

Student Prioritization of World Language Learning

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ABSTRACT

This paper compares a student's priority of world language learning to an employer's demand for multilingualism. Massachusetts high school students responded to a survey about world language availability and their success with and enjoyment of learning world languages, which was compared to statistics regarding the value employers place on multilingualism in job candidates. The results show that while students prioritize world language learning relatively highly, they pursue it more for fun than for practical value, likely due to the lack of visibility of world language needs in job postings. Employers need to clarify and emphasize these needs to encourage students to continue learning world languages and educators can assist in filling this gap by promoting the importance of world languages in their curriculums.

Introduction

Many factors are considered important for employment. Among the most contested in the United States is multilingualism, or the ability to speak more than one language. A popular opinion among Americans is that they only need to know English. However, research shows that knowing another language can be beneficial in many aspects of life, including pleasure, work, and travel. The increase of availability and functionality of technology has greatly contributed to the increase in value of multilingualism, as it increases global interconnectedness, allowing greater communication.

With this increase in connectivity comes more opportunities to share culture. This requires a common means of communication, which has caused an increase in opportunities for education through websites, apps, and classes. Learners of all ages can pursue world languages (also known as foreign languages) by the method that works best for them. Many learners study languages to understand media they enjoy.

Many schools require world language (WL) classes or offer WL electives, which give more structured, interactive, and realistic learning situations. These opportunities also tend to be less diverse in the number of different WLs available, and therefore can make it more challenging for students to learn languages that truly interest them. However, teacher feedback can be very influential in the student's learning experience, especially by helping students to recognize the real-world applications of the WL skills they are learning. Teachers generally inform students of the uses of WLs, particularly the benefits they provide in higher education and the workforce. Students are then left up to their discretion to decide through the learning process whether the language is worth pursuing, depending on their priority of it.

Literature Review

Factors affecting student priority of WLL are potentially more diverse than the diversity of learning methods. Studies research students' enjoyment, attitude, and motivation for WLL to better understand what affects student performance in a WL classroom. Each of these factors is affected by many internal and external variables, causing each student to have different WLL experiences.

All of these factors focus on the student's perspective in the process of WLL. However, they lack the perspective of how highly valued WLL is when considering its usefulness for the student's future. Employers have a greater demand for multilingual employees due to a reliance on language skills beyond English, an anticipated increase in WL demand, and a current language skills gap. Meanwhile, students prioritize WLL differently based on their enjoyment of and ability to learn WLs. So, how does a Massachusetts high school student's prioritization of world language learning align with an employer's demand for multilingualism?

World Language Enjoyment

Dewaele & MacIntyre (2016) describe world language enjoyment (WLE) as a "complex emotion, capturing interacting dimensions of challenge and perceived ability that reflect the human drive for success in the face of difficult tasks". As WLL is a very involved and time-consuming task, there is great potential for WLE, a positive emotion that increases student appreciation for WLL. WLE is often found to outweigh language anxiety (a related emotion described by MacIntyre and Gregerson (2012) as "a term that encompasses the feelings of worry and negative, fear-related emotions associated with learning or using a language that is not an individual's mother tongue"), with more experience and perceived proficiency leading to more WLE and less language anxiety (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014; Botes et al., 2020). An absence of language anxiety is often found to increase WLE but does not necessarily indicate its presence, and vice versa (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2016; Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014).

WLE has a variety of factors which Dewaele and MacIntyre (2016) divide into two categories: social (involving teacher and peers) and private (based on realization of progress and authentic use of WL). These factors are often intertwined, but private focuses more on personal pride. Different experiences can trigger WLE, language anxiety, or both for any student (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014).

Teachers generally have a large role in affecting student WLE (Botes et al., 2020). Teachers' friendliness and positivity contribute to a relaxed atmosphere that allows students to step out of their comfort zone and overcome difficult challenges (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2016; Botes et al., 2020, MacIntyre & Mercer, 2014). Most key episodes causing WLE come from classroom activities (specifically those that allow choice), peer and teacher recognition, realization of progress, teacher skills in creating an enjoyable environment, and authentic use of the WL (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014).

Language anxiety and WLE have been likened to the right and left feet of a language learner, in that they both are important factors in WLL and share sources, but are independent emotions (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014; MacIntyre & Mercer, 2014). There has been much debate over how linked language anxiety and WLE are. Dewaele and MacIntyre (2014) found a significant negative relationship; however, the most common conclusion is that they share a moderate negative correlation. Any learner may experience one, both, or neither while learning a language (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2016; Botes et al., 2020; MacIntyre & Mercer, 2014). Higher levels of self-perceived proficiency, multilingualism, relative standing in a group of WL learners, and education have been shown to decrease language anxiety and increase WLE (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014; Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2016; Botes et al., 2020; Dewaele & Dewaele, 2017; MacIntyre & Mercer, 2014).

WLE is a related, but not opposite, emotion to language anxiety. They share many characteristics; however, WLE often overpowers language anxiety and has a greater impact on the learning experience. A wide range of internal and external learner variables affect WLE. Students who have higher enjoyment levels have higher WLL ability levels and greater appreciation for WLL, which creates a more positive world language attitude.

World Language Attitude

World language attitude (WLA) is the beliefs a student holds in regards to WLL, specifically emotions and expectations towards the process, target language, and its community. This includes the difficulty of WLL, WL aptitude, the

nature of WLL, and learning and communication strategies (Horwitz, 1988; Gardner, 1985; Dewaele, 2009). A positive WLA denotes a greater incentive to learn.

Horwitz's 1988 study showed that students generally found WLL a manageable undertaking as only moderately difficult and requiring a moderate amount of time (3-5 years) to learn at one hour per day. However, most students also believed that some people possess a gift for learning languages, with varied results as to whether or not they possessed it. Despite this, most students agreed that everyone can learn a WL, meaning that an average ability is adequate. This is also beneficial as a majority of students felt that WL class was different from other subjects, and required much memorization of vocabulary and grammar rules. Students almost unanimously agreed that it is important to practice and repeat, perhaps due to the popular opinion that nothing should be said in the WL unless it can be said correctly (Horwitz, 1988; Horwitz et al., 1986).

It is generally agreed that WLAs are shaped by aspects of the target language and the people who speak it (Dewaele, 2009; Gardner, 1968). While each learner is different, global geopolitical and sociopolitical contexts, teachers, and dislike or admiration of certain speakers of the language can have large impacts on WLA (Dewaele, 2009). These factors can also be very impactful in building specific types of motivation, or a lack of motivation, which translates into student success (Dewaele, 2009; Gardner, 1968).

Achievement can also have a large impact on WLA, as more successful students have more positive outlooks on WLL (Gardner, 1968), and positive attitudes toward learning result in higher achievement (Noels et al., 2000). Overall, students find WLL a manageable task that requires moderate and consistent effort, though their WLA is shaped by many factors.

World Language Motivation

WL attitude and world language motivation (WLM) are closely linked. Gardner (1985) defined WLM as "the combination of effort plus desire to achieve the goal of learning the language plus favorable attitudes toward learning the language". WLM studies research why people learn WLs, as well as which factors are most important in shaping this drive, to create the most effective learning experience (Dewaele, 2009; Noels et al., 2000). This is hugely important in a student's determination to continue learning a WL.

WLM is affected by integrativeness (Dewaele, 2009, Gardner, 1968; Noels et al., 2000). Gardner describes this concept in his 1985 motivation theory as a positive disposition toward the target language community, including a desire to interact with or become more similar to members of that community. The integrative aspect explains a large amount of variance in motivational disposition (Dörnyei, 2003). Whether it has a significant positive impact on WL success is debated (Dewaele, 2009; Noels et al., 2000). The instrumental orientation is its counter, where WLL is motivated by a practical goal like job advancement or course credit (Noels et al., 2000). No consensus has been reached on which orientation has a greater impact on WLL success (Noels et al., 2000).

Deci and Ryan's self-determination theory is also very influential as intrinsic and extrinsic motivation are commonly referenced in WL studies (Dörnyei, 2003; Noels et al., 2000). Intrinsic motivation is interest in the specific activity, whereas extrinsic motivation is based on its rewards (Noels et al., 2000). This theory involves several aspects that the integrative/instrumental orientations lack, which helps it to be thorough and reliable (Noels et al., 2000), though it is not specific to WL like the integrative/instrumental theory.

Parents can also be a large factor in shaping student motivation. Gardner (1968) discussed the impact of active and passive parent roles, with the active role promoting and monitoring the child's success, while the passive role is the parent's attitude towards the target language community. He argued that the passive role is more important as it affects the student's attitude, which affects their motivation. High motivation positively impacts student achievement in WLL, supporting the positive correlation between WLE and motivation (Botes et al., 2020).

Many factors and theories are involved in WLM. This, in addition to the fact that WLM can fluctuate significantly, makes WLM research more complicated than other areas of WL research. The sheer variety of perspectives

in WLM causes much uncertainty within the field (Dörnyei, 2003; Dewaele, 2009). Still, it is widely supported that WLM has a large impact on student appreciation of WLL.

Conclusion

Many factors impact WLL, including WLE, WLA, and WLM. These shape a learner's view of the process and influence how positively a student interacts with WLL. While each is affected by different factors, all increase WLL success when more positive. Learners with higher levels of WLE, WLA, and WLM are more likely to continue learning a WL and gain a higher proficiency.

Though there is a plethora of WLL research, there are several areas that are lacking. Most WLL studies focus on college students or other adult learners; very few focus on high school students. Many studies are not geographically specific, others focus on an entire country, or are limited to one college or university. This creates either a very broad or incredibly small geographic range. Most WLL studies concentrate on how different factors relate to one another or change over time. There is a lack of research on how students expect WLL to impact their future, particularly regarding employment, and comparing a student emotion to an outside factor separate from the learning experience.

Considering the research question "how does a Massachusetts high school student's prioritization of world language learning align with an employer's demand for multilingualism?", this leaves a gap of high school students, the location Massachusetts, and focus on the student goal of WLL for employment purposes.

Methods

Design

The researcher used a quantitative method. Two terms in the research question must be defined in order to understand the design. Student priority (SP) was the student's WLL enjoyment and ability. Enjoyment was measured using a modified version of Jean-Marc Dewaele' and Peter D. MacIntyre's WLE scale in "The two faces of Janus? Anxiety and enjoyment in the foreign language classroom" (2014). Ability consisted of the student's usual grade in WL class and confidence in speaking, reading, listening, and ability to reach fluency in the WL. These factors made up a majority of the survey.

Employer's demand (ED) for multilingualism was employers' need for multilingual employees. This was measured by the average of three percentages: frequency of employer reliance on non-English language skills, anticipated increase in WL demand, and the current language skills gap. This was supported by a study conducted on LinkedIn where a sample of 10 job postings for each of the top 3 industries (according to the survey results) were examined for information regarding non-English language skills. Further understanding of ED was gathered through an interview with a WL expert.

Data collection began February 21, 2022, and ended March 11, 2022. The data was stored in password-protected file storage.

Participants

High school students were selected as most have learned their WL long enough to understand its uses and the learning experience, while also considering what career they hope to pursue. Students were contacted through social media and asked to share the survey with their connections. It was also distributed by the researcher's town government. Demographic variables measured included student year of graduation, gender, language(s) spoken at home, and language(s) learned at school.

A total of 71 people responded to the survey, but 9 responses did not answer all the questions and had to be discarded. This resulted in 62 participants. The years of graduation of students in high school during the 2021-2022 school year were 2022-2025. There were 13 students from the class of 2022, 16 from 2023, 27 from 2024, 5 from 2025, and 1 who preferred not to answer. There were 33 female participants, 21 male, 2 nonbinary, 3 responded “other”, and 3 preferred not to answer. Participants were asked to select all languages spoken at home, resulting in 61 speaking English, 1 spoke Spanish, 4 spoke French, 1 spoke Vietnamese, 4 spoke Arabic, and 10 spoke another language. Only 3 languages were being studied by participants: 19 participants were learning French, 24 Spanish, 10 Latin, and 9 were not studying a WL.

Instruments

A Google Forms online survey was used. The survey was divided into three sections: 1) background information, 2) world language availability and success, and 3) world language enjoyment. Background information collected demographic information about year of graduation (2022-2025), gender, language(s) spoken at home (Demographics of Massachusetts, 2022), WL(s) taken in school (K, 2020; Lexplorers Team, 2018), and the industry the student expected to go into (*Jobs*). These variables were important in potentially affecting student prioritization of WLL.

World language availability and success focused on student ability. Students were asked to rank seven school subjects (math, science, history, English, WL, art, and music) in order of importance for getting a job. Following questions asked how many WLs were available at the school (0-4+), if the WLs available at the school interested the student, the student’s usual grade in WL class (100-90, 90-80, 80-70, 70-60, 60-0), and student confidence in WLL ability on a 5-point Likert scale about speaking, reading, listening, and ability to reach fluency in their WL.

The WLE scale was taken from “The two faces of Janus? Anxiety and enjoyment in the foreign language classroom” by Dewaele and MacIntyre (2014), as this was the most widely accepted WLE scale in the WLL research, which was pilot-tested with 15 participants and adjusted accordingly. The researcher used 15 out of 21 questions from the original survey for the WLE scale. Each question was on a 5-point Likert scale from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). All items were positively phrased.

Analyses

Each response was compiled into an ultimate priority score. Student ability was measured by the student’s usual grade in WL class and confidence in their ability to speak, read, listen, and reach fluency in their WL. The usual grade had five choices: 100-90, 90-80, 80-70, 70-60, and 60-0. For analysis purposes, 100-90=5, 90-80=4, 80-70=3, 70-60=2, and 60-0=1. The student confidence questions were each on a 5-point Likert scale. The average of these five questions was used to create the student’s ability score with a range of 1 (minimum ability) to 5 (maximum ability).

The student’s enjoyment score was taken by averaging fifteen questions in the WLE section of the survey. Each question was on a 5-point Likert scale. The resulting range of responses was 1 (minimum enjoyment) to 5 (maximum enjoyment). The enjoyment and ability scores were added together to create the priority score with a range of 2 (minimum priority) to 10 (maximum priority), and rounded to the nearest hundredth. Responses were grouped by industry and WL.

Employer demand was found by averaging three measures from the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages’ 2019 report “Making Languages Our Business: Addressing Foreign Language Demand Among U.S. Employers”. The three statistics used were “9 out of 10 U.S. employers rely on employees with language skills other than English”, “56% say their foreign language demand will increase in the next 5 years”, and “1 in 3 language-dependent U.S. employers report a language skills gap”. This translated to 90% reliance, 56% increase, and 33% gap. These were averaged together to find the ED measure, then converted to be out of 10 rather than 100 for ease of comparison with the SP score.

The LinkedIn study was conducted by searching each of the most popular three industries as the most relevant, entry level, full-time job posted within the past 24 hours on March 14, 2022. The top 10 job postings for each industry were examined to see if they requested/required non-English language skills in applicants. Additional understanding of ED was gathered through an interview with the president of the Massachusetts Foreign Language Association.

Results

The SP and ED scores were the basis of the study to see the similarity between student and employer views of WLL. There were three main groups of results. The first, the SP and ED scores, showed that while similar, students held a higher value for WLs than employers. The second showed which classes students found most important for employment. Students most frequently ranked WL as fifth most important for getting a job. The third were the results from the WLE scale with the highest majorities. These questions reflected that students cared more about having fun than practical growth in WL class.

Demographic variables collected included year of graduation, gender, language(s) spoken at home, WL(s) taken in school, and the industry the student expected to go into. Participants represented all grades in high school from the 2021-2022 school year, with 21% from the class of 2022, 25.8% from the class of 2023, 43.5% from the class of 2024, 8.1% from the class of 2025, and 1.6% who preferred not to answer. Typical to most WL survey-based research, there was a majority (53.2%) of female participants, with 33.9% male, 3.2% nonbinary, 4.8% responded “other”, and 4.8% preferred not to answer.

Students were asked to select all languages that were spoken at home. Nearly all participants (98.4%) spoke English at home, but additionally, 1.6% spoke Spanish, 6.5% spoke French, 1.6% spoke Vietnamese, 6.5% spoke Arabic, and 16.1% spoke another language. Only four WLs were being learned by participants: 30.6% were learning French, 38.7% were learning Spanish, 16.1% were learning Latin, and 14.5% were not learning a WL. Students reported a wide variety of industries, with 16.1% choosing healthcare services or “other”; 12.9% arts and design; 9.7% engineering or prefer not to answer; 8.1% education; 4.8% legal; 3.2% information technology, program and project management, or research; 1.6% support, military and protective services, media and communications, human resources, finance, entrepreneurship, community and social services, or business development.

Other learner-related variables included the number of WLs available at the student’s school, whether or not the WLs interested the student, and the student’s usual grade in WL class. Of the participants, 1.6% had no WL available at their school, 6.5% had one, 6.5% had two, 75.8% had three, and 9.7% had at least four. A majority of students (69.4%) were interested in the WLs at their school, while 29% were not interested and 1.6% preferred not to answer. The participants were generally good students, as 71% had a usual grade of 100-90, 19.4% had a usual grade of 90-80, 3.2% had a usual grade of 80-70, and 6.5% preferred not to answer.

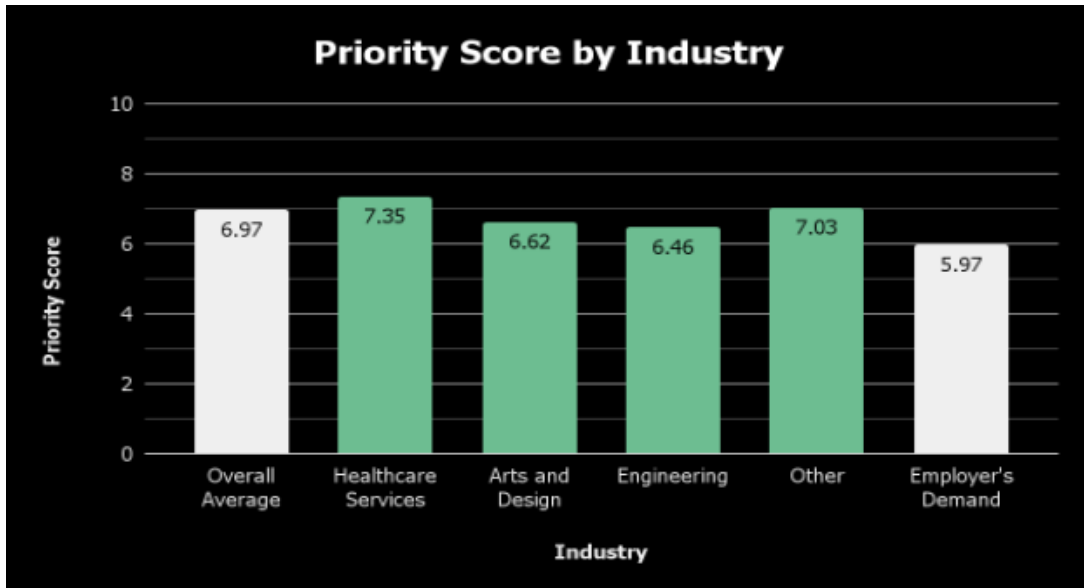


Figure 1. Student Priority Score by Industry

The most popular three industries were healthcare services, arts and design, and engineering. The average SP was found for each of these, and all remaining participants were grouped into the category “other”. Figure 1 shows that the highest priority was held by healthcare services (7.35), followed by other (7.03), the overall average (6.97), arts and design (6.62), engineering (6.46), and finally the ED (5.97). The ED was in last place, 1.38 below the highest (healthcare services), 1.00 below the average, and 0.49 below the lowest industry (engineering).

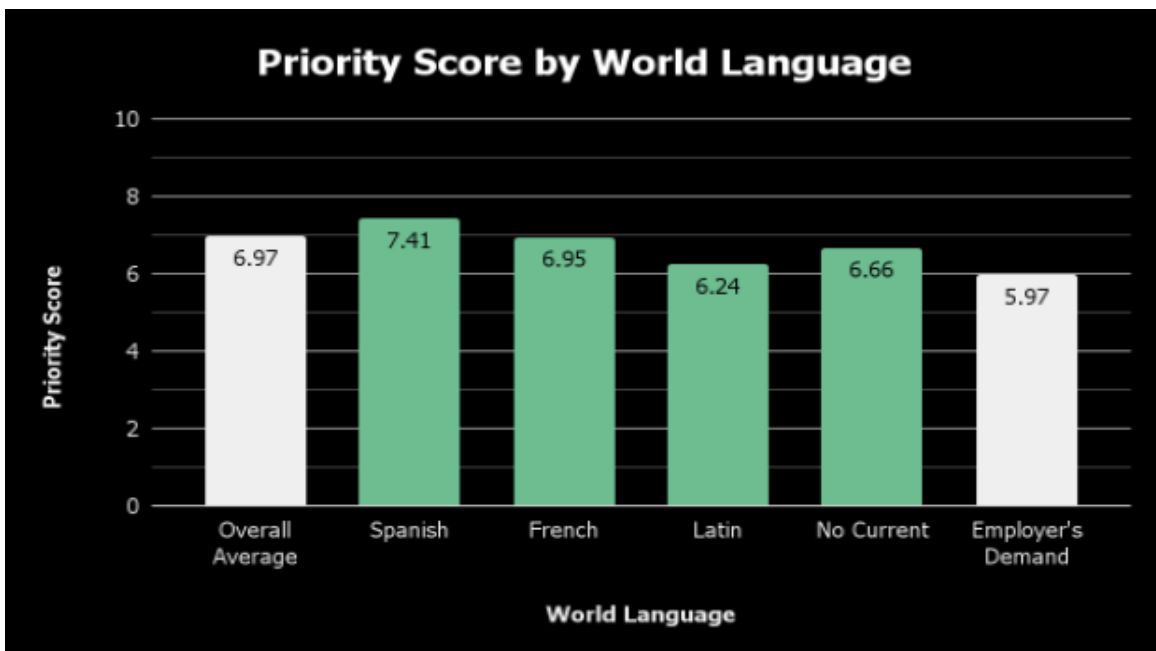


Figure 2. Student Priority Score by World Language

Four language groups were present among the participants: Spanish, French, Latin, and no WL. As seen in Figure 2, Spanish held the highest SP (7.41), followed by the overall average (6.97), French (6.95), students not currently taking a WL (6.66), Latin (6.24), and lastly the ED (5.97). The ED was again in last place, 1.44 below the highest WL (Spanish), 1.00 below the average, and 0.27 below the lowest WL (Latin).

Students most commonly ranked WL as fifth most important for getting a job. In order of rank, the subjects were English, math, science, history, WL, art, and music. The order of the subjects corresponds to their most common placement, except history and WL were both most often put in fifth place, and none most commonly in fourth place. History had more students ranking it in fifth place, therefore making it of higher importance than WL.

Table 1. Responses from WLE Scale with 75% Majority

Statement	% Strongly Disagree	% Disagree	% Neither Agree Nor Disagree	% Agree	% Strongly Agree
I've learned interesting things.	6	3	8	37	45
It's cool to know a world language.	2	2	3	16	77
Making errors is part of the learning process.	2	0	2	27	69
My world language teacher is friendly.	0	5	11	32	52

Four questions from the WLE scale had a response of over 75% of participants agreeing or strongly agreeing with the statement. No question had a majority of participants disagreeing or strongly disagreeing with the statement. Of the participants, 82% agreed that they have learned interesting things in WL class, 93% agreed that it is cool to learn a WL, 96% agreed that making errors is part of the learning process, and 84% agreed that their WL teacher is friendly. Three of the four statements focus purely on fun, while the statement about making errors shows an appreciation for the learning process.

The LinkedIn study examined a total of 30 job postings for information regarding non-English language skills (see appendix). The only job posting to request a language other than English was for a visiting assistant professor of German, which required native/near-native fluency in German. The other 29 job postings did not request multilingualism.

Students reflected a higher priority for WLL than the ED. All groups, both by industry and WL, remained above the ED by at least 0.27, and the overall average was 1.00 above the ED. WL was most commonly ranked fifth of seven subjects for importance in getting a job. Students tended to value WLL highly, but a majority of their most positive responses focused on having fun rather than valuing the language or learning process. The positivity of the SP score contrasts the low ranking of WL for importance in employment, but the relation between these opposing views is made evident by which statements about the learning process students most strongly agreed with.

Discussion

Combined, these results show a complete picture of SP in comparison to ED, to answer the research question “how does a Massachusetts high school student’s prioritization of world language learning align with an employer’s demand for multilingualism?”. This addresses the previously unexplored areas in WLL literature of the location Massachusetts with high school participants, as well as the purpose of research to compare the SP to the external factor of the ED.

Discussion of the Research Question

Overall, students held a higher value for WLs than employers, but more as an interest than a priority for employment. The ED was 1.00 point below the average SP, 1.44 below the highest group (Spanish), and 0.27 below the lowest group (Latin). This positions students as having a higher value of WLL than employers. However, this cannot be viewed as a higher priority for employment because WL was most commonly ranked in 5th place for importance in getting a job, meaning that four other classes (English, math, science, and history) were generally seen as a higher priority.

This is logical as English, math, science, and history all have associated high school graduation requirements in Massachusetts, while WL is only recommended (MA Graduation Requirements and Related Guidance, 2022). While individual school districts may have different requirements, the fact that the statewide department of education does not value WL as highly as other subjects gives credence to students not prioritizing it as greatly.

In addition, colleges do not value WL as highly as other classes. Massachusetts state universities reflect the same pattern as how students ranked the subjects, requiring four courses of English and math, three courses of science, and two courses of history and WL (GEAR UP High School Courses, n.d.). While students may hold WLL at a higher value than employers, their view matches that which the academic requirements shows: less value to WLL.

The idea of WL valued more as an interest was also reflected in the responses to which over 75% participants agreed. Three out of the four statements (I’ve learned interesting things, it’s cool to know a WL, and my WL teacher friendly) focus on the student having fun learning the language, without practical use. The remaining statement (making errors is part of the learning process) reflects an understanding of the worth of WLL as it shows an understanding of the effort required to succeed.

The lower ED was supported by lack of clarity in job postings. Out of a sample of 30 job postings, only one mentioned multilingualism. This contrasts the high reliance on non-English language skills (90%) and the presence of a language skills gap (33%) that factored into the ED, as these prove that there is a demand for WLs, but employers are not making this evident in job postings. If students do not see WL opportunities in job postings, they might consider WLL less of a priority to aid in employment ventures and focus their attention elsewhere despite the need for multilingual skills in the workforce.

The positive student view of WLL aligns with previous findings in WLL research. Previous research found that WLE usually outweighed language anxiety, showing a strong positive emotion, which these students also showed. They also displayed a relatively positive attitude towards WLL, similar to the students in Horwitz’s 1988 study. The fact that these students’ views align with the views of students from other research lends more credibility to their responses.

Implications

The results of the survey could have implications for students, WL teachers, administrators, and employers. The positive view that students have of WLL shows that students do enjoy WL class, and that teachers are doing a good job of engaging students. Their lower priority of it, however, means that teachers need assistance in explaining the im-

portance of WL for employment. The Massachusetts Department of Education could improve the situation by requiring WLL for high school graduation, and state universities could increase WL requirements to increase the visibility of the importance of WLL for employment.

Employers, in particular, need to change to fix the disconnect between the demand and SP. The lack of visibility of WL requests/requirements in job postings makes it very difficult both for students to recognize the value of WLL and for the WL gap to be filled. Employers should include multilingual information in job postings. Simply including that bilingual/multilingual applicants are preferred would be beneficial, but including which WLs are needed would be most useful.

Suggestions for Future Research

This research provides several avenues for further exploration. Focusing more specifically on individual factors rather than the sample as a whole could yield interesting results. Comparing the ED between different industries could show where the greatest need for WLs is, so students entering those industries could pursue their WL further and be better prepared. Further research could also compare ED between WLs to see which languages are most important for employers. If the languages with the highest demand are not being taught in school, this could have impacts on the curriculum so students can be best prepared to enter the workforce.

Additionally, SP could be compared between different factors. SP could be compared between industries to see if the career the student intends to pursue impacts how highly they value WLL. It could also be compared between WLs to see if certain languages are generally more appreciated by students than others, specifically if the prevalence of the language in the student's community affects how highly they value learning it.

Further research could be done with a different method for finding the ED, particularly by reaching out individually to employers to ask about the demand and more specifically about which languages are valued greatest. This could also gain information on employers specific to Massachusetts, which was the location of the study, while the statistics and LinkedIn method were both based on the country at large.

Conclusion

This study filled a gap in the research on student emotions in WLL. It researched the previously unexplored area of SP, or the value students hold for WLL in employment, in addition to demographic variables of the location Massachusetts and high school participants. The research found that students hold greater value for WLs than employers do, but this is tempered by the lack of priority given to it for high school graduation, access to state universities, and presence in job postings.

This information clarifies where there was previously a lack of information on how students find WLL important for employment. While students enjoyed WLL, it was not a priority for getting a job, seeing as it was most commonly ranked fifth most important of seven subjects. Students were most strongly in agreement about the WLL experience in areas of enjoyment rather than in appreciating the process or the language. This implies that while WLL may be fun as a pastime, it does not seem applicable in everyday life for students.

This is likely because of the scarcity of visibility of WL opportunities outside of high school. Massachusetts state universities require only 2 years of high school WL courses, and most job postings do not include information requesting multilingualism. This makes it very hard to impress upon students the need for WLL as, though there is WL demand, it isn't apparent in the job market.

Employers have a moderate demand for WLs, and students have a high enjoyment of WLL but a low prioritization of it for employment. This illustrates a disconnect between these two areas that could be filled by increasing or emphasizing WLL requirements in high school and higher education and including more information about multi-

lingual wants/needs from employers in job postings. By changing these factors, students may gain a higher appreciation for the value of WLL in the real world, and therefore pursue it further, which will benefit both them and the employers in need of WLL skills.

Limitations

One limitation of the research is the sample size. There were only 62 usable responses to the survey, which is not a very large sample, and therefore may not be entirely reliable to represent students from all across Massachusetts. These students were generally very good students as well, as 90.4% of them had a usual grade of 80-100. If more academically challenged students participated, this could affect the SP. Also, only three languages were represented in the sample, while there are 16 WLs taught in Massachusetts (K, 2020; Explorers Team, 2018). To get a full picture of SP in Massachusetts, all WLs should be represented, so this means that the sample did not completely represent high school language learners in Massachusetts.

Another limitation is the currency of the ED score. The statistics were taken from a report from 2019. This means that the statistics could be somewhat out of date, considering that they were from three years ago. In addition, it was published before the COVID-19 pandemic, which could have greatly altered them. Updated statistics would be preferable.

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