

Students' Experience with the Trilingual Program: A Survey Report

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Abstract

In this paper, the authors introduce and discuss the findings gathered from a 2017 online survey targeting students studying under the Trilingual Program at the University of Tokyo. The aim of the study was to examine how students experience the program in terms of their motivation and to identify areas where the program could be potentially improved. The study's design took into consideration the program's overarching goals, teachers' and students' voices, and general issues pertaining to third language education in Japan. Completed by 165 students, the survey aids in determining the general demographics of the program's learners, including the reasons for program withdrawal; the rationale behind the choice of the third language; and the student participation in the overseas travel offerings. Due to the authors' particular interest in the dynamics of students' motivation, both motivating and demotivating factors such as various obstacles are closely examined in order to identify potential areas of improvement. Finally, the students' direct comments and suggestions are also considered. While the paper introduces many issues relevant to updating program policy, this study's four major recommendations are related to streamlining/unifying the program's process and requirements; enhancing integration of English; optimizing workload/benefit balance for science students; and reevaluating the program's curriculum with the aim to strengthen the cultural/social component.

Keywords: *TLP (Trilingual Program), third language education, student motivation, program design.*

1 Introduction and background

1.1 *Third language education in Japan*

This paper presents and discusses the results of an online survey targeting students participating in the “Trilingual Program” at the University of Tokyo. The survey was conducted by TLP teachers¹ in order to learn about students’ experience with the program following its expansion to include four languages in 2016.

The Trilingual Program (TLP) refers to a program focused on the education of students learning to speak a third language in addition to their native language (Japanese) and English, their second language. The program was initiated by the University of Tokyo and aspired to promote plurilingual education beyond the traditional Japanese-English dyad. In Japan, mastering English has traditionally received great attention while other languages have often remained marginalized in the education system, with the exception of programs under foreign language faculties.

The following issues have been reported regarding third language education in Japan: ideological dilemmas pertaining to foreign language education in general (Butler, 2007), the “hegemony” of English (Kubota, 2015), and the general post-Meiji trend to diminish rather than expand third-language learning opportunities (Sensui, 2009). Previous research has also mentioned Japan’s present-day overemphasis on regarding language learning as a tool for career development rather than as an opportunity to learn about other cultures and broaden horizons (Hasegawa, 2013; Sensui, 2009). Secondary education issues include an insufficient number of schools offering third language classes as well as their reliance on non-tenured teachers to provide third language instruction to pupils (Hasegawa, 2013). Pupils are not sufficiently motivated as these languages are not relevant to their university entrance exams (Hasegawa, 2013). At the university level, there is a reportedly insufficient number of classes offered for acquiring a third language, and the inability to master the language within the given hours in turn demotivates the learners (Iwasaki, 2001). A further university-level third language education issue concerns an excessive number of students per class (Sensui, 2009).

The university language program discussed below has been implemented to overcome a wide range of issues pertaining to third language education in Japan, thus aiming to serve as a benchmark for the future development of similar programs. The University of Tokyo’s program strives to achieve a balanced learning of two foreign languages (i.e., English as the second and another language as the third) in addition to students’ major. As such, students’ ability to speak several foreign languages emerges as an additional strength and provides the learners with a competitive edge in the global market.

Real-time examination of how students experience this program can help provide further insights pertaining to the future of third language education in Japan.

¹ The survey was developed by the authors of this paper (from the Russian TLP and German TLP respectively) in collaboration with Qian Wang from the Chinese TLP and Julien Agaesse from the French TLP. The authors also thank the TLP committee for endorsing the project.

1.2 *The TLP Program*

The TLP program of the University of Tokyo was launched in 2013, at which time the only third language offered was Chinese. French, German, and Russian were added in 2016, while in 2018 Korean was added to the program and is to be followed by Spanish in 2019. Every year a new group of first-year students begins their studies under the TLP program and continues for three semesters (a year and a half) for French, German, and Russian and for eight semesters (four years) in the case of Chinese.² Students' eligibility to join the program depends on their English entrance exam score, as only the top 10% are offered the opportunity to join the program.

During the first semester of the program, students are to attend 5 classes per week (2 grammar, 2 intensive, and 1 practice) and thereby obtain 10 credits. Intensive and/or practice classes are usually taught by teachers who are native speakers. During the second semester, students attend 4 classes and 3 classes during the third semester. The grammar classes are not necessarily TLP-specific and are sometimes taught in language classes together with non-TLP students.³ Overseas trips are offered as part of the program as rewards for well-performing students. Students are evaluated following each semester, and some must withdraw from the program midway if they fail to achieve the required score. Simultaneously, new high-achieving students who took classes on the target language as part of other courses can join the TLP program at the beginning of the second and third semesters.

For example, in 2016, the number of students enrolled in each language of the TLP was as follows: Chinese – 63, French – 40, German – 32, and Russian – 14. In 2017, 78 students obtained a TLP program completion certificate, with 29 in Chinese (including one 4th year student), 28 in French, 12 in German, and 9 in Russian.

The Chinese TLP program commenced in 2013, and at the time of the survey (October 2017) this program's first-year students were the fifth cohort of Chinese learners under the TLP. In contrast, the French, German, and Russian TLP programs were launched in 2016, so while at the time of the survey these programs' first-year students were the second cohort of learners under the TLP, the second-year students constituted the only seniors in the program.

Tables 1-3 provide an overview of the number of students who enrolled in and dropped out of the French, German, and Russian TLP since the program started. The survey revealed differences in circumstances between students of humanities and students of sciences, and therefore both groups are shown separately. It is also interesting to note the existence of different proportions of humanities/sciences students in each of the languages.⁴

² During the first two years of studying at the University of Tokyo, the students are split into those who belong to Humanities and those who belong to Sciences, each following their respective curriculum, albeit in the frameworks of general education course in the College of Arts and Sciences. After having completed this so-called junior phase, the students choose their specialization and transfer to the relevant faculties.

³ The Chinese and Russian TLP programs offer a TLP-specific grammar class for TLP students which is not shared with non-TLP students.

⁴ Unfortunately, we were not aware of the different conditions of science and humanities' students when developing the survey. Thus, the influence of specific circumstances is only revealed if the students mention their affiliation to one of these two courses in the free comments.

Table 1: Enrollment and dropping out of students in the French TLP

French	1st cohort						2nd cohort					
	2016 spring		2016 autumn		2017 spring		2017 spring		2017 autumn		2018 spring	
	Hum	Sc										
Enrolled	17	20	5	-	3	1	22	16	3	1	-	1
Dropped out	4	2	2	9	1	-	7	4	6	-		
Finished program					18	10						
Obtained TLP certificate					18	10						

Table 2: Enrollment and dropping out of students in the German TLP

German	1st cohort						2nd cohort					
	2016 spring		2016 autumn		2017 spring		2017 spring		2017 autumn		2018 spring	
	Hum	Sc										
Enrolled	11	21	1	2	-	1	9	20	1	2	1	1
Dropped out	3	5	1	7	-	4	3	5	1	2		
Finished program					8	8						
Obtained TLP certificate					6	6						

Table 3: Enrollment and dropping out of students in the Russian TLP

Russian	1st cohort						2nd cohort*					
	2016 spring		2016 autumn		2017 spring		2017 spring		2017 autumn		2018 spring	
	Hum	Sc										
Enrolled	9	5	2	-	1	1	5	8	1	2	1	1
Dropped out	2	2	-	-	-	-	0	3	-	-		
Finished program					9	3						
Obtained TLP certificate					7	2						

*2nd cohort numbers (Table 3) were revised on September 30, 2019 because of a misprint.

In the case of Chinese, usually two thirds of the students study humanities and one-third study sciences, while during some years (e.g., 2016), the number of sciences and humanities students was the same. The Chinese dropout rate is approximately one third each year.

Because the program requires an ongoing ability to advance the learning of English, in order to obtain the TLP certificate students must excel not only at their third language (Chinese, French, German, or Russian) but must also maintain a high score in English.⁵ If they fail to remain among the best 10% of English students, they must take the external IELTS exam and achieve 7.0 points or more in order to qualify for the certificate.

⁵ TLP students participate in regular English classes with other non-TLP students, as there are no special English classes as part of the TLP program.

The aim of the survey presented in this paper was to evaluate whether the program’s established goals receive organic implementation and to determine which potential improvements could further enhance the application of the program’s principles while sustaining students’ motivation.

2 Demographics

The anonymous survey was conducted between October 15 and 27 of 2017 and consisted of 22 questions combining multiple-choice, multiple-answer, and open-ended questions and required approximately 10 minutes of respondents’ time. All questions were compulsory and thus could not be intentionally skipped. Initially, 176 answers were obtained, but the sample amounted to 165 responses following data cleaning.⁶ The criteria for data-cleaning regarded opting out of the survey before answering the question inquiring about which language program (Chinese, German, French, or Russian TLP) the respondent belonged to. Following data-cleaning, the response completion rate amounted to 93%, as some respondents chose to opt out of the survey during a later stage, but their answers were nevertheless included in the analysis.

The demographic characteristics of the respondents are found in Table 4 below.

Table 4: Demographic characteristics of the sample (N=160)

Year		Language		Still taking TLP classes ⁷	
				Yes 79 (49%)	No 81 (51%)
1 st year	81 (50.5%)	Chinese	21 (26%)	21 (100%)	-
		French	26 (32%)	25 (96%)	1 (4%)
		German	19 (23%)	18 (95%)	1 (5%)
		Russian	15 (19%)	14 (93%)	1 (7%)
2 nd year	67 (42%)	Chinese	15 (22%)	1 (7%)	14 (93%)
		French	16 (24%)	-	16 (100%)
		German	24 (36%)	-	24 (100%)
		Russian	12 (18%)	-	12 (100%)
3 rd year	8 (5%)	Chinese	8 (100%)	-	8 (100%)
4 th year	4 (2.5%)	Chinese	4 (100%)	-	4 (100%)

⁶ Among the 165 respondents, 5 second-year students did not belong to the TLP program but were allowed to join the TLP trip(s) together with the Russian TLP students due to their exceptional results. These five students only answered the trip-related questions, hence in other instances the overall number of survey respondents amounts to 160.

⁷ A few second-year students misunderstood the question and indicated that they were still taking TLP classes when the survey was conducted, which was technically impossible as such classes were not available except for the Chinese TLP. In the table, these responses are (correctly) counted as “No” (not anymore).

Among the first-year students, three indicated that they were no longer taking TLP classes. This means that they either opted out or dropped out from the program after the first semester of the first year. In contrast, none of the third- or fourth-year students who participated in the survey were still enrolled in the TLP program, as they all have either completed the program or opted/dropped out at some point in the past.

Regarding the 73 students responding that they were no longer taking TLP classes, we asked whether they completed the program or opted/dropped out of it, and Table 5 illustrates the results. The 19 respondents who indicated not completing the program were further asked about the reasons, which are shown in Table 6. Table 5 in particular clearly shows that some respondents who had completed the relevant TLP program (e.g., had attended the classes with reasonable regularity and passed the final tests) and were eligible to receive a TLP completion certificate on the basis of their TLP program score were nonetheless ineligible for certification due to their English score. Because the survey occurred while some students were still taking their IELTS exams or were otherwise unsure about their final third language and/or English classes' scores, 27.39% of respondents indicated that they “did not know” whether they would be eligible for the TLP certificate.

Table 5: “I am not in the TLP Program anymore, because...” (Q3), (N=73)

Status of former TLP students	Total 73 (100%)	Chinese 26 (100%)	French 15 (100%)	German 24 (100%)	Russian 8 (100%)
I completed the full TLP Program, but I do not know yet whether I am eligible for the TLP certificate	20 (27%)	4 (15%)	7 (47%)	6 (25%)	3 (38%)
... and received/will receive the TLP certificate	28 (38%)	16 (62%)	6 (40%)	6 (25%)	-
... but did/will not receive a TLP certificate due to my TLP classes score	-	-	-	-	-
... but did/will not receive the TLP certificate due to my English exam score	6 (8%)	2 (8%)	-	2 (8%)	2 (25%)
I did not complete the full TLP program	19 (26%)	4 (15%)	2 (13%)	10 (42%)	3 (38%)

Table 6 provides information regarding the reasons for withdrawal from the program before completion (e.g., attending classes for three semesters (more for Chinese) with reasonable regularity and passing the final tests). Multiple answers were possible in this question so the resulting number of responses exceeds the actual number of self-reported drop-outs shown in the first row of the table (19 students).⁸ The majority of responses (27 of 30) are provided by second-year students, although

⁸ The percentages in the second column relate to the number of respondents, since we were interested in how many students chose the answer rather than the proportion between the answers chosen.

the actual withdrawal might have occurred during their first year in the program. Unless stated otherwise, the responses in the table are from second-year students.

Table 6: “Why did you opt/drop out from the TLP program?” (Q4), (N=19, multiple answers possible)

Reasons for Leaving the Program	Total 19 (100%)	Chinese 4	French 2	German 10	Russian 3
TLP program did not meet my expectations	3 (16%)	1		1	1
TLP program was too demanding	5 (26%)	1	1	2	1
My "bukatsu" was too demanding	5 (26%)			4	1
I started working part time	1 (5%)			1	
I had many other obligations	3 (16%)	3			
I did not meet the required TLP class score	2 (11%)		1		1
I did not meet the required score in English	2 (11%)			1	1
I left/am leaving the University of Tokyo/ took a leave of absence	4 (22%)		1 (1 st y.)	2	1 (1 st y.)
Other (please specify) ⁹	5 (26%)	1 (3 rd y.)		4	

While inherent factors were mentioned in 8 instances, such as the program’s failure to meet respondents’ expectations or being too demanding, external factors (such as *bukatsu* activities, part-time job, or other, including academic obligations) also played a considerable role.¹⁰

3 Reasons for language choice

In the first of a series of questions related to the motivation of students in the TLP program, we asked what determined their choice of language. This question resulted in responses from 160 respondents with language distribution as follows: 48 Chinese, 43 French, 42 German, and 27 Russian. The reasons provided by the students broadly varied, and because some students chose several reasons, the number of total responses exceeds 160 in Table 7 below. Discussion follows the table.

⁹ Others: “I lost motivation” (3), “I had to take another class”, “I didn’t see the meaning of the certificate”.

¹⁰ See Chapter 3 on motivation for a detailed discussion of the factors related to dropping out as well as an analysis of the comments provided in the “Others” section.

Table 7: “Why did you choose that particular language?” (Q7), (N=160, multiple answers possible)

Reasons for Language Choice	Total 160 (100%)	Chinese 48 (100%)	French 43 (100%)	German 42 (100%)	Russian 27 (100%)	
No specific reason	7 (4%)	1 (2%)	2 (5%)	2 (5%)	2 (7%)	
Only option/Language of first choice not available	15 (9%)	12 (25%)	1 (2%)	2 (5%)	-	
General interest	18 (11%)	3 (6%)	6 (14%)	5 (12%)	4 (15%)	
Interest in the language:	Linguistic interest	13 (8%)	3 (6%)	3 (7%)	2 (5%)	5 (19%)
	Previous knowledge of the language	10 (6%)	3 (6%)	5 (12%)	1 (2%)	1 (4%)
	Similarity to 1 st or 2 nd language	8 (5%)	1 (2%)	2 (5%)	5 (12%)	-
Social influence	15 (9%)	7 (15%)	3 (7%)	4 (10%)	1 (4%)	
Interest in the country:	Culture and cultural image	35 (22%)	2 (4%)	12 (28%)	8 (19%)	13 (48%)
	Academia	23 (14%)	-	2 (5%)	18 (43%)	3 (11%)
Future possibilities and career	45 (28%)	21 (44%)	17 (40%)	5 (12%)	2 (7%)	
Classes’ features and international trip	8 (5%)	3 (6%)	1 (2%)	3 (7%)	1 (4%)	

In the following section, we elaborate on some of the reasons provided by students in their comments.

- **Only option/General interest**

Of the 15 students who indicated that they were not specifically interested in the language of the program they chose, 10 students of Chinese noted that this was the only option available when they joined the TLP program. Five students would have preferred to learn another language which was not available.

Sixteen respondents stated that they favored a certain language or the country where it is spoken without providing concrete details. Common statements included “it seemed interesting”, “I was fascinated”, “it is unique to me”, and “it best fits my image of myself”.

- **Linguistic interest**

Thirteen students reported having a linguistic interest in the language. Many stated that they wished to learn a language of a particular language family or that they were interested in the language’s writing system. In the case of Russian, some reported its complexity to be an attractive factor. Ten respondents stated previous knowledge of a language as a reason for its choice, while a language’s simplicity and similarity to Japanese or English were stated by 8 students. Within this category, the most frequent response regarded German’s similarity to English.

- **Social influence**

Another set of reasons was related to an interest in the language due to the influence of one's ethnic background, family, friends, and greater social connections. Statements from 15 respondents fit this category, where either the students' family members or the students themselves used to live in or travel to the country of the studied language and had friends there. In some instances students' parents or grandparents spoke or even taught the language in question, while in others the respondents' choice was driven by a friend's invitation to learn the language together.

- **Future possibilities and career**

The majority of responses could be broadly classified as relating to future possibilities and career. Some respondents mentioned career opportunities or broadening horizons in concrete terms while others more generally referred to the importance of the studied language or country. This category included 28% of the respondents, comprising 44% of students of Chinese and 40% of French but only 12% of German and 7% of Russian. Each of the groups entailed characteristic features: China was often mentioned regarding its closeness to and economic ties with Japan which would require conversing in Chinese. French was often mentioned as one of the United Nations' official languages that is also used in many African countries and was thus viewed to be important in diplomatic careers. In the case of German, the central reason concerned future careers with science, especially medicine and pharmaceuticals. Finally, in the case of Russian, the reasons quoted included interest in the greater post-Soviet region and the importance of Russian in that region. Additionally, because few people in Japan choose to learn Russian, a competitive advantage was also reported as a reason to study this language.

The responses show that while Chinese and French are viewed as important languages in a globalized world, German and Russian seem to be mostly perceived as historically relevant. Although this is mainly due to the countries' general image in Japanese society, the German and Russian language departments might benefit from communicating a more up-to-date image of the countries and their languages.

- **Culture and the country's image**

Thirty-five respondents chose various reasons pertaining to interest in the country's culture and arts or in its cultural image. Students of Russian (13 respondents) noted the country's music, ballet, and arts. Several respondents mentioned that their reason was the perception of Russian as being "very different". Among 12 students of French in this category, many mentioned French food and the general beauty and "coolness" of the French culture and language. For German, the 8 students in this category referred to the country's culture in general, its classical music, and food. In the case of Chinese (2 students), one student mentioned the country's culture in general and its food. The second student of Chinese mentioned a desire to combat the negative image of China in Japan through learning the language and promoting the country's positive image.

- **Academia**

Another large category with 23 total respondents was related to academic purposes, where students indicated that the studied language was useful in or associated with a certain area of study, such as humanities or sciences. German was predominant in this category, with 18 students mentioning

philosophy, literature, history, law, engineering, physics, and medicine as reasons for choosing the language. Three students of Russian referred to Russian history, politics, and architecture while two students of French mentioned science and literature. There were no students of Chinese in this category.

- **Classes' features**

Eight students mentioned various reasons pertaining to the distinguishing features of the relevant classes, where 2 students of Chinese chose the language because the Chinese TLP program held the longest teaching record; 1 student of French selected French due to peers' claims about the classes' engaging atmosphere; and 1 student of Russian chose Russian due to the comparatively small number of students in classes. The possibility of traveling abroad more than once as part of the program's overseas offerings was explicitly mentioned by 4 students, including 1 studying Chinese and 3 studying German.

4 Motivating factors

As explained in the introduction, the TLP program is considerably competitive and requires extensive time and effort from the students. Throughout the program, the teachers noticed fluctuations regarding the degree of student motivation. This was a temporary occurrence for some students, while for others it resulted in an inability to devote the necessary effort to the program. As such, motivation emerged as one of the crucial aspects that we wanted to assess by this survey in order to understand which factors play a role in both increasing and decreasing the students' motivation.

We asked the students whether they experienced an increase or decrease in motivation at some point in the program and asked for specific reasons. The factors that increased motivation, which were experienced by 101 (63%) of respondents, are summarized in Table 8 below. Some respondents reported more than one factor, and as a result there are 115 responses in this category. The percentages refer to the total of 101 respondents.

Table 8: "If your motivation increased at some point during the TLP program, what was the reason for that?" (Q9), (N=101, multiple answers possible)

Reasons for an increase in motivation	Total 101 (100%)	Chinese 25 (100%)	French 26 (100%)	German 28 (100%)	Russian 22 (100%)
Trip	42 (42%)	10 (40%)	7 (27%)	19 (68%)	6 (27%)
Improvement of language skills	19 (18%)	4 (16%)	5 (19%)	6 (21%)	4 (18%)
Classmates	15 (15%)	5 (20%)	5 (19%)	2 (7%)	4 (18%)
Teacher/class atmosphere	12 (12%)	1 (4%)	3 (12%)	2 (7%)	6 (27%)
Meeting native speakers	6 (6%)	2 (8%)	1 (4%)	1 (4%)	2 (9%)
Learning about country/culture	6 (6%)	1 (4%)	-	3 (11%)	2 (9%)
Tests/exams	6 (6%)	3 (12%)	3 (12%)	-	-

Table 8: (continued)

Reasons for an increase in motivation	Total	Chinese	French	German	Russian
	101 (100%)	25 (100%)	26 (100%)	28 (100%)	22 (100%)
Time: 2 nd semester	3 (3%)	1 (4%)	1 (4%)	1 (4%)	-
Others ¹¹	6 (6%)	-	4 (15%)	-	2 (9%)

The results show that tendencies are similar among the languages,¹² with the top three choices including such factors as the overseas trip offered by the TLP program,¹³ students' realization of their improved skills, and being surrounded by engaged classmates.

The overseas trip emerged as the major factor influencing students' motivation, as 42% of the students in this category (corresponding to 26% of 160 respondents) mentioned it and many referred to the prospect of taking the trip. Those who had already participated in the trip mentioned having enjoyed the country, its culture, and interaction with the local people. Some also reported realization that they needed to further improve their skills in the relevant foreign language in order to more effectively communicate. One student mentioned that the trip provided motivation not only to learn the language in question but to also advance his/her English abilities in order to enhance potential for international communication.

The second important factor mentioned was the students' realization of their improved skills in the language (19% of students fell in this category). The students mostly mentioned the increased understanding of their teachers but also the ability to communicate with their classmates in the foreign language and to better comprehend written texts.

The third factor of importance, mentioned by 15% of the students in this category, was related to students' interaction with their classmates, where studying together with engaged and motivated peers positively influenced their own motivation.

The next factor was the teacher in question and/or the atmosphere in the class. Twelve percent of students in this category stated that they experienced an increase in motivation because their teachers were efficient and/or kind or because the general in-class atmosphere was cheerful and thus motivating.

The three following factors claimed the same number of respondents each, where 6% of students in this category were motivated by meeting native speakers, both in Japan and while abroad, by learning about the country and its culture in-class, outside of it, while on the trip abroad, and by studying for tests and exams.

¹¹ Others include some highly personal reasons such as enjoying the sound of the language, practicing writing, and songs.

¹² An exception was teacher/class atmosphere, which was higher in the case of Russian.

¹³ At first glance, the importance of the trip for the increase in motivation shown in Table 9 seems to differ with respect to the languages (27% for French and Russian, 40% for Chinese, and 68% for German). However, the higher percentage of German is related to the fact that German is the only language program that offers a trip during the first semester, meaning that 71% of the German TLP students had already participated in the trip at the time of the survey compared to 31% of the students of the other languages. For the students of Chinese, French, and Russian who had already participated in the trip, 66% percent (19 of 29) mention the trip as well.

In addition, 10% of students in this category mentioned a variety of miscellaneous motivational factors, from inspiration due to how beautiful the language sounds to excitement resulting from described accomplishments of seniors in the TLP program who have acquired solid command of the language in question.

5 The overseas trip

As already mentioned in the previous section, the overseas trip plays a major role in the motivation of the TLP students. Forty percent (64 of 160 students) cite the trip as one of the reason(s) for joining the TLP program and 25% state that their motivation increased when looking forward to or participating in the trip.

We therefore include detailed information about the trips and students' evaluation of their features.

5.1 Information about the trips

The overseas trips are organized by the language departments and differ in length and content. The numbers of trips may also vary by year. The trips are partially funded by the University of Tokyo. The information about the trips for the French, German, and Russian TLP programs is for 2016-2017, since these programs commenced in 2016.

Students of the Chinese TLP program can take a one-week trip to Taiwan following the second semester. A three-week trip to Nanking is organized for 20 students after the 3rd semester as well as a one-week trip to Beijing for 6 to 10 students during the 3rd and 4th years. During all trips, students participate in language classes and sightseeing excursions.

The French TLP program in 2016-2017 offered 13 students a 14-day trip to Paris and Lyon after the second semester, where students had workshops, met with French students from different universities (Lyon 3, Sciences Po, INALCO, Paris 8) and visited metropolitan or governmental agencies (AirParif, ANSES). The sightseeing program included places such as the Eiffel Tower and Versailles. After the 3rd semester, 13 students participated in a 14-day trip to Angers entailing 40 hours of language lessons in different classes and at different levels as well as three excursions together with other international students (Mont Saint Michel, Saint-Malo, and Chateau of the Loire).

Fourteen students of the German TLP program participated in a summer school (10 days) held in a conference center in Bonn after the first semester, with another 14 students visiting a winter school (14 days) after the second semester. The program was similar for both groups and included language lessons in the morning (40 lessons), two academic workshops, one workshop and dinner with German students, guided tours with discussions to the broadcaster Deutsche Welle, the museum Haus der Geschichte, and the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), three or four half-day sightseeing excursions, and 2 summer/4 winter sightseeing daytrips.

The Russian TLP program offered a 10-day trip to Saint Petersburg and Moscow with a cultural focus on the "Imperial Saint-Petersburg" after the second semester, which included 20 hours of language lessons, an academic excursion, and three exchange meetings (with local students, middle school pupils, and ballet academy staff). The trip also featured extensive sightseeing in Saint

Petersburg (Hermitage, Isaac Cathedral, Petropavlovskaya Fortress, etc.), a sightseeing-only trip to Moscow, and attending a ballet performance and concert (philharmonic hall). After the third semester there was a 17-day trip to Saint-Petersburg (titled “Literary Saint-Petersburg”) which comprised 40 hours of language lessons, four academic excursions, an exchange program with local students and another with the Institute of Russian Literature researchers, sightseeing (Dostoevsky Museum, Blok museum, Russian museum, Savior on Blood Church, etc.), and three cultural performances (ballet, drama theatre, philharmonic hall). Each of the two trips included 11 students.

5.2 *Reasons for not joining the trip*

Sixty-two students claimed participation in one or more trips at the time of the survey. Of the 86 students who reported not joining the trip, 61 lacked the opportunity to do so since no trip had yet been offered since beginning the TLP program.¹⁴ Of the remaining 25 students, 14 could not join due to other obligations at the time of the trip(s), 5 students mentioned costs as the reason for not taking the trip, 5 said they failed to qualify for the trip, and 1 student was not interested.

Table 9: Reasons for not taking the overseas trip(s) (Q17), (N=86)

Reasons for not taking the trip	Total
	86 (100%)
No opportunity (yet)	61 (71%)
Schedule/other obligations	14 (16%)
Costs	5 (6%)
Not qualified	5 (6%)
No interest	1 (1%)

5.3 *Evaluation of the trips*

Regarding the question examining what students gained from the trip, a majority answered that their knowledge about the culture of their host country increased, closely followed by improvement of language skills, growing closer with their peers, and interaction with local people.

¹⁴ Some students skipped this question, meaning that the total of respondents is only 148.

Table 10: “What did you take from the trip?” (Q21), (N=62, multiple answers possible)

Benefits of the trip	Total 62 (100%)	Chinese 15 (100%)	French 8 (100%)	German 29 (100%)	Russian 10 (100%)
Improved my language skills	48 (77%)	11 (69%)	7 (88%)	21 (72%)	9 (90%)
Learnt about culture	52 (84%)	14 (88%)	5 (63%)	23 (79%)	10 (100%)
Became closer with peers	44 (71%)	15 (94%)	5 (63%)	19 (66%)	5 (50%)
Enjoyed interaction with local people	40 (65%)	12 (75%)	6 (75%)	16 (55%)	6 (60%)
Other ¹⁵	3 (5%)	-	-	2 (7%)	1 (1%)

Differences between the languages can be related to differences in trip design offered by each program. For example, the high percentage of Russian students answering that they learned about culture can be explained by the Russian overseas trip program’s strong focus on culture. Similarly, the Chinese trip includes lessons on Chinese culture and sightseeing to historical sites. The comparatively low percentage of German students who answered that their language skills were improved by the trip might be related to the fact that the first trip to Germany occurs after the first semester, which is a stage where students have not yet acquired sufficient skills to communicate with native speakers. Moreover, since not all students participate in the trip, the focus of the language classes in the host country must lie on practice rather than progression, otherwise there would be too great of a difference in ability the following semester between students who took the trip and those who did not.

Table 11: “Did the trip meet your expectations?” (Q20), (N=62, multiple answers possible)

Satisfaction with the trip	All 62 (100%)	Chinese 15 (100%)	French 8 (100%)	German 29 (100%)	Russian 10 (100%)
Expectations fully met	38 (61%)	7 (47%)	6 (75%)	15 (52%)	6 (60%)
Expectations met but not enough language learning	12 (19%)	5 (33%)	-	6 (21%)	1 (10%)
Expectations met but not enough sightseeing	7 (11%)	-	-	6 (21%)	1 (10%)
Expectations met but not enough exchange with local students	18 (29%)	5 (33%)	1 (13%)	7 (24%)	4 (40%)
Expectations met but not enough academic workshops etc.	9 (15%)	2 (13%)	2 (25%)	3 (10%)	2 (20%)
Other ¹⁶	6 (10%)	-	-	5 (17%)	1 (10%)

¹⁵ Other: “Came to like the country more” (German, Russian), “opportunity to talk with teachers” (German).

¹⁶ Other: “Due to the size of the group, the students use Japanese most of the time”, “the trip took place too early so that the language skills of the students where not sufficient”, “some workshops were too difficult for students with a different subject”, “there were not enough visits to major cities”, “the language classes were good but too similar to the classes in Japan”, and “there was not enough freedom during the trip”.

As Table 11 shows, the trips met the expectations of most students, however 29% found that there was not enough exchange with local students, 19% would have preferred a stronger focus on language learning, 15% would have liked more academic programs, and 11% preferred to have more opportunities for sightseeing. Again, differences between the languages can be observed.

The responses show that, for many TLP students, the trip is the highlight of the TLP program and importantly provides the opportunity to communicate with native speakers outside the classroom. Consequently, a number of students suggested introducing additional opportunities to study abroad into the program.

6 Obstacles while learning under the TLP program

6.1 Overview and Tables

This section discusses the obstacles experienced by students while studying under the TLP Program reported in the survey responses. Several questions gave students the opportunity to specify various issues they found to be problematic while being TLP students. The questions were:

Q4: Why did you drop out of the TLP Program?

Q8: Did your motivation decrease at some point during the TLP program? If yes: What was the reason for that?

Q11: Did the TLP Program meet your expectations? If no: The TLP program did not meet my expectations because...

Q12: Are/Were there any external obstacles for you to learn efficiently under the TLP program?

Most were multiple-choice questions with more than one possible answer and a field for those wishing to provide additional comments, however Q8 on motivation was an exception as it provided no predetermined answer choices and allowed the students to freely express their opinions. Moreover, the survey's final question (Q22: What do you think about the TLP program? Do you have any suggestions?) was another opportunity for students with concerns about the program to comment freely. Below are the tables corresponding to each of the questions above, followed by the discussion of the obstacles mentioned by students. The table summarizing answers to Q4 was already presented in Section 2 (Table 6).

- **Question 8**

Overall, 101 students reported no decrease in motivation, while 55 (35% of the 156 respondents who answered this question) stated that during some point of the program they felt decreased motivation. Of the latter, first-year students comprised the highest share (27 students).

Table 12: “If your motivation decreased at some point during the TLP program, what was the reason for that?” (Q8), (N=156, multiple answers possible)

Reasons for a decrease in motivation	Total	Chinese	French	German	Russian
	55 (100%)	13	14	13	15
Too difficult/fell behind	9 (16%)	1	1	4	3
Too much work	10 (18%)	1	4	2	3
Other obligations (not enough time)	3 (5%)			2	1
Classmates (dropouts/demotivating behavior)	6 (11%)	1	3	1	1
Overlapping classes	4 (7%)	2	2		
Schedule (1 st /5 th periods)	1 (2%)				1
Low English score	2 (4%)			1	1
Usefulness of the TLP certificate	2 (4%)	1			1
TLP not acknowledged by university	2 (4%)	1	1		
No follow-up courses after the third semester	1 (2%)		1		
No English TLP classes	1 (2%)	1			
Vacation without training	4 (7%)	3	1		
No trip	2 (4%)	1		1	
Other ¹⁷	5 (9%)		2		3

• **Question 11**

Only 10% (17 students) of this question’s 156 respondents stated that the program did not meet their expectations.

Table 13: “The TLP Program did not meet my expectations because...” (Q11), (N=156, multiple answers possible)

Reasons for unmet expectations	Total	Chinese	French	German	Russian
	17 (100%)	9	1	5	2
Too much homework	1 (6%)	1			
Too much focus on speaking	1 (6%)			1	
Not enough speaking	1 (6%)	1			
Too much focus on grammar	1 (6%)	1			
Too much focus on culture	1 (6%)	1			
Not enough focus on culture	2 (12%)	2			
Not enough focus on reading	1 (6%)			1	

¹⁷ Other: “forced to take classes which differ from my studying style”, “too demanding: unable to learn other languages beyond the third language and English”, “no special care for students entering half-way”, “learning goal is unclear”, “was not studying enough”, and “no special English programs for TLP students”.

Table 13 (continued)

Reasons for unmet expectations	Total	Chinese	French	German	Russian
	17 (100%)	9	1	5	2
Too many classes	8 (47%)	5		2	1
Not enough classes	1 (6%)	1			
Other ¹⁸	8 (47%)	3	1	2	2

• **Question 12**

Of 154 students who answered this question, only 21% (33 students) reported experiencing no obstacles, which means that the majority of students experienced some difficulties while studying under the TLP program.

Table 14: “Are/Were there any external obstacles for you to learn efficiently under the TLP program?” (Q12-1), (N=154)

Were there external obstacles?	Total	Chinese	French	German	Russian
	154 (100%)	44 (100%)	41 (100%)	42 (100%)	27 (100%)
No obstacles	33 (21%)	13 (30%)	7 (17 %)	10 (24%)	3 (11%)
Obstacles	121 (79%)	31 (70%)	34 (83%)	32 (76%)	24 (89%)

Table 15: “What were the external obstacles to learn efficiently under the TLP program?” (Q12-2), (N=121, multiple answers possible)

External obstacles	Total	Chinese	French	German	Russian
	121 (100%)	31 (100%)	41 (100%)	42 (100%)	27 (100%)
The classes’ schedule	67 (55%)	16 (51%)	21 (51%)	13 (31%)	17 (63%)
Too many TLP classes	15 (12%)	4 (13%)	1 (2%)	5 (12%)	5 (19%)
Other academic obligations	42 (35%)	11 (35%)	12 (29%)	11 (26%)	8 (30%)
Extra-curricular obligations (<i>bukatsu</i>)	34 (28%)	7 (23%)	10 (24%)	12 (29%)	5 (19%)
Maintaining the high English score	38 (31%)	13 (42%)	5 (12%)	9 (21%)	11 (41%)
Maintaining the high TLP score	12 (10%)	2 (6%)	5 (12%)	4 (10%)	1 (4%)
Other ¹⁹	13 (11%)	2 (6%)	7 (17%)	3 (7%)	1 (4%)

¹⁸ Other: “English too demanding” (2), “not enough English classes for a trilingual program”, “three semesters too short”, “not enough information in advance”, “no German follow-up classes”, “the program style did not agree with my personality”, and “too many classes, no time for wrap-up”.

¹⁹ Other: “workload too high”, “content of the program was not made clear in the beginning”, “constant high English scores/IELTS”, “no English classes”, and “no follow up classes”.

6.2 Discussion

- **Schedule-related obstacles**

Schedule-related obstacles were a dominant concern for students and thus comprised the majority of responses to the questions analyzed in this section. For example, the schedule-related obstacles were reported in Q12 with 67 responses, and students' comments revealed that this category of obstacles includes three aspects.

The first is related to the fact that classes are often held during the 1st and 5th periods. Some students reported finding it difficult to attend (especially if living far from the university) or remain alert during these timeframes.²⁰

The second aspect relates to the problem of classes overlapping with other optional subjects of interest to students. In general, the TLP program is crafted in a way to ensure that the TLP classes do not overlap with any mandatory courses, thus the 1st and 5th period offerings. However, some students reported the inability to enroll in optional classes due to TLP obligations as a demotivating factor. Consequently, some respondents suggested that students should be allowed to choose the TLP class that best fits their schedule.

The third aspect refers to the program's temporal design and includes a number of issues. Firstly, a number of students voiced their dissatisfaction with the fact that there were no follow-up courses offered after the third semester (with the exception of Chinese where classes continue for 4 years). Some also suggested that auxiliary courses should be embedded in the program during the summer and winter breaks. Secondly, several students were displeased with the situation in which TLP students of the same language program belonged to different grammar classes progressing at different speeds. As a result, students who followed a more moderate learning schedule found themselves unable to keep up with the pace of the intensive TLP course. Finally, some students were dissatisfied that the advanced-level thematic classes that are compulsory for second-year learners under some of the TLP divisions were not specifically designed for TLP and were thus mainly attended by students of more advanced levels.

- **Time-related obstacles**

Many students reported an inability to effectively time-manage their TLP studies both due to their other academic and/or extra-curricular obligations and due to the workload demands inherent to the TLP program. For example, 22 responses to Q8 and 91 responses to Q12 referred to various time-related issues.

The issue of balancing the TLP with other academic obligations may hold particular relevance to science students who generally have more classes. Although science students are exempt from one of the compulsory TLP classes, many nonetheless choose to attend to avoid falling behind their peers. One student particularly mentioned that it was difficult for him/her to maintain a healthy lifestyle due to the double burden of regular assignments along with the TLP tasks. In the comments section, some TLP students voiced suggestions to either reduce some university obligations outside the TLP

²⁰ Because the 1st period starts at 8:30 and 5th period finishes at 18:35, in some cases students have to stay on campus for more than 10 hours.

program or to reduce the number of TLP and English classes. Another suggestion was to move some TLP classes from the busy third semester (spring semester of the second year) to the fourth semester (autumn semester of the second year) when students have fewer classes to attend.

Extra-curricular obligations (student circle activities known as *bukatsu*) were also cited as an obstacle by a considerable number of respondents. In the student culture of Japan, many students attend sports events, and there were cases of students favoring *bukatsu* when its events (camps, tournaments, etc.) overlapped with TLP activities such as an overseas trip.

The students' (primarily first-year) comments revealed a perception of the program as requiring an extensive amount of studying. As a result, some students experienced an inability to keep up with the new material and felt that they were falling behind their peers.

- **Status of English in the TLP**

Students of the TLP are required to maintain a high English score (or otherwise pass an external IELTS exam with the score of 7.0) in order to receive a certificate of completion of the TLP program, even when excelling in learning their language of choice. Many students reported this requirement to be a problem, as in Q12 38 respondents (i.e., almost 25% of the 160 students who participated in the survey) explicitly named it as an obstacle. In general, the status of the English language in the TLP program is mentioned in many students' comments, which shows that English is not yet well integrated into the program. Some students state that although a high English score is required, there is a lack of offered English classes designed specifically for TLP students. One student explicitly mentioned that his/her English skills worsened during the program as s/he had little opportunity to practice English. Others stated a desire to not have to worry about having to obtain a required score in English, as they felt excited to dedicate all their energy to the learning of their new language of choice under the TLP.

- **Classmates**

Demotivation was found to be associated with classmates in some way for two highly different reasons. On one hand, students mentioned demotivation resulting from the change of class atmosphere when peers must leave the program, while on the other hand some respondents mentioned the demotivating behavior of some of their classmates as an obstacle. Such behavior may have been the case with students who primarily joined the program due to opportunity rather than personal aspirations. Due to the specificity of the program, it may be important to more closely monitor and address demotivating behavior in order to maintain a motivating atmosphere in the classroom and to foster healthy competition.

- **Status of the TLP program**

Several students mentioned feeling that the TLP program or language learning per se was not fully acknowledged/appraised across the university, since one is expected to first and foremost master one's specialty beyond the language learning. One student stated that he/she could have studied under the TLP with less anxiety if there had been greater intra-university appraisal of language learning.

Science students mentioned that the program's extensive workload did not translate into credits that substantially count towards one's so-called *shinfuri* score, a score which matters when students

choose their specialty during the second year of studies. While TLP credits are counted by the programs to which the students apply, these credits provide no advantage score-wise despite the increased time and effort invested in the program. Although the program grants a certificate to successful completers, this was not appealing enough for some students who were unsure about its possible uses.

- **Inability to participate in the trip**

Another quoted demotivating factor regarded failing to join the overseas trip both due to one’s inability to achieve a required passing score on the trip’s placement test and due to cancellation of the planned trip. Students of the German TLP also suggested that there should be a trip for the second-year students, as offered by the other languages under the TLP, rather than only for the first-year students.

- **Need for extra guidance**

Some students requested additional clarification regarding the program’s completion requirements, including both the TLP and the English language scores, which indicated that they experienced difficulty in understanding the program’s technical requirements. The need for guidance was also reported by some students who transferred to the TLP from regular, non-TLP language classes. Some of these students reported difficulty in keeping up with the TLP classes and indicated that a guidance session targeted to transferees would have been beneficial.

7 Students’ comments and suggestions

In the final question of the survey, students were given an opportunity to freely express their opinions about the program. Overall, 148 respondents left a comment. Of those, 65 (44%) of the commenters were explicitly positive about the TLP program. The program was praised for providing an “ideal environment” for targeted learning and for the “teachers’ enthusiasm”. As discussed in the previous section, some responses included critical remarks mainly referring to various obstacles experienced by students that prevented them from studying under the TLP program as effectively as initially envisioned. Finally, some comments contained suggestions regarding how students felt the program could be improved to better suit their needs as learners. Some of these suggestions are directly related to the obstacles experienced by students. The major suggestions are outlined following the table below.

Table 16: *Praise, criticism, and suggestions in the students’ final comments on the TLP (Q22), (N=148)*

Students’ comments and opinions	Total 148 (100%)	Chinese 42 (100%)	French 39 (100%)	German 41 (100%)	Russian 26 (100%)
Praise:	65 (44%)	15 (36%)	23 (59%)	21 (51%)	10 (38%)
Praise only	37 (25%)	11 (26%)	15 (38%)	6 (15%)	5 (19%)
Praise and comments/suggestions	24 (16%)	4 (10%)	8 (21%)	7 (17%)	4 (15%)
Positive despite obstacles	9 (6%)	-	-	8 (20%)	1 (4%)

Table 16 (continued)

Students' comments and opinions	Total 148 (100%)	Chinese 42 (100%)	French 39 (100%)	German 41 (100%)	Russian 26 (100%)
Criticism:	36 (25%)	5 (12%)	8 (21%)	18 (44%)	5 (19%)
Obstacles (including responses above)	26 (18%)	3 (7%)	4 (10%)	14 (34%)	5 (19%)
No/not enough long-time perspective	10 (7%)	2 (5%)	4 (10%)	4 (10%)	-
Suggestions	56 (38%)	19 (45%)	12 (31%)	17 (41%)	8 (31%)
No comment	17 (11%)	5 (12%)	2 (5%)	3 (7%)	7 (27%)

- **Make the program more transparent**

Although basic information about the program is available through its website and pamphlet, students felt they lacked information regarding the program's overall structure, content, and specific requirements to obtain the completion certificate. Some students suggested adding a more extensive introduction both to the program's specifics and the basics of the new language before program commencement.

- **Make the program more attainable for science students**

This group of suggestions included both propositions to reduce science students' obligations in their area of specialty in order to allow more time to devote to language-learning under the TLP and/or to reduce the TLP workload (either of the third language or English) for science students. Some respondents proposed that providing different (easier) materials specifically targeting science students may be beneficial.

- **Enhance/Restructure the program**

Suggestions in this area included adding culture classes allowing one to learn about the country and culture in question. Some recommendations also indicated a preference to increase conversational class offerings or to include additional dialogue sessions with native speakers. Some students also recommended utilizing smaller classes (about 10 students per class) for an improved learning environment.

Students suggested that it could also be beneficial to hold more events allowing information exchange with TLP students of other languages as well as with those who have already completed the course. Another suggestion was to provide interaction with native speakers residing in Japan through invitation by the university to attend classes or relevant events.

Besides the notion to introduce additional languages to the TLP Program, this group of suggestions included ideas concerning the program's diversification. For instance, some students suggested the program should continue beyond three semesters and that there also should be classes for students with previous knowledge of the target foreign language. Finally, some suggested that there should be a third-language program which does not depend on English.

- **Make the overseas trip more available**

The overseas trip under the TLP Program is currently available only to a portion of TLP students, as each of the TLP languages has its system of determining candidates based on either their mid-term tests or additional targeted tests. Students suggested that the trip should be available to everyone and that other opportunities to study in the country of the target language should be introduced as part of the program in order to provide additional options to consider. Students also suggested the TLP's overseas trip should ideally occur after the third semester when students have already acquired enough knowledge to use the language onsite after 18 months of learning.

It is evident that some suggestions are mutually contradictory; for instance, it is not possible to enhance the program's content through adding culture classes and additional overseas trips while simultaneously reducing its workload. Some suggestions, such as to reconsider the role of English in the TLP, oppose the basic principle of the TLP as a trilingual program, however they highlight the need to better integrate English into the program in order to ensure that it is seen to play a natural role. Furthermore, such suggestions advancing the program's transparency and enriching its social dimension would undoubtedly benefit both learners and teachers.

8 Recommendations and concluding remarks

On February 1, 2018, a TLP graduation ceremony was held at the University of Tokyo with 78 students from four languages: Chinese, French, German, and Russian. Students received program completion certificates, and students from each language gave three-minute speeches reflecting on their experiences during the TLP program. The program's ultimate goal was achieved, as within a period of 18 months students achieved the ability to communicate complex ideas fluently and before a large audience. Many students obtained high scores in external language examinations undertaken either independently or following the advice of their university teachers. Among the respondents of the survey, 27 students reported having passed one or several of the following exams: the HSK (levels 4-6), TCF (B2), DELF (B1), Goethe Zertifikat (B2), ТРКИ (B1), and 中検, 仏検, 独検, ロシア語検定 (levels 2-5), with twice as many indicating having plans to do so.

By conducting this survey we aimed to determine how to help students reach the above-mentioned goal in order to maximize their opportunities while experiencing the least possible amount of disturbances. To conclude, we focus on the main points raised by the students' responses and the ways these issues could be tackled, namely by providing (1) more information about the program, (2) better integration of English, (3) optimized workload/benefit balance for science students, and (4) by enhancing the social aspects of the program. The recommendations are as follows:

1. It is encouraged to streamline the process so that students are fully aware of the requirements for the program's completion and are thus able to make timely and weighted decisions. Furthermore, it may also be beneficial to unify the output source of information regarding the requirements and ensuring its accessibility.

2. Integration of English could be approached from multiple angles. Firstly, it should be considered whether TLP-specific English courses for TLP students could be offered to help students maintain their knowledge of English while learning the third language. If such classes simultaneously incorporate students from multiple TLP programs, students are likely to feel motivated by the opportunity to share their experiences with peers in a similar situation. Under such circumstances, cross-language communication is likely to be facilitated.
3. In its current form, the TLP program is beneficial score-wise for the students of humanities. When second-year students of humanities choose their specialization under the system of *shinfuri*, their TLP scores are fully reflected in the general score required to enter the relevant program. In contrast, for science students TLP scores are translated into a minimal score that does not aid their general score when applying to certain science programs. If the goal of the program is to sufficiently integrate science students and maintain its high standard, some measures must be taken to advocate to allow the program a more significant share in the *shinfuri* system related to science programs or to complement the program with an additional bonus which may serve to motivate its completion. Alternatively, a “TLP light” version for science students could be considered if the program continues to aim at all students in the future.
4. Due to the extensive workload of the TLP program, there may be little room to embed additional culture classes into the curriculum. Instead, offering talks, workshops, and movie screenings to address the socio-cultural aspect may be considered. Perhaps some of these events could simultaneously target all TLP students without being language-specific, which would satisfy the students’ wish for additional interaction with their similarly positioned peers.

In summary, the findings show that while the program succeeds in addressing the needs and hopes of the majority of the students, this has however not been the case for every learner. The experiences of the learners who found it difficult to study under the TLP could be contextualized when evaluated against the third language education situation in Japan, which is briefly addressed in the “Introduction and background” section of this paper. In this regard, our survey highlights two central problems: The primary problem relates to the difficulties students experience with establishing the overall purpose of learning the third language. In the absence of such a purpose, everyday struggles and technical issues are experienced as particularly discouraging. This situation corresponds to the ideological dilemmas of Japanese society regarding the positioning of third-language learning. Furthermore, some struggles can be explained by the fact that, for many students, this program is the first experience of learning a foreign language other than English. Lack of exposure to other foreign languages at the secondary education level complicates the process of new language acquisition at the university.

To solve these problems, third-language learning must be addressed in its totality while regarding one’s learning trajectory from childhood through university. In addition, a comprehensive discourse on the importance of third-language education should be adopted, as not only does third-language education facilitate one’s ability to learn more languages and develop plurilingual competence, it serves as a window to truly understand other cultures.

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- Expert discussions of the authors and collaborators

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