the national world language standards.

### **Setting**

I was able to obtain data from recently graduated high school students in an ethical manner. The manager of the Department of Research and Accountability at the large public school district in the Midwest United States sent an email invitation to all recently graduated high school students who had taken a minimum of 2 years of a world language in the school district. The email instructed the students to contact me if

interested in participating in the study. I did not have a list of potential participants, and the manager did not know which students contacted me. Once the student contacted me, I sent a consent form for the study and followed up with a request for an interview upon receiving the student's consent. Correspondence occurred individually with participants and never included group emails. The names of the participants remained confidential. The location for the interviews was the Zoom virtual conferencing platform. I informed the participants they could opt out of the study at any time. Interviews lasted between 25 and 56 minutes and were conducted off district property to protect the identity of participants and the confidentiality of the location.

### **Demographics**

The manager of the Department of Research and Accountability at the large public school district in the Midwest United States contacted 291 students to participate in this study. Students were required to be recent graduates, be 18 years of age or older, and have studied a world language for 2 years or more. Of the 291 students who were contacted, 60% were female and 40% were male; nonbinary students were not being recorded in the data system for the school district at the time of the study. Of the nine students who participated in the study, eight were 18 years old, one was 19 years old, three were female, and six were male. All participants studied a world language for 2 years or more.

**Table 1***Demographic Data Details*

Demographic detail	Invited students ( <i>N</i> = 291)	Participants ( <i>N</i> = 9)
Gender		
Female	175	3
Male	116	6
Age		
18 years old	256	8
19 years old	32	1
20 years old	3	
Ethnicity		
Asian	19	2
Black	113	2
Hispanic	108	2
Native American	1	
Multirace	2	1
Pacific Islander	4	
White	44	2

**Data Collection**

Participants were recruited using purposeful sampling to provide differentiated experiences and quality information (see Patton, 2015). To participate, students needed to be 18 years of age or older and to have studied world languages for a minimum of 2 years in the district upon graduation in May of 2022. Each world language offered in the school district was represented. Three students had studied Chinese, two students had studied French, two students had studied Spanish, one student had studied Chinese and Spanish, and one student had studied French and Spanish (see Table 2). The average number of years studying a world language was 5 years for the nine participants. The equal representation of languages and the varied number of years the participants studied a language provided quality information for the study.

**Table 2***Languages Students Studied*

World language studied	Number of students
Chinese	4
French	3
Spanish	4

*Note.* Two students studied multiple languages.

Participants were interviewed once on Zoom in either August or September of 2022. Interviews lasted between 25 and 56 minutes with an average of 38 minutes. All interviews were synchronous. Participants were reminded that the interviews would be recorded and that they could opt out at any time. No unusual circumstances occurred during the interviews.

### **Data Analysis**

The primary method of data analysis was coding to create meaning from the experiences of the participants (see Burkholder et al., 2016). Although there is “no single correct way to read data” (Ravitch & Mittenfelner Carl, 2019, p. 263), I conducted a cyclical process to ensure an accurate interpretation of the data collected. I interviewed participants, coded the data, reflected, and reviewed the analytic memos, journal notes, recordings, codes, and information I had created. I then reformulated, reviewed, reflected, revised, and reanalyzed the data. Analyzing the data took 3 months to find shared commonalities and essences (see Patton, 2015) of the participants’ perspectives of their experiences in world language classes in the district.

The first step in data analysis was to transcribe the data. Although Zoom offered a closed caption service, transcripts needed to be verified for correct capturing of the

participants' words. This process of correcting misspellings and misinterpretations of participants' words allowed me to "stay as close to the data as possible" (see Ravitch & Mittenfelner Carl, 2019, p. 265) before analysis. Corrected transcripts were placed in a Word document to begin the coding process of assigning meaning to the data (see Ravitch & Mittenfelner Carl, 2019). Table 3 provides details about the participants and their transcripts. The names of the participants were changed to protect their identity.

**Table 3**

*Transcript Details by Participant*

Pseudonym	Language studied	Interview length (minutes)	Interview length (word count)
Venus	Spanish	45	5,621
Sun	French	40	4,644
Earth	Chinese	49	4,374
Mercury	Spanish		
	Chinese	56	3,849
Saturn	Chinese	41	3,489
Mars	Spanish	30	2,922
Moon	French	28	2,392
Jupiter	Chinese	29	2,253
Neptune	French	25	1,872
	Spanish		

After a first cycle of coding of the participants' words, I placed the codes into horizontal tables to better understand the commonalities of the students' experiences. Each table represented an interview question, but I was unable to synthesize the data using this method despite reading the data multiple times. After reviewing the data from the recordings, however, I realized I had introduced the a priori codes of communication, cultures, connections, comparisons, and communities during the interview process. Because of the introduction of the goal standards from the W-RSLL, the a priori codes, I

was able to better understand the initial coding and created categories using the a priori codes and the open codes I had developed from the first cycle of data interpretation of the participants. Chunking the information in this manner confirmed that the five goal standards of the W-RSLL (communication, cultures, connections, comparisons, and communities) were critical concepts in language studies according to recently graduated high school students from the school district, which answered the first research question.

I repeated the coding process to focus on needed changes to the national world language standards. This recoding allowed me to take time to reflect on the meaning of the experiences of the students and to ensure their words were reflected in the process. Discrepant cases emerged due to the emphasis by the participants on conventions, inclusion, inclusive knowledge, criticality, unification, and exposure to global opportunities. Based on the words of the participants, analytic memos, and journal notes, I was able to recategorize the codes into five groupings: communication, cultures, connections, cognition, and communities to answer the second research question.

### **Evidence of Trustworthiness**

The evidence of trustworthiness for data analysis and interpretation was consistent with the techniques identified in Chapter 3. I used credibility to ensure the study measured the critical concepts and needed changes to the national world language standards. During the interview process, I used iterative questioning to increase the level of details, and I analyzed memos, journal notes, and interview transcripts to ensure the quality of the study. The rich descriptions from the interviews were coded into categories and themes that can be transferred to other contexts. I provided sufficient details of the

process used during this study to assist researchers in replicating the study in different settings. Finally, to create an objective study, I counseled with thought partners to decrease subjectivity and journaled, analyzed, and reflected on notes to confirm the trustworthiness of this study.

## **Results**

This basic qualitative study included two research questions: What are the perspectives of recently graduated high school students who completed world language classes from a large public school district in the Midwest regarding critical concepts of the World-Readiness Standards for Learning Languages? What are the perspectives of recently graduated high school students who completed world language classes from a large public school district in the Midwest regarding needed changes to the World-Readiness Standards for Learning Languages? The interview questions addressed the five goal standards of the W-RSLL (communication, cultures, connections, comparisons, and communities) as well as needed changes to these national world language standards to answer the research questions. Table 4 summarizes the findings for the first research question.

### **Research Question 1**

RQ1: What are the perspectives of recently graduated high school students who completed world language classes from a large public school district in the Midwest regarding the critical concepts of the World-Readiness Standards for Learning Languages?



**Table 4***Themes for Research Question 1*

Theme	Number of participants who mentioned theme	Number of total times theme emerged in interviews
Communication is a critical concept	9	59
Cultures is a critical concept	9	52
Connections is a critical concept	9	67
Comparisons is a critical concept	6	32
Communities is a critical concept	9	42

***Communication***

Communication is a goal of the W-RSLL (NSFLEP, 2015). Participants supported communication as a critical concept in Chinese, French, and Spanish, the languages represented academically in the district. Students expressed the importance of communicating for personal growth and with others and highlighted the potential benefits of knowing how to communicate in another language. Mercury said communication was the biggest goal because “if not learning a language to communicate, no point.” Sun summarized communication as “helping with all types of interactions from day-to-day to overseas.”

Mars, a student of Spanish, said “one thing I wish we could have done more at [district] is like more speaking, especially at lower levels. I do think a strong emphasis should be on conversational Spanish.” Mars described communication as of “huge importance” opening doors of opportunities and helping to create circles of acceptance. A student of French said “I think the goal is not just to be necessarily fluent, but to be able

to say, or just communicate in general because that could have a basis for further learning.” Finally, a student of Chinese expressed the following:

You should also be able to understand and know when something is translated differently. Because if it’s about someone else’s perspective, I think it would be a bit troublesome if you misinterpret their meaning. In that way you might have like a bad opinion of what their perspective is, but it was due to a misunderstanding on your account.

Communication was a critical concept as perceived by recently graduated high school students; the perspectives of the participants were aligned with critical concepts of the W-RSLL.

### *Cultures*

Cultures is a goal of the W-RSLL (NSFLEP, 2015). All nine participants felt strongly about cultures as a critical concept. One student of Spanish said “culture is huge,” and another said “I feel like people should have that experience with learning other cultures.” According to Jupiter, a student of Chinese,

culture is important when it comes to world languages because if you don’t understand the culture, the language that you’re learning, you lack a lot of definitions, and backing behind some words in a lot of words and overall, the entire language. You lose a lot of aspects of it.

A student of French reported that “a culture is probably just as important as learning the actual language, because you won’t understand why they say things the way they say them.” The same student talked about the fact that culture came before language to

highlight its importance. Another student of French said “I think that culture is quite an important factor to learn about when learning a language because a lot about the language is related to the culture.” Cultures was a critical concept as perceived by recently graduated high school students; the perspectives of the participants were aligned with the critical concepts of the W-RSLL.

### *Connections*

Connections is a goal of the W-RSLL (NSFLEP, 2015). Participants, in each language, felt strongly about connecting other disciplines to their language learning. Moon said “we listened to music, and we got to peer into how their music is the same, yet different from ours.” Neptune said “and I think that hearing and talking about these sort of things [political issues, history, biology] allowed students to have a broader vocabulary and perspective in these different cultures.”

Participants felt strongly about career-related situations; Sun spoke of a job in “medical science” and Jupiter mentioned “foreign policy.” Moon spoke about transferring skills. “It’s a cool skill to have and it allows you to be able to live in a place outside of the United States.” Several students asked for less textbook work and one student asked for no tests explaining it was not applicable to a career. Moon reiterated,

I feel like tests add a lot of anxiety and stress to an individual, and I would do more projects and things along those lines where you’re working with someone else, or like along those lines, because when I look up in the real world and the things that I’ve like experienced you often have a group of people around you to support you, who are experts in different ways, so it’s not like being forced to sit

down and recall from memory a lot of different things is not something that's usually done out in a real world. You'll have notes, you'll have things to call upon, or you'll be able to accurately look at something as you're speaking so probably just not as many tests and more acts of doing things because that's how you really learn, making those connections to your brain.

Another student added that vocabulary should not be taught for tests and quizzes; there should be application in the content for a "job" and a "career."

Mercury stated learning another language "makes you a well-rounded individual."

Jupiter related the importance of connections to the purpose of education:

The purpose of high school secondary education has evolved a lot over the years, and as of right now, and probably in the future, its mission is to equip students and the community with capabilities. No, it's to equip the student with the most they can be, and I think for a student to be a holistic person is not to focus on one subject but to be kind of like a Renaissance man.

Participants also felt strongly about differences and similarities. "There's different ways of thinking" said Earth. Sun added "there's a lot of meaning behind a lot of what they do." Venus stated,

let's say you wanted to go to school over there, and you wanted to learn their type of Spanish, their talking, their fine arts. We'd really have to understand that culture in a different type of way, or I would say, for traveling aspects, learning their respective culture. When it comes to things like their sciences and their philosophies, and how they go about, that is really important, because we go

about those things totally different in the U.S. And so, I feel like learning those differences will again help you broaden your horizon on different type of aspects with things.

Mars concluded “a lot of content is locked behind language barriers.” All participants felt that connecting with other disciplines and acquiring information and diverse perspectives was a critical concept. The perspectives of the participants were aligned with the critical concepts of the W-RSLL.

### ***Comparisons***

Comparisons is a goal of the W-RSLL (NSFLEP, 2015). Several students felt strongly about comparisons as a critical concept, as in the words of Venus “oh, my God! That’s actually the key to learning languages.”

Participants valued the goal of comparisons in various ways. Mars expressed the importance of comparing the languages. “I think that is definitely important for English speaking students to compare English to Spanish and kind of realize the difficulties that English presents to those who are starting off with Spanish.” Sun expressed the importance of comparisons in logistical terms “being able to compare is, you know, that’s like the first step in being able to understand or connect.” Moon spoke more about this idea of connecting by comparing:

sometimes being able to compare those two things, and seeing this similarity between them kind of, I think, helps bring us back to that previous point about understanding each other, that we realize we’re really not all that different even if we’re stuck behind this language.

Jupiter continued by saying “it’s good to be able to compare cultures because it’s definitely equipped the student with a better kit to understand.” Finally, Neptune expressed the importance of comparisons by alluding to both standards of the goal comparisons: language and culture. “Well, I think the comparison is important because culture and language is something that goes hand in hand.” Comparisons was a critical concept; the perspectives of the participants were aligned with the critical concepts of the W-RSLL.

### *Communities*

Communities is a goal of the W-RSLL (NSFLEP, 2015). Each student felt strongly about communities, and one student said “it is huge.” Mars continued by talking about the value of speaking to community members in their language and students in the district whose first language was Spanish. “I feel like you make a student feel a lot more valued.” Mars also spoke about students who might not be able to communicate with family members, and the importance of language to bridge communities at school and at home.

Two participants expressed this standard goal was very important; one participant was a student of French and the other was a student of Chinese. Jupiter stated,

I think it’s very important to be able to speak Chinese out of the classroom, because just goes in general with all languages to being able to speak more than your own language, is kind of a sign of respect not only for yourself to be able to better understand other people, it’s also just for other people to understand that

you take the effort out to understand them, and that would then build better community partnership with peoples.

Another student of Chinese, Saturn, alluded to community partnerships during the interview. Although Saturn did not use the words “very important” to express this standard goal, the participant valued the concept of interacting and connecting with the Chinese speaking community to help them better understand English and create community partnerships around language. Unification was a common theme.

According to Earth, the communities goal was valuable as well. “It’s important to communicate with someone else who speaks that language, especially outside of class in order to enrich or improve your speaking skills.” In fact, two students expressed remorse that their instructors did not apply the critical concept communities. Mercury said “that’s a big factor especially since we have limited time in the classroom. We spent the majority of our time learning the content, but we don’t actually get to use that content.” Sun agreed that communicating outside the classroom would “be a huge part now of learning the language,” but stated that unfortunately “it was not always stressed.” Communities was a critical concept for recently graduated high school students; the perspectives of the participants were aligned with the critical concepts of the W-RSLL.

Communication, cultures, connections, comparisons, and communities were not the only critical concepts mentioned by the recently graduated high school students; however, the five goal standards of the national world language standards were the only critical concepts that answered the first research question: What are the perspectives of recently graduated high school students who completed world language classes from a

large public school district in the Midwest regarding critical concepts of the World-Readiness Standards for Learning Languages? Therefore, an additional cycle of coding was conducted to answer the second research question: What are the perspectives of recently graduated high school students who completed world language classes from a large public school district in the Midwest regarding needed changes to the World-Readiness Standards for Learning Languages?

Saldaña (2016) posited that recoding tends to occur for qualitative inquiries to find the meanings of the human experience. Most codes that answered the second research question were in vivo codes, meaning the words were taken directly from the participants. By resynthesizing the codes, I was able to create additional critical concepts: conventions, inclusion, inclusive knowledge, criticality, unification, and exposure to global opportunities. I also reorganized several existing critical concepts: diverse perspectives, careers, and goals based on student input. Five categories emerged from the coding to represent needed changes to the national world language standards: communication, cultures, connections, cognition, and communities. Table 5 summarizes the findings for the second research question.

## **Research Question 2**

RQ 2–Qualitative: What are the perspectives of recently graduated high school students who completed world language classes from a large public school district in the Midwest regarding needed changes to the World-Readiness Standards for Learning Languages?



**Table 5***Themes for Research Question 2*

Theme	Number of participants who mentioned theme	Number of total times theme emerged in interviews
Conventions is a needed change	7	38
Inclusion is a needed change	9	55
Inclusive knowledge is a needed change	9	40
Careers is a needed change	5	17
Cognition is a needed change	9	28
Exposure to global opportunities is a needed change	9	30
Unification is a needed change	7	14

***Conventions***

Participants considered communication a critical concept, specifically interpersonal communication, but there was little emphasis on the interpretive or presentational modes as stated in the W-RSLL; rather, participants valued the importance to communicate effectively and proficiently in the target language, with proper conventions, in multiple situations and for multiple purposes. A needed change to the W-RSLL is to incorporate the critical concept of conventions.

Conventions are an agreement in principles (Conventions, 2023). For the purposes of world languages, conventions would include “sentence structure,” “verb conjugation,” “accents,” “spelling,” “formal vs. informal,” and “grammar,” as perceived by the participants of this study. Students in Chinese spoke often of “sentence structure.” Earth noted,

when I was barely learning Chinese, I had a little bit of trouble because I wanted to directly translate whatever I was gonna say from English to Chinese. I had to switch around this, like the sentence structure of the words, which is a little difficult for me at the beginning, but then I got more used to it. So sentence structure is the main thing when learning Chinese.

Jupiter expressed the desire for a “full understanding” of Chinese with more exposure to a broader range of vocabulary and texts. Neptune expressed the desire to “learn how language works.” Neptune continued explaining communication:

How to have conversations with people, and how the language works, just like grammar of the language. And I think the goal is not just to be not necessarily fluent, but to be able to say, or just communicate in general, because I think that could have a basis for further learning before you’re studying the language.

Seven out of nine participants, Earth, Neptune, Mars, Venus, Saturn, Sun, and Jupiter spoke about conventions whether it was “sentence structure” or “basic structure.” Adding conventions as a critical concept to the W-RSLL is a needed change according to participants of this study.

### ***Inclusion***

Inclusion was mentioned the most during interviews, although participants used different words to express the same idea. Inclusion is not cultural competence, a concept mentioned in the W-RSLL. Some students referred to inclusion as learning to keep an open-mind, others used words such as “empathy,” “acceptance,” “respect,” and “appreciation.” All participants expressed the importance of inclusion.

Moreover, each language was represented. In Chinese, Jupiter spoke about respect and taking the time to understand other people and cultures. Saturn spoke about respecting all cultures and identities. Mercury felt that learning languages would make you “well rounded” and “help you relate.” Sun, a student of French, said “you have to be open minded, and that can be difficult a lot, but just because it’s difficult doesn’t mean you have to shy away from it or lean away from it.” Neptune, who took both French and Spanish said “languages connect us, and we are able to communicate with others who don’t share our background.” Finally, Venus, a student of Spanish, stated

have an understanding mind. Also, I think it helps if you’re already a person who is well diverse within yourself, because, understanding, sometimes comes from personal experience. I can say I learned that myself. I’ve had my own first share of experiences from just being black, and so I’ve noticed, like I’ve noticed the stigma with the Spanish making countries of darker people, and where they don’t understand that you can be darker and speak Spanish. And so I noticed that that culture is a bit skewed within itself. So just understanding where other people are coming from with it, and if you can relate, can already help. You have like a good understanding on where they are within and how you can be diverse, and how they’re diverse.

Inclusion was a critical concept, according to participants, regardless of their language of study in Chinese, French, or Spanish.

Additionally, inclusion was mentioned by participants when speaking about various goal standards such as cultures. The W-RSLL cultures goal specifies the

relationship between the practices, perspectives, and products of cultures which might lead to stereotypes in the classroom. Neptune said it most aptly “appreciate cultures, don’t appropriate them.” Earth reiterated this idea of celebrating other people’s cultures and to include them with a caveat. “There’s been people who try to change Mexican dishes and make them American. I believe you shouldn’t. Give credit where credit is due.” In speaking about the critical concepts communication and cultures during the interviews, Neptune concluded with thoughts on inclusion “something that should occur is just speaking with more people that are from backgrounds where their culture speaks.” The critical concept inclusion was mentioned by participants throughout the interviews.

Inclusion is not a critical concept of the W-RSLL but can be similar to ideas of cultural competency and studies of culture from the national world language standards. The two standards of the cultures goal in the W-RSLL are relating cultural practices to perspectives and relating cultural products to perspectives, but there is no mention of inclusion. Nonetheless, inclusion was mentioned by all participants, represented in each language, and alluded to throughout the interviews of the five standard goals of the W-RSLL. Explicitly stating inclusion as a critical concept in the W-RSLL is a needed change according to recently graduated high school students.

### ***Inclusive Knowledge***

Participants expressed the importance of making connections to other disciplines. Sun said “learning a language is not just about learning the language,” and Venus “it’s not just about words.” “You learn about the world.” A needed change is the knowledge that is disseminated. Saturn stated

to begin, I think history is very important. I also think it's a pity that, like in our history classes, for example, I took history of Americans, there was barely anything on Chinese culture or Chinese history in general. But I think language itself has a very deep connection with history, because I know that Chinese has evolved throughout many thousands of years, and the dynasties, for example, have also. It also has culture in history so learning about history can also help you learn about the culture which also can help you improve your language.

Earth expressed the way people think is "based on their history." Sun said "there is a lot of meaning behind what people do, reasons why, how it impacts lives." Furthermore, Jupiter took Chinese due to an interest in the history of China and the lack of this critical knowledge in other disciplines. "Hearing about other things is important; it allows us to have a broader perspective," said Neptune.

Several students mentioned culture as a discipline, even though culture is not a subject taught in school such as math or science. Mercury expressed the desire to learn about all cultures. "But honestly, I think all learning should be about learning about all cultures equally, all types of languages." Sun stated,

it's important to sort of help understand, like the betterment of that culture of language. Not everything is taught the same throughout the world. No, obviously you have like the difference, like the metric system. But more of like in that culture what is taught, or what is pushed because the difference between like these countries that do speak French and maybe some other European countries. But you know mainly the difference between them and America is just you know, not

only what they're taught but the way that they're taught and that can be like a little difficult and kind of clash. Those ideas which is learning you know, where they're coming from can help in that way, or what certain stuff that they're learning means to them specifically like, as far as maybe history or certain like a certain holiday is that they have or you know things, or say rituals, that they have but just learning, not learning what it is, but why they do. That is a big part.

Participants agreed with content areas as a critical concept but expressed the need for inclusive knowledge of the content. Explicitly stating inclusive knowledge as a critical concept in the W-RSLL is a needed change according to recently graduated high school students.

### *Careers*

The importance of the critical concept "careers" was previously mentioned under the description for the goal standard connections in Chapter 4 and is also mentioned in the W-RSLL for the description of connections. "Connections. Connect with other disciplines and acquire information and diverse perspectives to use the language to function in academic and career-related situations" (NSFLEP, 2015, p. 9). Nonetheless, the two standards, under the goal standard connections, focus on content areas and diverse perspectives; the concept of careers is not mentioned.

Although careers is mentioned the least by recently graduated high school students as a critical concept, five students mentioned the importance of learning a language for a career and each language was represented. Jupiter, a student of Chinese, expressed the desire to become a polyglot. "I understood that the world language course

would best suit me up for that course of action in the future.” Jupiter continued “I think it’s a very important ambition to maintain Chinese both in the sense of achieving your best personal accomplishment and both in foreign policy.” Sun, a student of French said “and with like what I have planned for my career, French could help me in that field as well.” Later, in the interview, Sun reiterated “learning French could help me in like a future career path that I see for myself.” Venus, a student of Spanish, stated

well, number one is, do you want to use it in the long run, like is there a plan with using Spanish like don’t just make it a class like a lot of people make classes just that, just for a grade. But I feel like those real important classes. You should really have a goal on where do you see this going further in your life? Do you see using this to travel. Do you see this using this for our job? Do you see this making sure that you can communicate with other people? You know, make friends or have family relatives that you want to talk to of the different language and things like that. I really feel like that should be one of the biggest goals.

Given the importance of this critical concept, per the perspectives of participants, the reorganization and prioritization of careers is a needed change to the W-RSLL.

### ***Cognition***

W-RSLL encompass five goals: communication, cultures, connections, comparisons, and communities (NSFLEP, 2015). A needed change is to create a new goal entitled cognition for two new standards. All participants considered setting goals and criticality important; therefore, a needed change is to create a concept, criticality, and reorganize the critical concept of goal setting under the new standard goal cognition.

Moon made a connection with goals in language learning to goals in life.

“Without goals, you have no direction, and without direction, you’ll have little movement like anything else in life.” Venus aligned goal setting with reflection. “Yeah, definitely reflection is a big part of that because if you don’t go back and look at what you’re doing, what’s the point of continuing?”

Saturn used the words “extremely important” for setting goals and another student said “really important.” Four participants said goal setting was “very important,” two participants said “the most important,” and the last participant, Jupiter, said goals should be specific and measurable. Jupiter also described the importance of goals in detail,

I think that’s one of the most important parts is to keep track of your goals and your progress, because with all languages in general, it’s very easy to regress and slide back, and if you keep a track record of yourself, of how you’re doing, and what you want to get out of it, and give yourself deadlines, then that helps you achieve your best self, and I would say that not every student, probably like not a lot of students, not even myself, would really do that. It’s not so easy to keep a written track record or even a mental one. But I think that if that’s involved in the school in some way or curriculum in some way, then that would yield a lot of success, and of course, it is already like that through you know, week one you understand that, week two, you understand this, but I think there should be some more personalized options.

All participants expressed the importance of creating goals and reflecting on progress in language learning. The W-RSLL places the idea of goal setting under communities, and a



needed change is a new category in the W-RSLL, cognition, to house the critical concept entitled goals to better reflect its significance.

An additional change is to create a standard for criticality under the goal cognition. A common topic in the data was the teacher; yet participants expressed the desire to control their learning. Participants spoke about a personalized purpose and autonomous learning. Mercury suggested giving students the opportunity to “choose their learning.” Jupiter requested more varied challenges. Jupiter added “through my teacher, they helped us know what we understand and present the information that we know, so that we can both not only teach other students, but to teach ourselves a little bit and extend that knowledge.” Saturn said “I would make it more interactive based around what students would like instead of just focusing on the curriculum.” Saturn continued “but I think it would also be helpful for teachers to know what students prefer in order to better teach them.” A needed change is a new critical concept entitled criticality under a new standard goal cognition.

### ***Exposure to Global Opportunities***

Communicating with native speakers, in addition to native speaking instructors, was a common topic. Neptune suggested “I think what could occur is probably more cool communication with people that have these world languages as a native language, or maybe just like meeting with guest speakers.” Saturn said “exposing yourself to those who are native or have a high mastery in Chinese is very important.” Jupiter requested more native voices. “I think that there needs to be a bunch of voices that are willing to educate beyond just teachers and like random people on the Internet.” Venus added “and

I would like to say that Google translate does not help. I've tried it, and that's where that personal connections come in where you actually have people who speak that language with you, talk to you in it." Earth stated,

I went to Mexico when I was a kid. I plan on going again in the near future and speaking Spanish would help me. You know, learn what everyone in Mexico does that I have a vastly different experience from Mexicans in Mexico compared to Mexico in the U.S. because they grew up differently and speaking to them and learning what they've done also helps, and then for Chinese, I believe, is the same thing. If you speak with a native, it's way better to learn their culture that way than actually just learn searching it up online and trying to see what you can find.

Opportunities to communicate outside the classroom were suggested such as "studying abroad" or "putting people in the environment" or "find people who actually speak like that" as Venus said. Jupiter suggested every student graduate bilingual, and the opportunity should be made to exercise that right from the district, but Neptune recognized that resources are lacking.

Exposure was a critical theme. Moon spoke about "interacting with different kinds of people." Mars said "exposure for sure. I think that study abroad programs and just times even like video chats with students from other countries would be super valuable, definitely exposure." Mercury reiterated

that's a big factor especially since we have limited time in the classroom. We spent the majority of our time learning the content, but we don't actually get to use that content. So, by the time you roll back around, you actually want to speak

Chinese, or you know, write someone a letter like you don't have much experience with that. If you're outside of the classroom looking for active people to talk to, people to chat with, I'll say speaking is the biggest, like biggest factor because if you can't speak like if you're not speaking Chinese, it's just so hard to communicate with other people like cause you just start forgetting it, or like you start, I believe after a couple of days, just really finding connections, it's gonna effectively help you communicate better, especially outside the classroom. Yeah, that's one of the biggest factors.

Participants requested exposure to various regions, dialects, and accents. Although the communities goal mentions interacting to participate in multilingual communities (NSCB, 2015), there is no requirement for global opportunities. Participants expressed the need for exposure to global opportunities as a change in the W-RSLL.

### ***Unification***

Unification is also a needed addition to the W-RSLL. Participants expressed the importance of building relationships and creating partnerships with the community.

Jupiter spoke in depth on this concept

I think it's very important to be able to speak Chinese out of the classroom, because just goes in general with all languages to being able to speak more than your own language is kind of a sign of respect not only for yourself to be able to better understand other peoples, it's also just for other people to understand that you take the effort to understand them, and that would then build better community partnership with peoples.

While speaking on the goal communication, Mars suggested connecting with other schools in other countries to help students realize the importance of learning the language and to “bring the world together.” Mars stated,

I think that’s a huge importance learning to communicate, and Spanish has opened up a lot of doors for me personally, and I think that is also very nice to be able to communicate with I mean Spanish is a very widely spoken language, too, so it gives me more opportunities for studying broad programs in the future. I also feel like it helps people feel accepted and listened to, especially when you can try and attempt to listen to them in their native tongue.

Mars also spoke about unification while discussing the goal communities. Languages are critically important to unify family members unable to communicate with each other.

I know that some students will be Latinx, but then they won’t be able to communicate with family members just because they didn’t learn it in the household, that Spanish speaking would help with, and also through service. A lot of the [city], especially where you can drive a little bit, there will be a totally different area where Spanish speaking is. The amount of Spanish speakers is huge and it definitely helps to be able to communicate and connect different communities.

Additional students also spoke about this idea of unification. Venus simply appreciated the opportunity to “help out,” but for other students, the reasons were much stronger. Saturn took Chinese to communicate in the community and to bridge the gap of misunderstanding. “I think it’s extremely important.” Sun stated,

Like I've said before about not being able to relate. You know, the languages being a bit similar, but to be able to do that better. I feel like you not only have to know the language, like I said learning things every day, but you have to learn. You have to know the culture behind it because you know culture can relate through all types of things you know. You don't need to speak the same language to be able to connect through culture, you know. You don't have to be from the same parts of the world to connect through culture you know and yeah, it's stuff as little as dance and music that can bring people together easily, even if you don't understand what the song is saying or what the dance means, you know, and that's learning to help connect as well.

The addition of the critical concept, unification, is a needed change to the W-RSLL.

World language learning is "not just about learning words." Venus continued to say "learning Spanish was really an experience of learning, that this is not just a language, like these are not just words." Venus added "language classes are like important to know because it's not just a class, like a language can be a lifetime experience that you could take with you anywhere." Venus summarized the importance of learning languages with the following remarks

in the eleventh grade, which started off virtual coming from the previous year, and people would assume that like it's easy because you have technology and you could just look things up, but I truly believe the point of languages is to have others around you, to speak that language, have other experiences of that

language, have other tastes of that language. It's just simply looking up things truly doesn't help you grasp the essence of a language.

A student of French said "I think the goal is not just to be necessarily fluent, but to be able to say, or just communicate in general because that could have a basis for further learning." Participants expressed the need for additions of critical concepts to the W-RSLL. For participants, language learning was much more than just "learning words."

### **Summary**

In Chapter 4, I addressed the two research questions: What are the perspectives of recently graduated high school students who completed world language classes from a large public school district in the Midwest regarding the critical concepts of the World-Readiness Standards for Learning Languages? What are the perspectives of recently graduated high school students who completed world language classes from a large public school district in the Midwest regarding needed changes to the World-Readiness Standards for Learning Languages? I presented the findings from the nine recently graduated high school students, from May of 2022, who completed world language classes in the district. Overall, findings revealed the perspectives of recently graduated high school students on the critical concepts of the W-RSLL were similar; however, students added conventions, inclusion, inclusive knowledge, unification, criticality, and exposure to global opportunities as needed concepts. Several critical concepts from the W-RSLL were reorganized based on the perspectives of recently graduated high school students from a large public high school in the Midwest United States. In Chapter 5, I will provide interpretations of the findings in the context of critical theories and how

these findings confirm, disconfirm, and extend the current beliefs and held truths in world languages.

## Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore the perspectives of recently graduated high school students regarding the critical concepts and needed changes to the national world language standards. Created without student input, the current standards have been assumed to reflect what is best for students and to represent all critical concepts for world languages. By interviewing recently graduated high school students on their perspectives of the world language standards, I sought to fill the gap in literature related to recently graduated high school students' perspectives regarding the critical concepts and needed changes to the national world language standards and allowed the participants to provide legitimate perspectives on their education (see Cook-Sather, 2014). Findings revealed that participants valued the national world language standards as critical concepts. Participants also provided new knowledge by suggesting themes of conventions, criticality, exposure to global opportunities, inclusion, inclusive knowledge, and unification as additional critical concepts for world language studies.

### **Interpretations of the Findings**

Cook-Sather, Addy, et al. (2021) and Cook-Sather, Allard, et al. (2021) advocated for pedagogical partnerships between adults and students to produce fewer misunderstandings. Findings of the current study of recently graduated high school students from a large public school district in the Midwest United States revealed misunderstandings of the critical concepts in world languages. An analysis of the data revealed that recently graduated high school students agreed that the five goal areas of the W-RSLL (communication, cultures, connections, comparisons, and communities) were



critical concepts in world languages, but participants also recommended critical concepts that had not been considered.

### **Similarities**

Magnan et al. (2014) interviewed university students on the five goal areas of the W-RSLL. Students agreed that the goal areas were critical concepts in language studies with communities as the preferred goal standard. Participants in the current study also valued the five goal standards of the W-RSLL.

Miller (2019) reported communication as the most preferred goal standard among university students. In the current study, participants were not asked which critical concept was the most valuable for world languages, but the goal standard connections was mentioned most frequently in the context of learning about other disciplines, acquiring new information and diverse perspectives, and for a career. Communication was mentioned by all participants in this study and was mentioned the second highest number of times. Miller's university participants and the recently graduated high school students from the current study agreed that communication is a highly valued critical concept, with an emphasis on speaking, and for recently graduated high school students, communication was valuable to develop connections.

### **Differences**

Researchers called for additional research on student perspectives regarding standards (Cox et al., 2018; Miller, 2019; White, 2016) because adults tend to have different perspectives than students (Hancock & Davin, 2020; Jones & Bubb, 2021; O'Rourke & Zhou, 2018). A difference existed between the perspectives of those who

developed the national world language standards and recently graduated high school students.

All participants in the current study requested the addition of the following critical concepts to the national world language standards: inclusion, inclusive knowledge, and exposure to global opportunities. Inclusion was mentioned 55 times, the most by participants. Currently, inclusion is not stated in the national world language standards but might have been if the creators of the W-RSLL had asked for student input. In the context of this study, inclusion not only encompassed cultural competence but is “the act or practice of including and accommodating people who have historically been excluded” (Inclusion, 2023, para. 4). Participants used words such as “critical, open-mindedness, better comprehension, understand people more, inclusive, empathy, humanistic, and appreciation.” Similarly, inclusive knowledge was mentioned 40 times by participants, the second most popular theme. Sun said “shouldn’t knowledge be knowledge but not everything is taught the same throughout the world.” Inclusive knowledge is not exclusive. Finally, exposure to global opportunities was emphasized by all participants. Although the W-RSLL stated “learners use the language both within and beyond the classroom to interact and collaborate in their community and the globalized world” (NSCB, 2015, p. 9), the standards do not mention the opportunity and the requirement to do so.

Seven out of nine current participants suggested adding conventions and unification as critical concepts. Brown (2009) found that students preferred a grammar-based approach to learning a language as opposed to the communicative approach seen as

a core practice among world language teachers and the national organization for language teaching. However, as stated in the W-RSLL (NSCB, 2015)

through the study of a new language system and of how such a system expresses meanings in culturally appropriate ways, learners gain insights into the nature of language and the communicative functions of language in society, as well as the multifaceted nature of interaction between language and culture. (p. 89)

In other words, “Grammar is not the goal of instruction” (NSCB, 2015, p. 140).

Additionally, seven current participants spoke about unification, which is different than cultural competence, connections, or communities. Participants suggested “building relationships” and “build better community partnerships” and expressed the desire to make the world a more unified place to live. Unification is not mentioned in the W-RSLL.

Five participants spoke about criticality and the importance of learning a language for a career; nonetheless, according to the NSCB W-RSLL (2015):

the purposes and uses of world languages are as diverse as the learners who study them. Some learners study another language in hopes of finding a rewarding career in the international marketplace or government service. Others are interested in the intellectual challenge and cognitive benefits that accrue to those who develop competency in multiple languages. Still other learners seek greater understanding of other peoples and cultures and see languages as a means of social networking to connect with people around the world. Many learners approach language study, as they do other courses, simply to fulfill a graduation

or admissions requirement. Regardless of the reason for study, languages have something to offer to everyone. (p. 27)

Students' perspectives are different than adults'. Current participants expressed the desire to drive their education. Including students' perspectives could have a positive impact on their learning and guide the instructor toward better outcomes (Bloemert et al., 2020).

### **Extension**

Wassell et al. (2019) advocated for the incorporation of critical concepts such as social justice in national world language standards. Osborn (2006) defined social justice as the equitable sharing of social power and benefits within a society. In the context of language education, social justice could include seeking the perspectives of those the standards affect: the students. Furthermore, Bloemert et al. (2020) advocated for student perspective while developing a "knowledge base" (p. 429). Adding student perspectives could be the knowledge linking the critical concepts in world languages.

### **Analysis**

The conceptual framework for this qualitative study was critical theory and critical pedagogy with a constructivist epistemology. Critical theory is used to identify power structures. Critical pedagogy is used to examine the knowledge taught in schools.

The national world language standards are the framework for world languages that impart knowledge in curricula, textbooks, and professional development (Reagan & Osborn, 2021) and provide critical concepts to create a picture of world language studies. Magnan (2008) asked whether "the Standards simply reinforce, and spread, the status quo

or do they advance teaching in terms of current understanding of learning?” (p. 352). Obtaining the perspectives of recently graduated high school students on the national world language standards was an implementation of critical theories in action by encouraging students to become coinvestigators (see Bettencourt, 2020) through the collaborative use of power (see Yang, 2020).

Findings revealed there was a difference in the perspectives of those who developed the national world language standards and recently graduated high school students on the knowledge that students should acquire in world languages (see Curtain & Dahlberg, 2016). Participants provided new knowledge through constructivism, and in doing so, went against the standard practice in education (see Magnan et al., 2014). Including the perspectives of recently graduated high school students on the national world language standards challenges power structures and creates a complete picture of the critical concepts in world languages.

### **Limitations of the Study**

This basic qualitative study was designed to explore recently graduated high school students' perspectives of the critical concepts and needed changes to the national world language standards. One limitation was the time constraint of finding recently graduated high school students, but I was able to interview nine participants. Another concern was credibility. An analysis of memos, journal notes, and interview transcripts was conducted to ensure the study measured what it intended. The data were coded into categories and themes, and the process was described in detail so that the study could be replicated in other contexts. Finally, I tried to remain as objective as possible by

analyzing the data multiple times, conferring with colleagues, and reaching out to thought partners to minimize potential researcher bias.

### **Recommendations**

The aim of this study was to synthesize the students' experiences into a few shared commonalities to improve studies of world languages and student experiences in world languages. Cook-Sather (2020) advocated for student perspective to communicate positive change in educational decisions. In exploring the perspectives of recently graduated high school students regarding the critical concepts and needed changes to the national world language standards, I identified several themes from the data.

Additional research is needed on high school students' perspectives of effective practices in world language education such as communicative versus grammar-based instruction. Conventions were reported as a critical concept by recently graduated high school students, yet the ACTFL recommends communicative competencies. Bloemert et al. (2020) requested future research on learners as initiators in the improvement of the study of world languages. In the current study, Earth suggested that students coteach alongside their instructor, and mentioned that each world language classroom should have a minimum of two instructors. Adults tend to have different perspectives on world language policy (Hancock & Davin, 2020), world language course objectives (O'Rourke & Zhou, 2018) and effective teaching (Brown, 2009); therefore, a need has been established for continued research.

Several additions to the national world language standards were provided by current participants. Two critical concepts found in the data were inclusion and inclusive

knowledge as all participants questioned the knowledge that was absent from their curriculum (see Krek, 2018). Reagan and Osborn (2021) posited that schooling is not neutral. Further research could be conducted to determine what is missing and how instructors decide what is taught in the classroom (see Tedick & Cammarata, 2012).

Current participants questioned the lack of importance given to world languages in education. Jupiter expressed that world languages should be given equal consideration compared to mathematics or social sciences:

Require every student to come out of high school being bilingual, then that would be best and of course, there would probably be some exceptions, and some, you know, wiggle room, but I think overall it should be established in [district] that every student should come out bilingual, and there should be opportunities to exercise that.

Research on which critical concept is the most important in world languages for recently graduated high school students might confirm the purpose of world languages and create a desire to graduate more students with high proficiencies in world languages.

Given that students' perspectives are different than adults, recently graduated high school students' suggestions for improvement should be considered as world language standards continue to be developed and updated in the United States. Further research on effective pedagogies, inclusivity, and the purpose of world languages studies in the United States is recommended. The implication of the current study is to cocreate the educational framework in world languages with students for all stakeholders.

## Implications

Academics have assumed the national world language standards reflect student needs and desires (Magnan et al, 2014), but knowledge has been overlooked by those who developed the national world language standards. This basic qualitative study provided an opportunity for students to affect learning in world languages as knowledge assets (see Bettencourt et al., 2020) by imparting their perspectives on the critical concepts and needed changes to the national standards in world languages. Positive social change could occur in the future development of world language standards through incorporation of the new knowledge of critical concepts obtained by recently graduated high school students from a large public school district in the Midwest United States.

Based on the findings of this study, I recommend changing the national world language standards to incorporate recently graduated high school students' perspectives. Five goals with a total of 10 standards (Tables 6–10) might be included:

**Table 6**

*Communication*

A priori, in vivo, and open code	Standard	Meaning
Communicate with others Speak more Basic communication Multiple situations Conversational Proficiency Multiple purposes	Communicate	“Learners communicate effectively in the target language in order to function in a variety of situations and for multiple purposes” (NSCB, 2015, p. 9).
Conventions Comparisons Broader vocabulary	Conventions	Learners investigate, coconstruct, explain, and reflect on the nature of the language.



**Table 7***Cultures*

A priori, in vivo, and open code	Standard	Meaning
Cultural competence Critical Open-mindedness Better comprehension Understand people more Understanding Inclusive Empathy Humanistic Appreciation Culture Differences and similarities Many cultures Language is related to culture Diversity Need culture to understand language Different customs Diverse perspectives Compare cultures Culture is just as important as language Culture came before language Different ways to behave	Inclusion           Diverse perspectives	Learners interact with cultural competence and understanding (NSCB, 2015) in a way that shows familiarity, value, and inclusion of the cultures, peoples, and products of the target language.           Learners acquire information and diverse perspectives that are available through the language and its cultures (NSCB, 2015).

**Table 8***Connections*

A priori, in vivo, and open code	Standard	Meaning
Other subject areas Connections Culture is just as important Well-rounded Inclusion Holistic	Inclusive knowledge	Learners connect with other disciplines to build, reinforce, expand, and apply an inclusive knowledge of other content areas (NSCB, 2015).
Career Real-word learning	Career	Learners connect knowledge and skills gained in the language for enjoyment, enrichment, personal connections, and advancement (NSCB, 2015) in a career.

**Table 9***Cognition*

A priori, in vivo, and open code	Standard	Meaning
Goals are critical Find connections when struggling with concepts Establish goals Sense of accomplishment Know what works for you Reflection is key	Goals	Learners assess growth (NSCB, 2015) in language learning, practice, and understanding of self-identified and/or instructor-identified learning goals.
Personal connections to learning Critical thinking skills Allow choice in structure Autonomous learning Essential	Criticality	Learners use critical knowledge and skills to cocreate content and instruction and work collaboratively to solve problems creatively (NSCB, 2015).

**Table 10***Communities*

A priori, in vivo, and open code	Standard	Meaning
Communicating in community Building relationships Build better community partnerships	Unification	Learners use the language within and beyond the classroom to interact, collaborate, and unify communities (NSCB, 2015).
Exposure Global Communicate with native speakers Study abroad Resources Receive scholarships	Exposure to global opportunities	Learners are exposed to and able to interact and collaborate with native speakers throughout the world with digital tools, community partnerships, study abroad, and connections to the globalized world.

The implication is that decision makers in world languages will allow student voices to be heard and acted on regarding standards that frame world language studies to accurately reflect the needs and desires of all stakeholders. In doing so, a needed disruption of the status quo in education will have occurred, making this study a substantial addition to critical work and a transformation in world languages.

### **Conclusions**

Power informs the knowledge produced in schools (Melo, 2019), and the absence of student voices in the national world language standards is due to power structures (Giroux, 1992). Cook-Sather, Addy, et al. (2021) and Cook-Sather, Allard, et al. (2021) explored power structure through critical theory and critical pedagogy by advocating for students to become cocreators of education. Through inclusion of the perspectives of students as cocreators of the framework in world languages, a transformational change can occur in the educational power dynamic (Magnan et al., 2012). When students are

able to design their future by imparting knowledge of the critical concepts and needed changes to the national world language standards, a new norm will be established with students at the forefront, and the purpose of world language education will be complete.

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## Appendix A: Interview Protocol

### **Research Questions:**

RQ 1–Qualitative: What are the perspectives of recently graduated high school students who completed world language classes from a large public school district in the Midwest regarding the critical concepts of the World-Readiness Standards for Learning Languages?

RQ 2–Qualitative: What are the perspectives of recently graduated high school students who completed world language classes from a large public school district in the Midwest regarding needed changes to the World-Readiness Standards for Learning Languages?

### **Introduction:**

Hello, my name is Diane Bosilevac. Thank you for allowing me to interview you. The purpose of this interview is to talk about your world language experience in the district. This interview might last about forty-five minutes.

Please answer the questions to the best of your ability. Although you have already consented to recording the interview, I would like to let you know this interview may be stopped at any time.

I may share your answers with my instructor, but I will not identify you in my documents, and no one will be able to identify you by your answers. Before I start the recording, do you have any questions? Are you ready to begin?

### **Guide for interview questions:**

1. I understand you have taken world languages for more than 2 years. What

motivated you to take world language classes in this district?

Follow-up question:

- 1a. What was the reason for taking Chinese/French/Spanish? (Henceforth, Chinese/French/Spanish will be referred to as L2, in the document, although the language studied could be the students' third language, fourth language, etc.)
2. Tell me about your L2 experience.
3. What are the important goals and concepts that should be studied in L2?

In world languages, there are national world language standards and overall goals for the standards; they are communication, cultures, communities, connections, and comparisons. I would like to hear your perspectives on each of these goals.

Let's talk about the goal communication:

4. Tell me about the importance for students to learn how to communicate in L2.
5. What did you learn in class to be able to communicate effectively in L2?
6. What must occur for you to be able to better communicate in L2?

Let's talk about the goal cultures:

7. Tell me about the importance for students to learn about culture in world languages.
8. What did you learn in class to be able to relate well with people from various cultures where L2 is spoken?

9. What must occur for you to relate better with people from various cultures where L2 is spoken?

Let's talk about the goal connections:

10. Tell me about the importance for students to learn about other subject areas in world languages.

Clarifying information:

10a. Fine arts, social sciences, science, philosophy, etc.

11. What did you learn in class about other subject areas?
12. What must occur for you to better understand diverse perspectives?

Let's talk about the goal comparisons:

13. Tell me about the importance for students to learn how to compare languages and cultures.
14. What did you learn in class to be able to compare languages and cultures?
- 14a. Should that change?

Let's talk about the goal communities:

15. Tell me about the importance for students to communicate in L2 outside the classroom.
16. How important is it for students to set goals and reflect on their progress for L2?

Probing question:

16a. What guidance have you been given to set goals and reflect on your progress?

Finally, I have one last question about world languages.

17. What if you could design your world language classes, how would they look?

18. Is there anything else you would like to share?

19. Do you have any questions for me about the questions or your comfortability?

### **Follow up**

Thank you for this interview. I want you to know that the information from this interview will be saved on a password protected external hard drive for 5 years, and you can always read my dissertation to see the results of your input. I will send you, via email, a 1-to-2-page summary of the research results once the dissertation is published. Do you have any questions for me?

Thank you for your time. I am going to stop the recording. Thank you.

## Appendix B: Email Invitation From District

**Subject line:**

Interviewing world language students (\$25 thank you gift card).

**Email message:**

There is a new study about the experiences of world language students to understand how to improve the world language programming at (insert name of school district). For this study, you are invited to describe your perspectives as a student in Chinese/French/Spanish.

**About the study:**

One 30-45 minute Zoom interview that will be recorded.

You would receive a \$25 Walmart or Target gift card as a thank you.

To protect your privacy, the published study would use fake names.

**Volunteers must meet these requirements:**

18 years old or older

Student of Chinese/French/Spanish for a minimum of 2 years at (insert name of school district)

Graduating senior in May of 2022 at (insert name of school district)

This interview is part of the doctoral study for Diane Bosilevac, a Ph.D. student at Walden University. Interviews will take place in July, August, or September 2022 on Zoom.

Please email Diane Bosilevac [diane.bosilevac@waldenu.edu](mailto:diane.bosilevac@waldenu.edu) to let her know of your interest. You are welcome to forward it to others who might be interested. DO NOT

RESPOND TO THIS EMAIL. Send an email to Diane Bosilevac with the words “I am interested in the study.”

## Appendix C: Scheduling the Interview

**Subject line:**

Interviewing world language students – let's schedule the interview.

**Email message:**

Thank you for agreeing to be a participant in this new study about your experiences in world languages at (name of school district). For this study, you are asked to describe your perspectives as a student in Chinese/French/Spanish. Let's schedule the interview!

Could you tell me which language you studied in (name of school district) and for how long?

When are you available to be interviewed via Zoom for 30-45 minutes in July, August, or September of 2022?

Once you email your answers to these questions, I will send an email invite.

Please provide a personal email.

Thank you for the consideration to participate in this research study! I appreciate you!

Sincerely,

Diane Bosilevac

[Diane.bosilevac@waldenu.edu](mailto:Diane.bosilevac@waldenu.edu)