

**EXPLORING AND EXPANDING THROUGH ‘REAL-WORLD TASKS’: THE DIGITAL
PRACTICES OF GENERATION Z POST-SECONDARY FSL LEARNERS**

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Abstract

This exploratory case study examined the digital practices and literacies of Generation Z language learners and explored how these practices could be better addressed in the language classroom through "Real-World" tasks. The study was conducted within the theoretical framework of the Sociocultural Approach to Language Learning and the pedagogical framework of the Real-World Task-Based Language Teaching approach, with an emphasis on the eLANG citizen project. The data was analyzed through qualitative thematic analysis of both a corpus of learner final reports and two questionnaires, resulting in a detailed portrait of the learners' digital practices. The findings indicate that implementing real-world, task-based language learning projects that utilize Generation Z's pre-existing digital competencies can lead to improved language and digital literacy skills. Students reported enhancements in their oral expression, use of slang, and interaction with native speakers, as well as improvements in their understanding of hashtags, video planning and editing, and trend tracking. The students had multiple real-world, authentic interactions through the digital citizenship project, which enabled them to become enhanced digital citizens in FLS by formulating their identities, observing established communities and language users, participating in these communities directly, and learning in informal, gameful ways. It is proposed that utilizing the digital practices of Generation Z learners for language learning not only enhances the authenticity and relevance of the activities but also helps to achieve pedagogical objectives. This prepares learners for their future in a technology-saturated world and becoming effective members of society and is the next relevant step in sociocultural language pedagogy.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Over the past several decades, there have been significant advancements in the field of computer-assisted language learning (CALL). Online environments now “constitute primary settings through which routine constructions of identity are created, and curated” (Thorne et al., 2015, p. 216). In fact, various sociological studies have demonstrated that the Internet has “qualitatively transformed everyday communication and information practices in professional, educational, recreational, and interpersonal realms” (Thorne et al., 2015, p. 215).

The seamless evolution of communication tools and our increased dependence on digital technology has had a profound impact on how language learning is taking place in digital spaces (Gonulal, 2019). As Klimanova suggests, computer-mediated communication, or “any human communication that takes place between human beings via the instrumentality of computers” (Herring, 1996, p. 1), “has quickly [become] a medium through which language learners began to develop their second language (L2) skills and related competences, as well as engage in meaningful interactions with the target language communities” (Klimanova, 2021, p. 187). With the rising popularity of social media (SM) platforms that are “personalized, contextualized, and unrestricted by temporal and spatial constraints”, learning has become increasingly ubiquitous (Falk, 2015, p. 146).

Sauro and Thorne (2020) advise that “innovative pedagogy needs to be adaptive” (p. 238) meaning that educators need to consistently be experimenting and modifying their teaching to be relevant and authentic to their learners. Along with the growing body of research that highlights the positive impact of SM on language learning (e.g., Barrot, 2021; Jia & Hew, 2019; Manca, 2020; Paul & Friginal, 2019; Reinhardt, 2019), many researchers suggest that the communication

practices and opportunities that are demonstrated through various social media platforms should not be disregarded in language education (Aloraini & Cardoso, 2020; Sun et al., 2017). However, simply making use of SM in the language classroom is not sufficient to transform these platforms into meaningful language learning tools: they must be an explicit part of instructional design, use, and evaluation, and guided by curricular principles and research in language education (Fuchs and Snyder, 2013; González-Lloret, 2017).

Reinhardt (2019) defines social media as “any application or technology through which users participate in, create, and share media resources and practices with other users by means of digital networking” (p. 3). Social media language learning (SMLL) then, may be defined as a learning approach that seeks to connect interactive social media opportunities with language learners around the world. The emerging field of SMLL acknowledges the importance and prominence of social media today and seeks to provide authentic communicative experiences for students whose relevance reaches far beyond the classroom (Wiemeyer & Zeaiter, 2015).

Consequently, the popularity of social media among Generation Z provides exciting new opportunities for language learning due to how integral these platforms are in their day-to-day lives (Kick, Contacos-Sawyer, & Thomas, 2015; Vitelar, 2019; Schnackenberg and Johnson, 2019).

People coevolve with the technologies that emerge and develop alongside them in their youth (Reinhardt, 2022). Therefore, each new generation thinks and learns in qualitatively different ways than older generations (Prensky, 2001). As Klimanova (2021) argues, “the rapid proliferation of digital social platforms and utilities has facilitated daily interactions and qualitatively transformed the ways communication is understood in today’s global society” (p. 186). While Millennials were considered “digital pioneers,” who experienced firsthand the

explosion of technology and social media, Generation Z was born into a world where technological innovation was already at its (supposed) peak with information that was immediately accessible and social media growing in prominence (AECF, 2021). Born between 1997 and 2012, Generation Z is considered to be the "digital natives" (Prensky, 2001), currently aged anywhere from 10 to 26 years old.

Generation Z learners in “affluent parts of the world have grown up surrounded by computers and laptops and by an array of increasingly sophisticated communication devices that support personal, portable, wirelessly networked communication” (González-Lloret, 2017, p. 234) and consider these technologies to be essential to their daily existence. Generation Z has been using technology and social media their whole life to communicate with their circle and to learn new skills (Fromm and Read, 2018; Prioparas et al., 2017; Smith, 2019; Schnackenberg and Johnson, 2019). Indeed, “most students now come to L2 learning with a range of dispositions or habitus associated with everyday technology-mediated literacies” (Reinhardt, 2022, p. 1). This generation is already using a variety of socially-minded technologies and tools for enjoyment; therefore, it is up to educators to help them apply their uses for more serious endeavours (Blattner & Lomicka, 2012).

Despite the numerous possibilities offered through SMLL, the bulk of research in the field appears to focus on the applications of Facebook and Twitter (e.g., Antenos-Conforti, 2009; Blattner and Lomicka, 2012; Hattem, 2012; Lomicka and Lord, 2012; Hattem, 2014; Fornara, 2015; Lomicka, 2017). Very little research seems to have been published to date involving Generation Z participants, focusing on applications such as TikTok or Instagram. As Muliadi suggests, “just as Millennials fueled the rise of earlier social media platforms, like Facebook, Generation Z is fueling the rise of TikTok” (2020, para. 5).

As suggested by Han, Thorne, and many other scholars in the field, educators need to be teaching languages in ways that are authentic, relevant, and applicable to their students (e.g., Blattner & Lomicka, 2012). As the needs and goals of learners evolve, so should pedagogy. It is for this reason that I believe that the research in the field of SMLL could be updated to include newer social media platforms that correspond with the “evolving online intercultural meaning-making practices in which youth are engaged” (Han, 2021, p. 28) so that educators can employ effective pedagogical practices with Generation Z learners.

Through a case study that was conducted in a post-secondary FLS class, I will be attempting to determine what digital practices of Generation Z can be better addressed in the LL classroom through “Real-World” tasks (Caws, et al., 2021) with a focus on a semester-long digital citizenship project. The primary theoretical framework through which this research will be conducted is that of the Sociocultural Approach to language learning. Moreover, I will also draw heavily on the Seamless Language Learning model.

The pedagogical framework that will be operationalized is that of Task-Based Language teaching (Ellis, 2003, 2009, 2017; Long, 2015). More specifically, the digital literacy and digital citizenship frameworks developed by the eLANG and eLANG citizen projects (Caws, et al., 2021) with a focus on ‘real-world’ tasks.

In this study, I plan to take a qualitative (Croker, 2009), exploratory (Smith and Rebolledo, 2019), and empirical (Conrad and Serlin, 2006; Bengtsson, 2013; LaSalle University, 2022) approach. To do so, I will analyze a corpus of coursework produced by university-level students enrolled in a FLS course focusing on the use of internet and social media for language learning.

Through this exploratory case study, I will be attempting to answer four main research questions.

RQ1. What digital practices are the Generation Z learners bringing to this course?

RQ2. What digital literacy and language competencies are the Generation Z learners able to further through this real-world digital citizenship project?

RQ3. How do the learners individually describe and interpret the task process and outcome?

RQ4. How were the students able to make use of social media as a mirror, window, doorway, and playground through the digital citizenship project?

1.1 Plan

This thesis will be organized into six main chapters, followed by a bibliography, and an appendix.

In Chapter 2, I will be conducting a brief overview of the relevant literature in the field of social media language learning to date. This will include a discussion of digital literacies (Lankshear & Knobel, 2008), and how traditional approaches to literacy do not need to be cast away, but rather redefined and reevaluated to consider “the profound shift that is occurring from traditional notions of literacies to digital literacies” (Elola & Oskoz, 2017, p. 52). The notion of digital wilds (Sauro & Zourou, 2019) will then be explored, a concept which asks us to look beyond contexts directly linked to formal educational practices and allow for truly authentic, wild experiences for our language learners (Sauro & Zourou, 2019). Then, I will discuss the fact that digital spaces such as social media platforms now “constitute primary settings through which routine constructions of identity are created, and curated, through the use of textual and multimodal expression” (Thorne, Sauro, and Smith, 2015, p. 216) and how this is crucial to consider in the language classroom. I will then highlight the Seamless Language Learning Model

(Wong et al., 2017) which facilitates social interactions in authentic learning contexts with social media to foster meaning-making and idea-sharing with the target language (Wong et al., 2017).

Then, after the discussion of the seven proposed affordances (Gibson, 1979) of SMLL, I will also highlight students' perceptions of SMLL that have been found in the literature. I will then highlight past studies regarding the application of Facebook and Twitter for language learning, as well as the few studies that have been published regarding the applications of TikTok and Instagram. This section will also include brief explanations of the apps and their proposed affordances.

Then, finally, I will outline Reinhardt's (2020) *Metaphors for Social Media Language Learning* which will act as the basis of my data analysis. Reinhardt's *Metaphors* expand past the "tutor" and "tool" roles of technologies for language learning towards conceptualizations that better encapsulate the unique opportunities and affordances of socially minded technologies such as social media platforms. He suggests four new metaphors: "windows", "mirrors", "doorways", and "playgrounds" that aid us in understanding "how social media actually mediates what learners see, where they go, and what they do in these new virtual spaces" (Reinhardt, 2020, p. 236).

Chapter 3 will focus on the Theoretical & Pedagogical framework of this research. Firstly, The Sociocultural Approach to Language Learning (Vygotsky, 1978) & Social Pedagogies will be discussed, and links made between these frameworks and the possibilities created through SMLL. Then, the "Real-World" (cf. eLANG) Task-Based Language Teaching (Ellis, 2003, 2009, 2017; Long, 2015) approach, which seeks to "promote language acquisition along the three dimensions of fluency, accuracy, and complexity" (González-Lloret, 2017, p. 235) will be

explained, and its relevance to the application of SMLL will be explored. Next, the eLANG citizen project, which outlines motivating ways to develop language competence and digital citizenship by allowing students to (inter)act authentically in digital spaces will be highlighted as a key framework for my research. Finally, my research questions for this case study will be outlined.

Chapter 4 will provide an in-depth explanation of my methodology. Firstly, I will justify my methodological approach and decision to conduct a case study based on my unique position as both a researcher and teaching assistant for the course. Moreover, I will specify why I conducted an explorative case study due to the authentic, yet restricted context of this study. I will then outline why I have chosen to take a qualitative approach to the data collection and analysis process and discuss my data collection methods, as well as my approach to the data analysis. I then outline my methodological procedure and the six-step process of the thematic analysis that was conducted on the corpus of collected course artifacts and elaborate on how the findings yielded from this analysis will aid me in creating a detailed portrait of the learners' digital practices. Finally, I will explain the course context in which this case study was conducted and explain how the course aligns with the theoretical and pedagogical framework of this research.

Chapter 5 will focus on the results of this case study. The data collected from two questionnaires and a thematic analysis of a corpus will be presented and discussed in light of my research questions. First, I will begin by discussing my departure point: the digital practices that the Generation Z learners brought to this course. Then, I will venture into exploring both the language and digital competencies that the students feel like they acquired throughout the course. While exploring these competencies, I will also highlight which metaphors (Reinhardt, 2019)

were utilized, as well as the challenges the students faced, their real-world interactions, and their opinions and interpretations of the project and experience as a whole.

Finally, Chapter 6 will include a summary of this study, a discussion of the pedagogical implications of the results and a reflection on the limits and future directions for research.

1.2 Goals

Through this case study, I am hoping to fill a gap within the emerging field of SMLL regarding Generation Z language learners and their associated digital practices and literacies with newer social media platforms. Filling this gap could allow educators to employ SMLL effectively within their classrooms with Generation Z learners and henceforth take advantage of the numerous affordances.

Once again, the key pedagogical challenge is for educators to transform the target language into a “living” language for the learners by bringing the nature of communication into context (Wong et al., 2017, p. 10). This involves teaching in a way that provides students with the skills needed to succeed in the target language for all the modes of communication they will be using which includes their digital literacies and practices.

I propose that implementing the digital practices of Generation Z learners for language learning purposes not only enhances the relevance and authenticity of the activities for the students but can also help to achieve various pedagogical objectives. By focusing on the students’ perspectives, and their opinions on the tasks within this course, I believe and hope to prove that employing Generation Z’s digital practices for language learning with a real-world, task-based (Ellis, 2003, 2009, 2017; Long, 2015) approach is the next relevant step in sociocultural language pedagogy.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Digital Literacies

The requirements of being able to function effectively in today's society are much more than basic reading and writing skills. The ubiquity of technology and social media especially has dramatically impacted the way individuals interact and socialize with one another (Blattner and Fiori, 2011). In other words, people must now be competent in making use of a variety of both digital and print technologies to learn and communicate (Gabriel, Wiebe, and MacDonald, 2009; Hafner, 2014; Han, 2021) since developing effective literacy skills is about building a “repertoire of changing practices for communicating purposefully in multiple social and cultural contexts” (Mills, 2010, p. 247). This is not to say that traditional approaches to literacy need to be cast away, but rather redefined and reevaluated to consider “the profound shift that is occurring from traditional notions of literacies to digital literacies” (Elola & Oskoz, 2017, p. 52). As Moje (2009) suggests, it is not about creating a dichotomy of “old” and “new” literacies, but instead, situating literacy practices on more of a continuum (p. 359).

Historically, literacy has been understood as meaning-making skills related to acquiring linguistic elements that are fixed, rule-governed, monomodal, and static (Pennycook, 2001; Chen, 2013; Han, 2021). However, today's digital communication practices have transformed the notion of literacy by altering and expanding how we interpret and make meaning in new spaces mediated by digital technologies. Literacy, now, is viewed “as social practices that are fluid, sociocultural, multimodal, and dynamic” (Chen, 2013, p. 143) that are practiced by individuals and groups alike (Gee, 2004; Thorne & Reinhardt, 2008; Reinhardt & Thorne, 2011; Chen, 2013; Ware, 2017).

Many explanations and conceptualizations have been put forth regarding new literacy practices in digital media, and the ability to engage in these contexts is referred to in a variety of ways (Hafner, 2014). These include, among others, digital literacies (Lankshear & Knobel, 2008), electronic literacies (Warschauer, 1999), new literacies (Lankshear & Knobel, 2003), and multiliteracies (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000; New London Group, 1996).

The term “digital literacies” is now used to describe these technology-mediated literacies, and encompasses the skills needed to successfully decode and encode semiotic activity taking place in various digital environments such as mobile apps, social media, and online games (Gee, 2004; Lankshear & Knobel, 2008; Chen, 2013; Thorne, 2013; Han, 2021). These digital literacies overlap with other forms of literacies such as computer literacy, which is the competence to use and make use of technology; information literacy, the ability to find and evaluate information; and media literacy, which is the critical awareness of media representations and their ideological purposes (Dudeney & Hockly, 2016; Hockly, 2012; Elola & Oskoz, 2017). So, digital literacies are not simply technical competencies, but rather the skills needed to successfully interact with “the myriad of social practices and conceptions of engaging in meaning-making [...] via digital codification” (Lankshear & Knobel, 2008; p. 5).

In digital spaces, text, images, sounds, and videos are amalgamated more often than not. For this reason, multimedia literacy, similar to the New London Group’s (1996) “multi-literacies” and Kress’s (2003, 2010) “multimodality”, helps us to understand how “text is now often a complement to, or complemented by, other ways of communicating meaning” (Elola & Oskoz, 2017). According to the New London Group (1996), there are five different modes of meaning that “merit systematic attention in literacy education” (Hafner, 2014). These modes of literacy are linguistic, visual, audio, gestural, and spatial, and can all be described as systematic semiotic

resources. Hence, digital literacies are the skills needed to understand, create, and produce the multimodal combination of various semiotic modes both as separate entities and how they interact when together (Elola & Oskoz, 2017).

Changes in digital environments such as social media have “complex effects on the meaning-making that they mediate” (Thorne et al., 2015, p. 215). Today’s digital environments have expanded learners’ writing practices, going as far as to create new genres of communication entirely. Many social media platforms today include the use of not only writing as a communication mode but forms of multimodal communication as well (Hafner, 2014). Social media platforms have become one of the primary locations of media participation and digital literacy practice (Reinhardt and Thorne, 2019). This means that social media literacies, such as knowing how to curate one’s profile, how to traverse connections, and how to articulate one’s network (Ellison & boyd, 2013), are important aspects of digital literacies education. This also includes awareness of the functions of social media; for example, what “clickbait” is, how algorithms use your data, and privacy settings (Reinhardt and Thorne, 2019).

The creation of these social tools has “expanded our learners’ writing practices in ways that were unimaginable a decade ago, expanding our communication channels and bringing the opportunity to explore new writing genres” (Elola & Oskoz, 2017, p. 52). The convergence of text, image, and sound has created many 21st-century genres such as blogging, vlogging, and online forums, all of which serve as a form of self-expression (Herring, Scheidt, Wright, & Bonus, 2005; Lee, 2009; Elola & Oskoz, 2017). Because of these developments in new genres, the scope of language teaching should be “expanded beyond the traditional focus on speech and writing to the production of multimodal ensembles, drawing on a range of other semiotic modes” (Hafner, 2014, p. 655).

These digital literacy skills are motivating for young language learners, who are eager to invest both their time and effort in creating content to share in online communities (Alvermann, 2008). In fact, Generation Z has been developing digital literacy skills to various degrees their entire lives whether they are aware of it or not. These skills will serve them well not only in the classroom but also in years to come as they become “the generation of future global communicators” (Han, 2021, p. 28). As Lam and Kramsch (2003) argue, the role of educators is to prepare students for their future, whether it be in their careers or civic involvement. Making use of digital literacies in the classroom allows language learners to practice languages “in rich contexts, to take agency over their learning, to explore and construct multiple identities, and to foster intercultural communication skills and a sense of global citizenship” (Han, 2021, p. 39). Developing digital literacy skills provides learners with opportunities to interact outside of the classroom and prepare themselves for a successful future in today’s technology-saturated world and become effective members of society (Blattner and Fiori, 2011).

Classroom practices continue to evolve and move away from traditional methods that develop test-takers toward “nurturing agentive social members” (Han, 2021, p. 39). Throughout this process, we must consider students’ needs, goals, and futures and learn from their “vernacular digital literacies in which they engage to explore and explain the changing world” (Han, 2021, p. 39). As suggested by Schetzer and Warschauer, “literacy is a shifting target, and we have to prepare our students for their future rather than our past” (2000, p. 172). Overall, digital literacies can be understood from a comprehensive sociocultural perspective as a dynamic, multimodal, and social practice that both produces and is produced by digital technologies (Kress 2003; Lankshear and Knobel 2006; Greenhow and Gleason, 2012).

2.2 Digital Wilds

Reinhardt (2020) suggested that social media “offers the means to make L2 learning relatable, relevant, and accessible” (p. 240). However, it has been critiqued that often, “technologies—especially those not designed for educational purposes, such as social networking tools—are sometimes “tamed” to fit curriculum-based, institutional frameworks and requirements, occasionally leading to paradoxical and unreal learner practices” (Sauro & Zourou, 2019, p. 1). The concept of digital wilds asks us to look beyond contexts directly linked to formal educational practices and allow for truly authentic, wild experiences for our language learners (Sauro & Zourou, 2019) with an emphasis on structured unpredictability (Thorne, 2022).

The notion of “in the wild” originates from the field of cognitive science, referring to a natural, culturally based context outside of the laboratory (Hutchins, 1995). In language education, however, wild refers to “socio-culturally based life contexts outside of classrooms” (Han, 2021, p. 28). The term “digital wilds” modernizes this idea to help us describe sociocultural, authentic spaces that are outside of the classroom that are mediated by digital technologies. Digital wilds focus instead on “naturalistic” contexts which incorporate engagements closely aligned with “lifeworlds” outside of academic settings (Thorne, 2022).

By confining learning experiences to pre-existing scenarios, we restrict the possibilities offered by wild technologies (Sauro & Zourou, 2019). Instead of looking to control the experience, educators are encouraged to allow for the “dynamic, unpredictable, erratic” nature of technologies to have a place within the language classroom (Sauro & Zourou, 2019, p. 2).

Thorne (2015), takes this idea further and argues for the “rewilding” of education. Precisely, he questions whether the “highly predictable and routinized environment of the classroom, with proscribed decision-making” is the best place to expose students to supposedly “authentic”

communicative tasks (Little & Thorne, 2017, cited in Sauro & Zourou, 2019, p. 2). Effective language tasks, rather, should take place in informal digital spaces that are independent of formal instructional contexts (Sauro & Zourou, 2019). In fact, in a “wild” environment, learning should not be directly designed based on guidelines, policies, practices, or norms, but rather on the wider extramural context in which language socialization occurs (Sauro & Zourou, 2019; Thorne, 2015). As suggested by Steven Thorne (Lingu@num, November 24, 2022), rewilding language learning has the potential to support active, self-directed, and autonomous learning. Social media is a wild environment by definition as it is dynamic, unpredictable, and erratic. However, these characteristics are part of what makes learning experiences with these platforms so valuable for learners. By using SM for pedagogical purposes, students are exposed to how their target language is used outside the boundaries of the classroom. Many studies that have been conducted regarding digital wilds have found that there are opportunities for students to enhance their learning in online informal communities (e.g., Black, 2005, 2009; Kim, 2016, 2018; Lam, 2000, 2004). With the exponential growth of social media platforms and virtual communities over the past decade, non-institutionalized and unstructured language learning (Klimanova, 2021) experiences have been coined “intercultural communication in the wild” by Thorne (2010, p. 144). These experiences offer new ways of understanding language learners’ use of the target language outside of formal instructional settings (Klimanova, 2021; Han and Reinhardt, 2022). In 1956 Strevens argued that “one of two things must be done: either life must be brought to the classroom or the class must be taken to life” (Strevens, 1956, p. 69). This remains true to this day; educators must create time and space for language learners to explore their identities, develop digital literacy skills, and enhance their learning in digital wilds such as social media.

2.3 Construction of the Self & Identity

Digital spaces and practices have become seamlessly integrated into our daily lives. This phenomenon, along with the rise of social media and mobile devices, has led to increased research in the field of CALL regarding learner identities in virtual spaces that allow for “instant, multimodal, and increasingly mobile access to private, public, and professional digital networks” (Klimanova, 2021, p. 193). The ubiquity of digital technologies in our lives provides many opportunities for the creation of different identities (Thorne, Sauro, and Smith, 2015) and our identities in virtual spaces are curated through the bridging of online and offline social networks (boyd & Ellison, 2007). Due to the public nature of social media, users project their identities in relation to how they want to be perceived by the public through “the discursive choices and selective appropriation of symbolic resources in words, photos, videos, and other modalities” (Chen, 2013, p. 145).

Research has highlighted the potential for digital literacies to facilitate the exploration and creation of multilayered identities of language learners as they discover and curate their relationships with the world around them (Chen, 2013; Domingo, 2014; Kim, 2016; Lam, 2000, 2009a, 2009b; Han, 2021). Online social media platforms and their associated communities create numerous opportunities for young language learners to “write, read, and speak their worlds into existence” (Alvermann, 2008, p. 13). Moreover, when conceptualized as a mirror, social media also allows learners to reinvent their identities in these virtual spaces.

Digital spaces such as social media platforms now “constitute primary settings through which routine constructions of identity are created, and curated, through the use of textual and multimodal expression” (Thorne, Sauro, and Smith, 2015, p. 216). Language learners are able to both develop and enhance their identity in virtual spaces, by carefully curating the communities

they wish to engage with, and the roles they fill. In this way, learning and identity are “dialectically bound to one another” (Thorne, Sauro, and Smith, 2015, p. 217). Indeed, learners of all social classes, ages, and geographic locations frequently “curate online personas in digitally mediated social, recreational, and professional environments as they create, amend, and evolve presentations of individual and group identity and affiliation” (Thorne, Sauro, and Smith, 2015, p. 217).

As previously mentioned, becoming literate today involves developing the ability to interpret and generate signs that are meaningful to a community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991).

However, literacy also involves developing an identity appropriate for that community (Gee, 2004; Reinhardt and Thorne, 2019). The formulation of identity is intrinsically linked to the notion of digital literacy skills, especially for Generation Z learners who have access to social media. Today’s digital spaces like social media have diversified our literacy practices to include “the entwining of written communication with socially relevant issues of participation and identity formation” (Reinhardt and Thorne, 2019, p. 211). Literacy is strongly implicated with social practices and the development of identity (Street, 2003; Hafner, 2014). This suggests that literacy learning in a first language (L1) or second language (L2), is understood as “a social process in which language learners actively participate, enacting particular social roles and negotiating their situated identities” (Lam, 2000 cited in Chen, 2013, p. 143).

Identity cannot be viewed as fixed and linear but as developmental, complex, and fluid (Klimanova, 2021). Learners’ identities are created through their ongoing performance of various roles in different social contexts, and interactions with others in specific communities of practice (Chen, 2013; Hafner, 2014). It is the technology itself that enables learners to perform these roles by employing a “variety of means and affordances to mediate self-positioning and

self-expression” (Klimanova, 2021, p. 188). However, these possibilities are not restricted to just discursive practices, but also the use of various semiotic modalities that allow for connections to take place in virtual communities and facilitate interactions (Klimanova, 2021). The virtual self is “a self that, sitting at [their] computer terminal, perceives, emotes, feels, remembers, projects, and fantasizes based on the verbal and non-verbal symbolic forms [they] apprehend on the screen” (Kramersch, 2009, p. 160). Simply put, in digital spaces, language learners can “create experiences that tie real and imagined identities, self-proclaimed ideologies, and perceptible boundaries of language use in the formation of the new reality of the digital L2 self” (Klimanova, 2021, p. 188).

While the application of digital technologies and environments has become more common in language education, there are dynamic tensions at play when it comes to learners engaging with both their situated and transportable identities (Zimmerman, 1998; Thorne, Sauro, and Smith, 2015). On one hand, we each possess our situated identities, our “expected roles and behaviours that are relevant to a specific context of communication [...] such as the role of a teacher, tutor, peer, or student” (Richards, 2006 cited in Thorne, Sauro, and Smith, 2015, p. 219). In contrast, we have our transportable identities which “reflect visible or culturally claimable characteristics of the learner” (Thorne, Sauro, and Smith, 2015, p. 219) that may or may not be invoked during an interaction such as our nationality, gender identity, ethnicity, age (Van De Mierop & Clifton, 2012; Thorne, Sauro, and Smith, 2015). These two sides of the identity coin are especially relevant when using vernacular, non-pedagogically designed technologies such as social medias that learners may regularly engage with outside of the classroom.

As everyday communication and identity-building practices in virtual environments continue to evolve, it follows that educational practices should respond accordingly. As suggested by

Pacheco & Smith (2015), educators should consider the impact of identity development “in the process of language and literacy development to better prepare learners for their futures through identity-related storytelling or problem-solving projects” (Han, 2021). Furthermore, it would be even more beneficial for educators to “have an explicit discussion or reflection with students on their identity development and digital meaning-making” (Han, 2021, p. 40). While learners participate in informal digital spaces, they acquire practices and skills that extend their communicative capacities that should not be overlooked but instead incorporated into formal educational contexts (Chen, 2013). Their engagement in “online discourse should be seen as consisting of acts of identity that are fluid and constructed in linguistic, symbolic, and social interaction” (Chen, 2013, p. 163).

In virtual communities, learners are able to negotiate new identities to help them gain agency over their language use and learning (Black, 2009; Lam, 2000). These new identities are steered by socio-cultural contexts, the learners’ own motivation, and their language use and learning. The creation of new identities exemplifies “the dynamic and multifaceted nature of identity practices empowered by digital literacies” (Han, 2021, p. 34). In their personal time, Generation Z learners are consistently engaging with multimodal content in virtual spaces “to share with others, using new tools to show and tell, and rewriting their social identities in an effort to become who they say they are” (Alvermann, 2008, p. 10). These pre-existing skills of identity and digital literacy development may be replicated and transformed for their second language, allowing them to portray themselves in another language entirely. Language learners’ online literacy practices and identity development should receive more explicit attention in the classroom because they provide insights “into how they present themselves in relation to others in Internet-based discourses and how they engage online, linguistically, socially, culturally, and

historically” (Chen, 2013, p. 164). As Thorne and Black discuss, “for many individuals, performing competent identities in second and additional language(s) now involves internet mediation as or more often than face-to-face and non-digital forms of communication” (2007, p. 149).

2.4 The Seamless Language Learning Model

In 2005, Siemens argued that “the development of learning theories, such as behaviourism, cognitivism, and constructivism happened before technology played an essential role in people’s lives and learning experiences” (Gomes Junior, 2020, p. 2). In their 2017 article, Wong et al., discuss the recurrent criticisms of current outdated language classroom practices including the dominance of the behaviourist PPP procedure (presentation, practice, production), over-relying on decontextualized materials, and unbalanced foci. To bring these practices up to date, educators are responsible for transforming the target language into a “living” language for the learners by bringing the nature of communication into context (Wong et al., 2017, p. 10).

The key pedagogical challenge, then, is to teach in a way that provides students with the skills needed to succeed in the target language for the modes of communication they will be using. Accordingly, Wong et al. (2017) outline a model that offers a solution to the outdated teaching methods: Seamless Language Learning (SLL). This model emphasizes connecting language learning activities that occur in different learning spaces (formal and informal, individual and social, and physical and digital). It also facilitates social interactions in authentic learning contexts with social media to foster meaning-making and idea-sharing with the target language (Wong et al., 2017).

The SLL model corresponds to the ecological perspective in language learning (Kramsch and Steffensen, 2008; Lier, 2010), which “does not see learning as a head-to-head meaning transfer, but rather as the emergence of actionable knowledge, possibilities for dealing with the world, a networked world” (Gomes Junior, 2020, p. 1). According to Lafford (2009), the characteristics of this ecological approach are the beliefs that language is a context-bound phenomenon, its role is to mediate relationships between people and the world, and its use is subject to the communicative needs of the people involved in specific authentic situations (Wong et al, 2017).

This suggests that language learning should be contextualized to support the learners’ communicative goals and that lessons should make use of authentic language experiences to foster the skills that will be relevant to them in the classroom and beyond. Through this perspective we can view social media as a digital space which facilitates “dynamic and dialogic relationships, one can assume that interaction with environments stimulates the creation and reinforcement of networks” (Gomes Junior, 2020, p. 3). For Generation Z, these approaches have logically become interconnected with SMLL since social media has become a social “space” and “environment” where the majority of their digital communication takes place (Kick, Contacos-Sawyer, and Thomas, 2015). It is, for this reason, that language educators must recognize that digital and multimedia literacies are no longer exceptional and impersonal, but instead important skills worth fostering.

Making use of social media has many affordances, but some of the most crucial is that they provide authentic experiences for the learners and expand the learning environment to provide opportunities for interaction outside of the classroom. Each of these frameworks and theories unanimously supports, even indirectly, the application of SMLL in the classroom. In summary, the framework that I will be operating under is one of viewing language as a means through

which people project their desired identities and communicate within their communities whether it be in physical or digital spaces. This framework views language learning as tied to authentic communicative experiences that are bound to the needs, goals and digital literacies of the learners and the context that they hope to be a part of.

2.5 Proposed affordances of SMLL

Although learners may be able to successfully interpret and utilize various digital tools and platforms, they may not be using them to their full potential. To successfully “exploit all the affordances of those digital tools to assist their learning” (Elola & Oskoz, 2017, p. 55), the notion of affordances must be explicitly taught (Lomicka & Lord, 2016). Gibson (1979) conceptualized affordances as “what [the environment] offers to a particular organism” (Lee, 2022, p. 4). In the case of learning affordances, van Lier (2004) considers these to be a relationship between the learner and the learning environment. Affordances, then, are “what is available in the environment for the learner to possibly use for learning” (Lee, 2022, p. 4). It is not just about the availability of the affordances, but the learners' ability to identify and exploit them. This means that digital affordances are not intrinsically valuable but rather, they acquire value based on the needs and goals of the learner (Dudeny & Hockly, 2016; Elola & Oskoz, 2017) and “through their conscious choices to take up a resource—to use it, discard it, change it, or repurpose it” (Ware, 2017, p. 266).

There are seven proposed affordances of SMLL: 1) enhanced authenticity and contextualization (Wiemeyer & Zeaiter, 2015), 2) increased learner autonomy (Blattner and Lomicka, 2012; Reinhardt, 2019), 3) expansion of the classroom (Aloraini & Cardoso, 2020; Sun et al., 2017), 4) increased motivation (Liu et al. 2013; Wiemeyer & Zeaiter, 2015; Aloraini & Cardoso, 2020), 5) opportunities for language user interactions (Hattem & Lomicka, 2016; Klapper, 2006;

Wiemeyer & Zeaiter, 2015), 6) the fostering of communication skills (Elola & Oskoz, 2017; Wiemeyer & Zeaiter, 2015; Sun et al., 2017), and 7) the development of digital literacy skills (Blattner and Fiori 2011; Blattner and Lomicka 2012; Lomicka and Lord 2012; Chen, 2013; Thorne, 2013; Elola & Oskoz, 2017; Han, 2021).

Learning opportunities need to be authentic and contextualized for learners. Social media, due to its prominence in the lives of younger generations, provides these opportunities for learners. Social media is well suited for applying, practicing and deepening productive and receptive skills (Wiemeyer & Zeaiter, 2015) in an authentic and contextualized way. L2 learners around the globe now have access to “a growing diversity of content and quality of authentic, vernacular input, and contexts for use as well as purposed L2 learning material online that might be used for informal, self-directed learning” (Reinhardt, 2022, p. 8). These opportunities need to be taken advantage of to provide language learners with authentic experiences to engage with their L2.

Reinhardt (2019) suggests that if used with agency and awareness, SMLL may facilitate the development of learner autonomy which is key to successful language learning. He explains that “there is no doubt that once L2 learners leave classrooms, they will encounter the L2 in social media and other digitally enhanced contexts as often, if not more often than in face-to-face situations” (Reinhardt, 2019, p. 26). Essentially, if learners can develop their communicative skills in the target language and recognize how these skills can be applied outside of the classroom, they will inherently increase their autonomy (Blattner and Lomicka, 2012).

The use of SMLL also has great potential for solving some of the limitations of language learning such as lack of classroom time and opportunities for output practice (Aloraini & Cardoso, 2020). SMLL has the advantages of accessibility, and availability, and allows for

learners to practice the target language outside of the classroom, thereby expanding the learning environment for continuous learning. This affordance is crucial, especially in foreign language environments where students lack sufficient opportunities to practice their speaking skills in a meaningful way (Sun et al., 2017). SMLL provides language learners with easily accessible opportunities to communicate in the target language, thereby expanding the learning environment to reach far beyond the classroom's walls.

Students' intrinsic motivation to use social media can be exploited by using these modes of communication for language learning purposes (Gulzar et al., 2021). For example, students in Aloraini and Cardoso's (2020) study found that their use of SM increased their exposure to and motivated them to practice using the target language. As Blattner and Lomicka stress, SMs offer new opportunities that are more personal and motivating in many respects (Wiemeyer & Zeaiter, 2015).

The potential for language user interactions is greatly enhanced by today's technologies and social media in particular. In foreign language contexts especially, being able to access authentic language user interactions is one of the main affordances of SMLL. Learners can connect with other speakers of the target language and communicate with and collaborate on a global scale (Wiemeyer & Zeaiter, 2015). Moreover, for students who are less confident with their speaking skills, social media acts as a window through which they can observe the language spoken by proficient speakers. Klapper (2006) claims that "perhaps the most exciting application of the web in language learning is its capacity for bringing together students and [language users]" which is even more relevant today (Hattem & Lomicka, 2016, p. 15).

Another affordance of SMLL is its ability to expand students' learning experiences by providing them with opportunities to interact and communicate with ease, potentially resulting in more effective learning (Aloraini & Cardoso, 2020). In fact, in their 2020 publication, Aloraini and Cardoso found that the majority of their participants paid more attention to their grammar and vocabulary before posting in SM, versus submitting a written assignment. This finding suggests that SM may contribute to improving the quality of students' written output, as students engage in self-correction to ensure their writing is acceptable. This is also true for oral communication skills, as many studies have reported perceived gains in speaking and pronunciation as well (Wiemeyer & Zeaiter, 2015; Sun et al., 2017).

Many members of Generation Z may have their own definitions of what they consider literacy to be (Alvermann, 2008). As previously mentioned, the development of literacy skills today involves much more than traditional notions of being able to read and write. As we continue to progress towards an increasingly digital world, incorporating social media into language learning pedagogy allows for students to further develop their digital literacy skills in both their L1 and L2, thereby preparing them for their futures. Indeed, social media platforms have become one of the key environments for digital literacy practice (Reinhardt and Thorne, 2019). It follows then that another main affordance of SMLL is its ability to further develop learners' digital literacy skills.

2.6 Student perceptions of SMLL

Overall, studies on learners' perceptions of SMLL are scarce, however, those that do exist suggest that learners' attitudes are overall positive. Most notably, Lee and Markey (2004) found that students rated SMLL highly with approximately 60% of learners reporting positive attitudes towards their pedagogical use. Bani-Hani et al. (2014) found that 88% of their learners viewed

SMLL positively and contributed to the improvement of their language skills. Gabriel, Wiebe and McDonald (2009) suggest that when curriculum and pedagogy are more inclusive of the personal and social lives of learners, they are more likely to understand the content and be more motivated to learn. Overall, learners find SMLL to be a positive experience as it reflects their real-life language use.

It is important to note, however, that while studies have found positive student perceptions of SMLL, others suggest that there are variances in these findings depending on the proficiency level of the student and their associated perceptions and goals (Aloraini and Cardoso, 2020). For example, Jones (2015) found that beginner learners used social media more passively for language learning purposes, while advanced learners were more creative and engaged further in discourse with native speakers and other learners. Jones' study seems to suggest that beginner learners engage with the target language on social media through a window, whereas advanced learners are more likely to pass through the doorway of social media. Student ideas of how SMLL can support their language learning also vary based on their proficiency level. Overall, advanced learners perceived SMLL as supportive when the experience was completed independently with little teacher involvement, while beginners thought of SMLL as supportive when the experience was additional to what was provided in the classroom and was teacher-facilitated (Aloraini & Cardoso, 2020). Therefore, both groups do feel positive about SMLL, but one as complementary to their language learning, and the other as an extension of the learning experience.

This case-study will focus specifically on the student perceptions of this digital citizenship project as my aim is to aid educators in their experimentation and modification of their teaching to continue be relevant and authentic to their learners. There is a key difference between what

educators may think is relevant and authentic for Generation Z learners, and what actually is. It is for this reason that the student's own perceptions and interpretations will be at the forefront of this research.

2.7 From Facebook and Twitter to TikTok and Instagram

As previously mentioned, many of the existing studies in the field of social media language learning have focused on older platforms such as Facebook and Twitter. So far, “little research has been conducted on Instagram and TikTok, although they are the most advanced in terms of key trends of technological innovations including multimodality, mobility, instantaneous participation and interactivity” (Lee, 2022, p. 3). According to Piper Sandler (2021), only 27% of the 10,000 Generation Z adolescents surveyed used Facebook. This is a steep decline from previous generations such as in 2012 when Pew research determined that 94% of the Millennials that were surveyed used Facebook (Pew Research Centre, 2013). It seems that the younger generations are moving away from Facebook and Twitter towards newer platforms such as TikTok and Instagram.

This decline may be due in part to the three emerging trends that Lomicka and Lord (2016) suggest will likely characterize the future of social media. These are (1) a move towards mobility, (2) a focus on ephemerality and digital tribalism and (3) a reduction of text and subsequent increase in images (Friedman 2013; Beck 2014). When it comes to mobility and ephemerality, Generation Z has a preference for mobile apps that include content that vanishes after a short period of time (Lomicka and Lord, 2016). Moreover, while Generation Z is still forming digital connections like those before them, there is less of a focus on “status updates, likes, followers, connections and notifications” and more focus on digital tribalism, “the push towards smaller subpopulation groups with shared interests” (Beck, 2014 cited in Lomicka and

Lord, 2016, p. 264). The apps that Generation Z prefers also make use of more visual elements such as photos and videos, rather than text (Lomicka and Lord, 2016).

However, while Facebook may not be as popular with Generation Z as it is with older generations, given that it is one of the most popular social media platforms, it has been profoundly influential in inspiring the development of other recent platforms, such as Instagram and TikTok. Therefore, findings from Facebook-based research can be applied to similar SM platforms to a certain degree. For instance, many studies have provided evidence that Facebook (e.g., Alm, 2015; Kabilan, Ahmad, & Abidin, 2010; Mitchell, 2012) and Twitter (e.g., Lomicka & Lord, 2012; Solmaz, 2017; Taskiran, Gumusoglu, & Aydin, 2018) have the potential to provide language learning opportunities by enabling language learners to interact in and through the target language.

In 2009 Blattner and Fiori found that the implementation of Facebook in the language classroom can lead to the development of sociopragmatic competence and a sense of community amongst the learners (Lomicka & Lord, 2016). Then, in 2016, Hattem and Lomicka critically analyzed seventeen studies conducted between 2009 and 2016 regarding Twitter's use in educational settings. They found that "Twitter is a viable language learning tool as it promotes interaction, builds community, and facilitates noticing and meaning negotiation" (Barrot, 2021, p.4). Reinhardt then conducted a more generic study in 2019 with a larger sample of 87 studies published between 2009 and 2018. His study concluded that "social media can afford the development of learners' intercultural, sociopragmatic, and audience awareness, language learner and user identities, and literacy when used informally" (Barrot, 2021, p. 5).

The proposed learning opportunities to interact with the target language on Facebook and Twitter exist similarly on newer platforms as well, suggesting that many of these findings may remain relevant. For example, TikTok, an application that was founded in China in 2016, is a “platform for making and sharing short videos, which has then [become] one of the fastest-growing social networks in the world” (Bernard Ining, 2021, p. 171). TikTok includes features which allow users to create videos anywhere from 3 seconds to 3 minutes in length and interact with other users through both comments and private messages (Demmy and Fathul, 2018). TikTok has become exceedingly popular amongst Generation Z, with up to 69% of its user base being aged from 16 to 24 (Sloane and Rittenhouse, 2019). Because the videos on TikTok are shorter in duration, Bernard Ining (2021) suggests that they are “able to capture better interest and the short attention span for many learners” (p. 172). Moreover, it has been determined that learners responded positively to the use of TikTok for pedagogical purposes as “they are able to learn many skills that are beneficial in their daily lives” (Bernard Ining, 2021, p. 172).

Bernard Ining found TikTok can lead to ESL students’ expanding their vocabulary and becoming more engaged in their learning by encountering “multiple new words through the use of captions and subtitles provided in the videos along with their correct enunciation and pronunciation” (2021, p. 179). TikTok has also been found to enhance student communication and presentation skills, aiding them to feel more confident when speaking in the target language (Bernard Ining, 2021).

Instagram is a photo and video sharing social media platform that was launched in 2010 and in June of 2018, became one of the most popular social networking platforms with 1 billion monthly active users (Statistica, 2018). Despite Instagram not being designed for pedagogical purposes in the slightest, many learners report using it for language learning purposes (Gonulal,

2019). In fact, there are many Instagram accounts specifically dedicated to language learning such as @easyfrenchvideos, @pearsonenglishlearning, and @bbclearningenglish. Overall, it has been found that language learners use Instagram for improving their communication skills and interacting and socializing in the target language (Gonulal, 2019).

However, regardless of the literature that supports the use of social media for language learning, many criticisms have been put forth. Some of these issues include “teachers’ and students’ resistance, appropriateness as an academic platform, adverse psychological impact, and technical problems” (Barrot, 2021, p. 2). Despite these criticisms, these virtual environments on social media such as TikTok and Instagram have transformed our perspective on informal language learning (Falk, 2015) and the application of these platforms for authentic and “wild” learning experiences.

However, it is important that the negative aspects of social media are highlighted for learners as well. In a study by Liu et al, regarding “COVID-19 information overload and generation Z's social media discontinuance intention during the pandemic lockdown” (Liu et al, 2021), the authors provide practical implications for social media users, social media providers, and policy makers. The study emphasizes the importance of understanding the impact of social media (mis)use on the psychological well-being of Gen Z, particularly during emergency events like a pandemic lockdown. They suggest that to maintain a healthy psychological state, Gen Z social media users are advised to self-monitor their information consumption, evaluate their psychological states related to social media, and regulate their social media use. It is recommended that Gen Z individuals, who may “have limited information processing capacity due to their lack of life experience”, be selective in the information they consume from social media. Filtering out information that may cause psychological harm and taking breaks from

social media are also encouraged. While there are many opportunities for language learning that are made possible by social media, it is important that Gen Z learners are aware of the potential adverse psychological impact of their digital usages.

2.8 Metaphors for SMLL

Since its beginnings, the field of CALL has relied heavily on two metaphors that help understand language learning with technology: “tutor” and “tool” (Levy, 1995; 1997). Technologies are viewed as a “tutor” when they “serve as the source of knowledge, aligning with structural understandings of language” (Reinhardt, 2020, p. 235). They are viewed as a “tool” when “it is not the sole source of knowledge, but rather serves as a means to develop or access knowledge” (Reinhardt, 2020, p. 235). Once sufficient, with the social turn in second-language acquisition and technology, those metaphors are no longer able to adequately represent the scope of the extended possibilities created through social media. The most crucial change is that since the 2010s, technologies have expanded the formal learning classroom. Mobile technologies nowadays allow for any time, anywhere access to social media and quickly became a tool for everyday use. This is an exciting opportunity for enhanced language learning because now, more than ever, learners have ubiquitous access to authentic language use.

SMLL, then, needs to be expanded past the “tutor” and “tool” roles towards conceptualizations that better encapsulate the unique opportunities and affordances of these technologies. Reinhardt (2020), suggests four new metaphors: “windows”, “mirrors”, “doorways”, and “playgrounds” that aid us in understanding “how social media actually mediates what learners see, where they go, and what they do in these new virtual spaces” (Reinhardt, 2020, p. 236). Through the window of social media, learners can observe how language users interact with one another and experience authentic language and cultural interactions without having to be directly involved in

the conversation. By creating and projecting an identity of their choosing, language learners may also use social media as a mirror. Once the learner feels ready, they can pass through the “doorway” and participate with the target language directly. This is especially useful in foreign language contexts, allowing learners to have authentic interactions with language users from around the globe. Finally, social media also acts as a playground, a space where learners can learn and play in “informal, autonomous, and gameful ways” (Reinhardt, 2020, p. 239) which may help them gain confidence and take risks (Bandura, 1997 cited in Han & Reinhardt, 2022) in the target language while eliminating their possible identity-related fears. As Reinhardt (2020) summarizes: “social media can be effective for formal L2 learning purposes, as something to look through, look at, go through, and play in” (p. 240).

2.9 Summary

As previously mentioned, this case study will be exploring the ways in which Generation Z’s digital practices can be implemented in the language classroom through a real-world, task-based (Ellis, 2003, 2009, 2017; Long, 2015) digital citizenship project (Caws, et al., 2021). This project was designed in an attempt to enhance the learners’ digital literacy and language skills as they experience authentic, real-world language use in the “dynamic, unpredictable, erratic” (Sauro & Zourou, 2019, p. 2) digital wilds.

Because digital spaces such as social media platforms now “constitute primary settings through which routine constructions of identity are created” (Thorne, Sauro, and Smith, 2015, p. 216) the students will be exploring the target language outside of the usual formal instructional settings while creating and curating their FLS digital identities. This semester-long project was designed with student perceptions of social media for language learning from existing research (Gabriel, Wiebe and McDonald, 2009; Bani-Hani et al., 2014; Jones, 2015; Aloraini and Cardoso, 2020)

— which have been overall positive depending on their proficiency and goals — as well as the proposed affordances such as increased authenticity, learner autonomy, and language user interactions.

Social media can create authentic language learning experiences “as something to look through, look at, go through, and play in” (Reinhardt, 2020, p. 240). However, because this thesis will be focusing specifically on GenZ learners, TikTok and Instagram will be the primary focus as they are two of the applications that are the most popular with this generation (Briggs, 2022). As outlined above, many of the existing studies in the field have focused on applications such as Twitter and Facebook with Millennial learners (e.g., Antenos-Conforti, 2009; Blattner and Lomicka, 2012; Hattem, 2012; Lomicka and Lord, 2012; Hattem, 2014; Fornara, 2015; Lomicka, 2017). It is for this reason that I will be focusing on these newer applications in an attempt to fill a small portion of the gap in the existing literature.

Chapter 3: Theoretical & Pedagogical Framework

3.1 Theoretical Framework

3.1.1 The Sociocultural Approach to Language Learning & Social Pedagogies

Influenced by Vygotsky (1978), the sociocultural approach to language learning views students as active learners who become involved in their own learning process by engaging with others through authentic interaction (Blattner & Lomicka, 2012). Through the sociocultural lens, learners are seen as acting as social agents, investing themselves in the target language. They “project multiple desired selves and identities in the communities” (Reinhardt and Chen, 2013, p. 13) that they are in. Evidently, the user-centered, participatory and collaborative practices associated with social media are consistent with the sociocultural approach (Liu et al., 2013) as virtual communities are relevant spaces where identity and meaning-making take place. Language and social interactions are intrinsically linked, both acting as cornerstones of developing and circulating knowledge within these communities. Technology and social media platforms in particular provide learners with access to a community. In fact, “the increasing capacity and ubiquity of communication technology have influenced the scope of imaginable communities. Individuals can extend their imaginations into virtual communities that go far beyond physical spaces” (Reinhardt and Chen, 2013, p. 15). Kessler perfectly summarized this theory by stating that he believes the most significant changes in the field of CALL “relate to the evolution of how we access, construct, and exchange language today. The digital landscape that we are immersed in not only provides us with access to information but also requires that we play an active role in the ongoing exchange of information” within the communities we are a part of (2013, p. 616).

With Generation Z learners in particular, “there is a desire to develop and maintain online relationships that lead to community building, self-expression and interaction with others” (Thorne 2010 cited in Lomicka and Lord, 2016, p. 256). For language learners, these relationships can be created and explored in virtual spaces such as social medias. Since social media platforms are environments where communities are created and maintained, they can be considered social practices (Lankshear and Knobel 2008; Lomicka & Lord, 2016).

Successful acquisition of a language involves learners being able to “mobilize symbolic and linguistic resources and competencies to successfully negotiate complex intercultural, transactional, and ideational dimensions of collective human interactivity” (Dubreil and Thorne, 2017, p. 2). The pedagogical techniques implemented in language classrooms must take into account the social, community-oriented nature of language to prepare learners to function in the target language outside of the classroom (Dubreil and Thorne, 2017). Language must be viewed “not simply a means of expression or communication” but instead as “a practice that constructs and is constructed by, the ways language learners understand themselves, their social surroundings, their histories, and their possibilities for the future” (Norton & Toohey, 2004, p. 1).

“Wild” interactions in virtual spaces such as social media “can equip L2 learners to function in multilingual and multicultural societies by enabling them to [achieve] academic and professional success” (Dubreil and Thorne, 2017, p. 5). When conceptualizing these interactions through the lens of Reinhardt’s metaphors for social media language learning (2020), it is evident that these virtual spaces act not only as a door through which learners can pass to interact directly with the target language but as a window to observe these sociocultural interactions as well (cf. 2.8).

Moreover, finding communities they can be a part of “can lead to developments in both identities

and in relationships and can expose students to current, real and meaningful language use for specific tasks” (Lomicka & Lord, 2016, p. 257). Mills (2011) suggests that social media tasks can provide opportunities for learners to “write [themselves] into being’ (Lomicka & Lord, 2016, p. 258) by constructing their identities in these virtual spaces.

Social media platforms are spaces where communities are consistently being formed and maintained and allows for learners to “cultivate a taste for working with a certain degree of unpredictability and ambiguity, develop an ability to adapt, and, through exercising agency and authorship in and out of the classroom, develop their own voice in the L2” (Dubreil and Thorne, 2017, p. 3). Virtual connections and the ability to form them with people from around the world can offer rich environments and opportunities for sociocultural language exchange (Lomicka & Lord, 2016). This is not to say that the traditional language classroom can simply be replaced by social interactions in virtual communities. Instead, these interactions can be viewed as an extension of the classroom, a place where students can develop their identities, observe the target language in the “wild” (cf. 2.2), and participate authentically with other language users. As Dubreil and Thorne (2017) suggest, “language learning is no longer to be primarily of and in the classroom alone but of, with, and for the ‘community’” (p. 1).

3.2 Pedagogical Framework

3.2.1 “Real-World” Task-Based Language Teaching

Social media platforms can promote the “human dimension of learning” (Fuchs and Snyder, 2013, p. 119) whereby learners can curate and explore their identity, consume and create content, and communicate and collaborate with others (Kern, 2006). González-Lloret (2017) argues that to fully make use of all the potential created through technology for language learning, task-based language teaching (TBLT) is the best approach. Some of the key principles of this

approach include that the tasks are goal and meaning-oriented, authentic, and “focus on the content of the message and not on the language” itself (González-Lloret, 2017, p. 235). Most importantly, tasks should incorporate real contextualized language as much as possible. The main intention of TBLT is to “promote language acquisition along the three dimensions of fluency, accuracy, and complexity” (González-Lloret, 2017, p. 235). The many affordances of social media for language learning align with the principles of TBLT because these platforms allow for learners to engage authentically with the language directly thereby promoting “active student engagement in learning, following a “learning by doing” (Dewey 1938/1997) philosophy of education” (González-Lloret, 2017, p. 236).

Chapelle (2001) outlined a framework for the implementation of task-based CALL, echoing that these tasks should be “authentic, practical, focused on meaning, and appropriate to the student's level and learning goals” (González-Lloret, 2017, p. 235). She argued that CALL tasks should not only focus on form but also provide opportunities for learning beyond that of the language such as digital literacies, and sociocultural competencies. A complimentary framework is González-Lloret and Ortega's (2014) characteristics for task-based CALL who argue that these tasks should be learner-centred, holistic, authentic, and emphasize meaning rather than grammatical forms (González-Lloret, 2017). Essentially, they believe that these tasks should draw on real-world uses of the language as much as possible and encourage metacognition throughout the learning process.

Related to these notions of authentic, learner-centered technology-mediated tasks is Fink's (2003) Significant Learning Experiences model which seeks to unite the cognitive and social aspects of learning when it comes to instructional design. Fink's model outlines six types of learning that are essential to the design of any course: foundational knowledge, application,

integration, human dimension, caring and learning how to learn. According to Fuchs and Snyder (2013), “Fink’s model may be particularly applicable to the analysis of instruction involving [social networking] technology because it does not privilege the acquisition of content knowledge over affective learning, but rather sees the acquisition of all six types of learning as part of a unified learning-centered approach to education” (p. 199). In Fink’s model, social and affective learning should be viewed as equally important to “traditional content-oriented learning” (Fuchs and Snyder, 2013, p. 134) which is especially relevant when it comes to language learning because of how crucial the social aspect is to the learning process.

However, successful task-based technology-mediated learning experiences are not simply replicating pen-and-paper, face-to-face tasks into a CALL environment. González-Lloret emphasizes that “the incorporation of technology is never neutral” (2017, p. 236) meaning that technology must be seamlessly integrated into the program and curriculum itself, with its codes and conventions explicitly taught. This includes articulating the affordances of various technologies, “what affordances they have, and what digital literacies the students need and already possess in order to use those technologies and accomplish the task” (González-Lloret, 2017, p. 236). For technology-mediated tasks to facilitate learning, technology itself must become an aspect of explicit instruction in the classroom. This way, students are “developing their digital, multimodal, and informational literacies at the same time that they are developing their language competence; two essential life skills for the citizens of tomorrow” (González-Lloret, 2017, p. 241). Moreover, it is important to remember that communication in digital spaces is not merely a replication of face-to-face forms of communication but rather its own entity entirely.

Nonetheless, González-Lloret (2017) reminds us that the implementation of technology-mediated TBLT is not without challenges. Most notably, the development and progression of technology moves quickly, causing older technologies and social media platforms to become obsolete or irrelevant over time. Also, from a pedagogical perspective, if technology is an essential part of a language learning curriculum, it should also be an integral part of the assessment. This, however, has proven to be challenging, as technology-mediated tasks, especially when facilitated by social media, are difficult to assess. Gruba and Clark (2013) ask, “how can learner efforts – whether individual, in pairs, or in groups – be seen to progress? How can success be determined?” (p. 177). In an attempt to answer these questions, they propose focusing on formative types of assessment that “seek to enhance learning via immediate feedback” (Gruba and Clark, 2013, p. 178). Formative assessment allows learners to take responsibility for their learning and may help them “to develop intrinsic motivation, improve self-esteem, foster independent learning methods and aid in the ability to improve cognitive strategies in solving problems” (Gruba and Clark, 2013, p. 178).

Indeed, it has been argued that “well-designed formative assessment tasks present learners first with the opportunity to judge their own level of development, then to work collaboratively with others to produce a higher level of language” (Gruba and Clark, 2013, p. 178) which is facilitative to both language learning and the development of self-regulation and motivation. To aid educators in implementing formative assessments, Frey and Fischer (2011) outline key questions to contemplate: ‘Where am I going?’, ‘Where am I now?’, ‘How am I doing?’ and ‘Where am I going next?’ (Gruba and Clark, 2013, p. 179). It is not just about the task itself, but rather the kind of foundation that the task lays for the learner’s future.

A technology-mediated task-based approach to language learning is a comprehensive one that views language through a holistic lens. This approach “gives priority to activities with the goal of doing something with a language, communicating meaning with a clear objective, in an environment authentic for the learners and their context, all according to their needs” (González-Lloret, 2017, p. 240). It is for these many reasons that I have set out to investigate the implementation of “real-world” task-based language learning with Generation Z learners.

Making use of social media has many affordances, but some of the most crucial is that they provide authentic experiences for the learners and expand the learning environment to provide opportunities for interaction outside of the classroom. Each of these frameworks and theories unanimously supports, even indirectly, the application of SMLL in the classroom. In summary, the framework that I will be operating under is one of viewing language as a means through which people project their desired identities and communicate within their communities whether it be in physical or digital spaces. This framework views language learning as tied to authentic communicative experiences that are bound to the needs, goals and digital literacies of the learners and the context that they hope to be a part of.

3.3 The Present Study

The present study will be operating through a Sociocultural theoretical framework, as well as a task-based, real-world pedagogical framework to investigate how the digital practices of Generation Z language learners can be addressed in the language classroom through a digital citizenship project. The eLANG citizen project will be at the forefront of this research as FLS learners will be experiencing real-world language usage in digital wilds throughout this task-based project.

3.3.1 eLANG Citizen Project

[The eLANG citizen project of the ECML](#) is a didactic framework for language education and the development of digital citizenship that is built on the socio-interactive approach based on the CEFR's action-oriented approach. The project approach integrates a strong inclusive (targeting multilingualism and interculturality) and creative dimension. It also focuses on motivation and seeks to provide motivating activities through the gamification of education (Caws, et al., 2021). This framework defines what it means to be a citizen user of languages and digital technology and provides pedagogical principles to help learners develop their digital citizenship while achieving language learning objectives (Ollivier, 2021).

According to eLANG, the language and digital citizen is someone who interacts socially both online and offline with different communities. Their actions are determined by the context, social rules, and values of these communities, as well as their own intentions, attitudes, ethics, awareness, skills, knowledge, and understanding of technology. The citizen can be a consumer, spectator, mediator, creator, or transformer of society, and must develop the necessary awareness, knowledge, and skills to act competently, responsibly, ethically, creatively, and safely (Ollivier, 2021).

The eLANG project aims to implement an open, transformative, and participative pedagogy that combines tasks focused on reflecting on digital technology use with tasks rooted in real-life situations (cf. e-lang, ECML; Caws, et al., 2021). Accordingly, these “real-world” tasks will enable learners to (inter)act authentically in digital spaces as citizens using languages and digital technology and experience communication in target languages or even multilingual communication; digital participation and creativity, including using multimedia; the creation and dissemination of information on participative websites. In summary, the eLANG project outlines

motivating tasks for learners to develop language competence and digital citizenship in authentic, real-world situations (Ollivier, 2021).

3.3.2 Research Questions

This study will be investigating four main research questions. First, I will be investigating the digital practices that the Generation Z learners are bringing to this FLS course. To decipher their existing digital practices, I will be exploring what social media platforms they use, why they use them, and how frequently. I will also investigate whether they consider themselves to be active and engaged on social media, and if they have used social media in French and on which platforms. As described above, answering these questions will enable me to fill a small portion of the gap in the existing research regarding Generation Z's digital practices as the majority of studies have been conducted with Millennial learners.

Next, I will be analyzing what digital literacy and language competencies the Generation Z learners are able to further through the real-world digital citizenship project. The results of this question will highlight the various educational objectives that can be achieved through a digital citizenship project such as this and begin to prove that implementing Generation Z learners' digital practices in the language classroom is the next logical step in sociocultural language pedagogy.

Thirdly, I will be exploring the students' own descriptions and interpretations of the digital citizenship project, as well as the project process and outcomes themselves. This question will be explored through the knowledge and skills that the learners believe they have developed through the digital citizenship project, the challenges they faced, and whether they feel like this experience will help them in the future as digital citizens in FSL. Many of the existing studies in

the field have focused on the students' perceptions of implementing social media in the language classroom, and I believe that this is for good reason. Educators and researchers may have ideas and hypotheses regarding learners' preferences and their digital practices, but it is crucial that this data be sought out through the learners themselves. Once again, people coevolve with the technologies that emerge and develop alongside them in their youth (Reinhardt, 2022), and, as such, each new generation thinks and learns in qualitatively different ways than older generations (Prensky, 2001). For this reason, research in the field of SMLL will need to be regularly brought up to date in tandem with the evolution of our learners by asking them for their own perceptions. Consequently, this study will be focusing heavily on the learners' opinions and interpretations of this digital citizenship project in an attempt to fill this *current* gap in the field.

Finally, I will attempt to deduce how the learners were able to make use of social media as a mirror, window, doorway, and playground through the digital citizenship project. As elaborated upon above, since its beginnings, the field of CALL has relied heavily on two metaphors that help understand language learning with technology: "tutor" and "tool" (Levy, 1995; 1997).

Though these metaphors were once sufficient, they no longer adequately represent the scope of the extended possibilities created through social media. This project was created with Reinhardt's (2022) updated metaphors in mind: windows, mirrors, doorways, and playgrounds in an attempt to prove that "social media can be effective for formal L2 learning purposes, as something to look through, look at, go through, and play in" (p. 240).

3.3.3 Positionality & Hypotheses

I believe that it is important for me to state my positionality and some preconceived notions that I have that may contribute to my hypotheses and the interpretation of my data. Firstly, I am both an FSL learner and an ESL educator. This means that I have experiences with learning French as

a second language and teaching English as a second language that may play a part in my perspective toward this research. Moreover, I am a member of Generation Z myself, and so many of my beliefs regarding the digital practices of Generation Z may be rooted in my own digital practices. While I certainly do not wish to generalize my experiences to my entire generation, there is no doubt that my perceptions of my own usage may affect my hypotheses. Finally, like many other Gen Zs, I have been using social media for most of my life. I have been using Instagram since 2012, and TikTok since 2018. I have multiple accounts on both these platforms and have worked as a content creator and social media manager for over four years. I have a personal TikTok with over fifteen thousand followers and help to manage various other accounts with up to a hundred thousand followers. All this to say, my personal experiences with social media may impact this research, as I am approaching data with some preconceived notions regarding Generation Z's digital practices that are partially based on my own. However, despite these preconceived notions, as a researcher I have tried, to the best of my ability, to maintain a neutral stance throughout this process.

I hypothesize that the Generation Z learners will use Instagram, TikTok, Snapchat, and YouTube the most frequently as these three applications are statistically the most popular with social media users of their age (Briggs, 2022). I also believe that they will use these platforms for amusement, learning new skills, and keeping in touch with family and friends. They will likely use social media for more than four hours a day and consider themselves to be active and engaged social media users. I believe that very few learners will use social media in French prior to this course but may have encountered French content occasionally.

I believe that this digital citizenship project will provide authentic opportunities for students to enhance both their language and digital literacy skills. I hypothesize that they will be able to

make use of social media as a window, mirror, doorway, and playground. There will no doubt be numerous challenges faced, though I am hopeful that the real-world interactions will prove to be motivating for the learners. Overall, I believe that this project will be received positively by the learners who will see the value and affordances of the experience.

Chapter 4: Methodology

My aim is to be able to create a detailed portrait of Generation Z's digital practices, and how social media can be used as a mirror, a window, a door, and a playground for language learning. To do so, I worked closely throughout the Fall 2022 term with participants (n = 22) who are Generation Z FLS learners that were enrolled in the FLS3791 course (*Le français sur la toile et dans les médias sociaux / "French on the web and in social media"*) offered by the Official Languages & Bilingualism Institute at The University of Ottawa.

It is through this experience that I will be formulating a case study (Merriam, 1988; Gall, Gall, and Borg, 2003; Yin, 2003a; Duff, 2008; Heigham, and Croker, 2009) based on the context of this course and its ability to make use of a real-world, task-based (Ellis, 2003, 2009, 2017; Long, 2015) approach for Generation Z language learners through a sociocultural lens.

This chapter will discuss my methodological approach throughout the research process. Firstly, I will justify my decision to conduct a case study based on my unique position as both a researcher and teaching assistant for the course. Moreover, I will specify why I conducted an explorative case study due to the authentic, yet restricted context of this study. I will then outline why I have chosen to take a qualitative approach to the data collection and analysis process and discuss my data collection methods, as well as my approach to the data analysis. I then outline the six-step process of the thematic analysis that was conducted on the corpus of collected course artifacts and elaborate on how the findings yielded from this analysis will aid me in creating a detailed portrait of the learners' digital practices. Finally, I will explain the course context in which this case study will be conducted and explain how the course aligns with the theoretical and pedagogical framework of this research.

4.1 Methodological Approach

Through this case study, I plan to take a qualitative (Croker, 2009), exploratory (Smith and Rebolledo, 2019), and empirical (Conrad and Serlin, 2006; Bengtsson, 2013; LaSalle University, 2022) approach.

Many of the definitions of case studies highlight the “bounded,” singular nature of the case, the importance of context, the availability of multiple sources of information or perspectives on observations, and the in-depth nature of analysis (Duff, 2008). More specifically, education researchers Gall et al. (2003) consider case study research to be “the in-depth study of instances of a phenomenon in its natural context and from the perspective of the participants involved in the phenomenon” (p. 436).

Case studies are, of course, a form of qualitative research, meaning that they can be understood as an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a single entity, phenomenon, or social unit (Merriam, 1988; Duff, 2008). Case studies are particularistic, descriptive, and heuristic, and rely heavily on inductive reasoning in handling multiple data sources (Merriam, 1988, p. 16).

My case study will focus on the context of the FLS3791 course (Le Français sur la toile et dans les médias sociaux / “French on the web and in social media”) and will include an analysis of multiple data sources. Regarding this data collection and analysis strategies, I will be following the definition provided by Yin (2003a), a case study methodologist in education and management. They suggest that a case study is an empirical inquiry that “investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context” (Yin, 2003a). However, the approach of a case study is particularly important “when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident” (Yin, 2003a). They also elaborate that a case study inquiry must cope “with

the technically distinctive situation in which there will be many more variables of interest than data points, and as one result” and rely on “multiple sources of evidence, with data needing to converge in a triangulating fashion” (Yin, 2003a). Triangulation is crucial because “another result benefits from the prior development of theoretical propositions to guide data collection and analysis” (Yin, 2003a, pp. 13–14).

In summary, case studies are “empirical investigations of contemporary phenomena within real-life contexts. They comprise a bounded system, including an individual or entity and the settings in which they act” (Duff, 2008) and it is for these reasons that I have chosen to approach my research in this way.

Exploratory research is a methodological approach that investigates research questions that have not previously been studied and seeks to understand more about a particular topic by connecting ideas (Smith and Rebolledo, 2019). It is for these reasons that I will be employing an exploratory approach: the case study that will be conducted is restricted to the context of the course, though the findings *may* be applicable in other contexts as well. The main goal of the case study is to connect the findings from the various course artifacts through triangulation. Through these connections, I will be exploring the ways in which the digital practices of Generation Z can be better addressed in the LL classroom through “Real-World” tasks.

According to Sue and Ritter (2015), the goal of exploratory research is to form hypotheses and clarify concepts. They claim that exploration often begins with case studies, which is why I will be taking an exploratory approach to my research.

This case study will produce mostly qualitative data from a corpus of course artifacts including the two course questionnaires and the digital citizenship projects and their associated final

reports. Some numerical data was brought forth by the questionnaires, however, this will be used to form connections between the qualitative findings, which will be the primary focus.

A qualitative approach, according to Robert A. Croker (2009) “entails collecting primarily textual data and examining it using interpretive analysis” (p. 5). Crucially, qualitative research operates under the notion that meaning is socially constructed and places the focus of the research on the participants. Qualitative research inspects how “participants experience and interact with a phenomenon at a given point in time and in a particular context, and the multiple meanings it has for them” (Croker, 2009, p. 7). I have chosen to take a qualitative approach for this study because, like many other qualitative researchers, I am interested in “the ordinary, everyday worlds of [the] participants” (Croker, 2009, p. 7).

This case study is taking place within an authentic environment, a real university-level language course. Moreover, I am not extricating participants from various sources, but rather *going to* the participants themselves (Rossman & Rallis, 2003, p. 9). Crucially, I am examining the results under the circumstances which already exist outside of this research while recognizing that this context is “complex, dynamic, and multifaceted” (Croker, 2009, p. 7).

This research is not meant to fall under the scope of action research, as “those interested in action research wish to intervene in their professional practices by changing something about them and to examine the extent to which their intervention produces positive changes in the educational context under investigation” (McKinley & Rose, 2020). I was not the primary educator of this course and was involved as a teaching assistant who contributed to designing the major project and accompanied the students throughout its process. I believe that if this had been my own language course, and I employed this project, it could be a form of action research. However, due

to my role, and the nature of the research I conducted, I do not believe that this current study constitutes action research.

Through this qualitative approach, I will attempt to create a detailed portrait of Generation Z's digital practices, and how these can be employed in the language classroom. I believe that this is the best approach for this context, as it allows for the research and learning context itself to guide my research as I explore the possibilities created through this course. A more specific description of the data collection and the corpus analyzed for this study will be further detailed in section 4.3.

4.2 Course Context

FLS3791 *Le français sur la toile et dans les médias sociaux* or “French on the web and in social media” is a hybrid FSL class at the University of Ottawa within the Official Languages and Bilingualism Institute which focuses on the analysis and application of language and conventions used on the internet and in francophone social media for second language learners. The course also involves the development and deepening of digital literacy skills for FSL learning and opportunities for practice in oral and written communication mediated by technologies: blogs, wikis, discussion forums, Twitter feeds and more.

Some of the main module topics include digital citizenship, various applications and their affordances, discussion forums, blogs and vlogs, professionalism and social media, wikis, and virtual francophone culture. The main goal of this course is to develop language and technology skills that will enable the student to be comfortable participating in French on the Internet and on social media. Specifically, in this course students analyze and critically use the tools and resources of language; exchange both orally and in writing in French in asynchronous modes on

various social media platforms; collaborate online in asynchronous modes on various social media platforms; collaborate online in the development of multimedia documents in French; and contribute creatively and personally to the online Francophone and Francophile community.

By the end of the course, students are able to think critically about the tools and resources used for language learning; be aware of and able to employ the conventions used on the Internet and in Francophone social media; develop and utilize digital literacy skills useful to their FSL learning; take part in online exchanges, participate in francophone social media; develop and employ strategies to develop and maintain their language skills for the future through information and communication technologies.

The digital citizenship project for this course is the main focus of my case study. This project is a macro-task that spans over the course of the semester whereby students created and maintained various social media accounts in French about a topic of their choosing. Students were organized into groups based on their interest in topics such as social justice issues, environmentalism, healthy eating, travel, or any other theme that interested them. Each group then created their accounts on a minimum of three social media platforms (i.e., Instagram, Twitter, Tiktok, YouTube) and divided amongst themselves who was responsible for maintaining the platforms, creating content, and any other relevant roles. They then developed a “brand identity” for their project that was used across their platforms, which included a name, social media handles, a logo, and a tagline.

Then, over the course of the semester, students created and posted content on these profiles, making use of the various affordances offered by each platform. All their content was required to be in French, and they were encouraged to find other French creators and accounts within the

same niche as them to interact with. Students were not assigned a specific number of posts they had to make but were instead encouraged to create authentically in a way that felt natural to them.

Students were then assessed on the consistency and quality of the content that was published during the semester, the relevance of the content to the concepts of their theme/topic, and the use of the codes and conventions of each platform. Furthermore, students wrote a final report on the experience and the knowledge and skills that they developed over the course of the semester. In this final report, students are asked to critically reflect on the macro-task by answering the following questions:

1. How was this experience? What are you most proud of? What was challenging?
2. Which platform have you enjoyed using the most? In your opinion, what are the benefits/affordances of this platform?
3. How do you think this experience will help you in the future?
4. What advice would you give to someone who wants to get started on social media in their second language (FSL)?
5. Do you feel like you have developed language and digital literacy skills through this project? What language skills do you feel like you improved the most?
6. Were you able to create a virtual identity for your group throughout the project? How were you able to do this successfully?

This course aligns with both the Sociocultural Approach (Vygotsky, 1978) to language learning, the Seamless Language Learning Model (Wong et al., 2017) and the eLANG citizen framework (Ollivier, 2021). Throughout the course, students take part in task-based learning experiences in

digital wilds to experience authentic, real-world language outside of the bounds of instructional contexts.

4.3 Data Collection

The data collected originates from three main sources: two questionnaires conducted in the first and last course of the semester and a final report. Additionally, the work produced for the digital citizenship major project was also analyzed to further support the findings from the main data sources. All data collected for this research originates from activities and projects that are regularly completed coursework of the FLS3791 course. The two course questionnaires are completed each term at the beginning and end of the semester as a way for the Professor to better understand both the digital practices that the students are bringing with them to the course, and both the language and digital literacy skills that they develop over the course of the semester. It is important to note, however, that I did play a part in the development of the digital citizenship major project. In the Winter 2022 term, I was hired as a teaching assistant for the FLS3791 course and helped to create the major project with my knowledge of social media, my FSL learning experience, my language education experience, and my existence as a member of Generation Z. This course remains Professor Hamel's, I played a role in the creation of this project by providing my ideas, suggestions, and guidance, it was still a collaborative effort in which the Professor of the course had the final say. Also, I believe that it is important to mention that the major project that was analyzed for this research (Fall 2022 term) was the second iteration of this macro task. My role within this course was to assist both Professor Hamel and the students. I acted as a guide, and provided the learners with resources, and presented some demonstrations regarding the usage of TikTok, Instagram, and various digital tools.

4.3.1 Questionnaires

Questionnaires were chosen as a method of data collection because this qualitative case study was conducted in an exploratory manner. According to Sue and Ritter (2015), if a questionnaire is conducted in such a way, “no attempt is made to examine a random sample of a population; rather, researchers conducting exploratory research usually look for individuals who are knowledgeable about a topic or process.” Within this case study, the participants were not chosen at random, but rather were all a part of the same course.

The first questionnaire was completed as a course assignment during the first class through the online quiz and survey platform Quizizz and made use of multiple-choice and short-answer type questions. All 22 students in the course completed this first questionnaire. It included 14 multiple-choice and short-answer questions focusing on their digital habits, social media usage, and goals for the course (See Appendix A). These provide insights into the learners’ digital practices, such as what social media platforms they use, how frequently, and for what reasons. The second questionnaire where students can provide feedback regarding each course task was completed at the end of the course and acted as a form of self-evaluation using the Survey platform SurveyMonkey. It included 11 multiple choice and short answer questions (See Appendix B) focusing on their experience with the course, and their interpretations of the affordances of the various tasks they completed. Only 21 of the 22 students completed the second questionnaire. As said, these questionnaires are regularly completed as a task within the FLS3791 course and were only enhanced with a few questions that relate specifically to Generation Z’s digital practices. They were not designed specifically for this research.

The results of these questionnaires will be summarized to not only discover the digital practices of Generation Z learners but also how their pre-established competencies associated with

everyday technology-mediated literacies (Reinhardt, 2022) can be better addressed in the LL classroom. Moreover, these questionnaires help to investigate the learners' perceptions of these tasks and what they allow for in terms of language learning and digital literacy development.

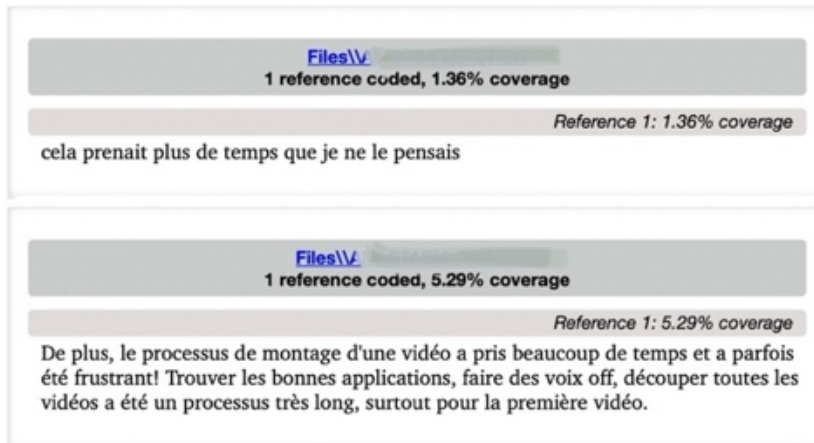
4.3.2 Final Reports

A thematic analysis of the corpus of their digital citizenship major project final reports was conducted because this method is intended to be employed in cases where you are attempting to discover something about people's views, opinions, knowledge, experiences, or values from a set of qualitative data – for example, interview transcripts, social media profiles, or questionnaire responses. This aligns well with the corpus of texts and projects that I will be analyzing and allows for increased flexibility in interpreting the data thereby simplifying the analysis of large data sets by sorting them into broad themes (Braun and Clarke, 2013).

4.4 Methodological Procedure: Thematic Analysis

The student's digital citizenship project final reports (See Appendix C) were analyzed thematically (Braun and Clarke, 2013; 2022) as a corpus using NVivo (Figure 1) to identify the affordances for language learning that this project facilitates, and the pedagogical goals that can be attained through its implementation and the digital practices that it addresses.

Figure 1
NVivo Tagging Export



Thematic analysis is a method of analyzing qualitative data that is usually applied to a set of texts. When completing an analysis of this kind, the researcher examines the data to identify common themes, topics, ideas, and patterns that appear. I have chosen to conduct a thematic analysis because it allows for increased flexibility in interpreting the data and for an easier approach to large data sets by sorting them into broad themes (Braun and Clarke, 2013).

This process typically involves six steps: familiarization, coding, generating themes, reviewing themes, defining, and naming themes, and writing up (Braun and Clarke, 2013). The first step, familiarization, involves getting to know the data through a thorough overview. Afterwards, the data is coded by highlighting sections of texts and labelling/coding them to describe their content. Next, the codes that have been created will be analyzed to locate patterns among them, thereby creating themes which are broader than the codes themselves. The researcher must then determine if their themes are useful and accurate representations of the data. This is where one might rework, split, combine, or discard their themes. Once the researcher has a final list of themes, they must name and define each of them. This involves, but is not limited to, formulating what is meant by each theme, and explaining how it helps us understand the data.

For this case study, I followed this six-step process to analyze the corpus of course artifacts and data collected. After familiarizing myself with the corpus, the final reports were tagged/coded both semantically and latently for indicators and instances involving constructions of the self, identity development, development of digital literacy skills, student perceptions of the experience, and metaphors for SMLL. A semantic approach involves analyzing the explicit content of the data and a latent approach involves reading into the subtext and assumptions underlying the data. Because I approached the data with some preconceived themes that I was expecting to find, I used a deductive approach to the thematic analysis.

To summarize, the questionnaire results and the findings from the thematic analysis were analyzed in tandem while considering Reinhardt's Metaphors for SMLL, The Sociocultural Approach to Language Learning, "Real-World" Task-Based Language Teaching (eLANG), Digital Literacies, Digital Wilds, and The Seamless Language Learning Model. Additionally, artifacts from the digital citizenship major project were used to further support the findings of these sources.

Based on the results of both the questionnaires and the thematic analysis of the digital citizenship project final reports, I will discuss the implications of my findings for language teaching and learning by creating a detailed portrait of the learners' digital practices, including how these can be better addressed in the LL classroom through "real-world" tasks. I will also propose some recommendations for pedagogical implementation that can be used with Generation Z learners by focusing specifically on the suitability/relevance of macro tasks and the language learning and digital literacy development that they facilitate.

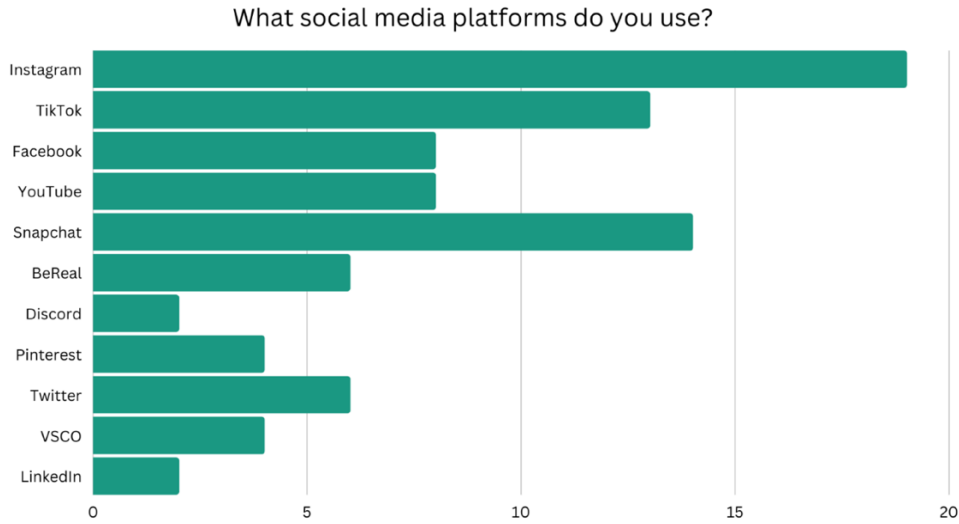
Chapter 5: Results & Discussion

The results and discussion of this case study will be presented simultaneously – the data will be presented and discussed in light of my research questions. First, I will begin by discussing my departure point: the digital practices that the Generation Z learners brought to this course (RQ1). Then, I will venture into exploring both the language and digital competencies that the students feel like they acquired throughout the digital citizenship project (RQ2). While exploring these competencies, I will also highlight the challenges the students faced, their real-world interactions, and their opinions and interpretations of the project and experience as a whole (RQ3), as well as which metaphors (Reinhardt, 2019) were utilized (RQ4).

5.1 RQ1. What digital practices are the Generation Z learners bringing to this course?

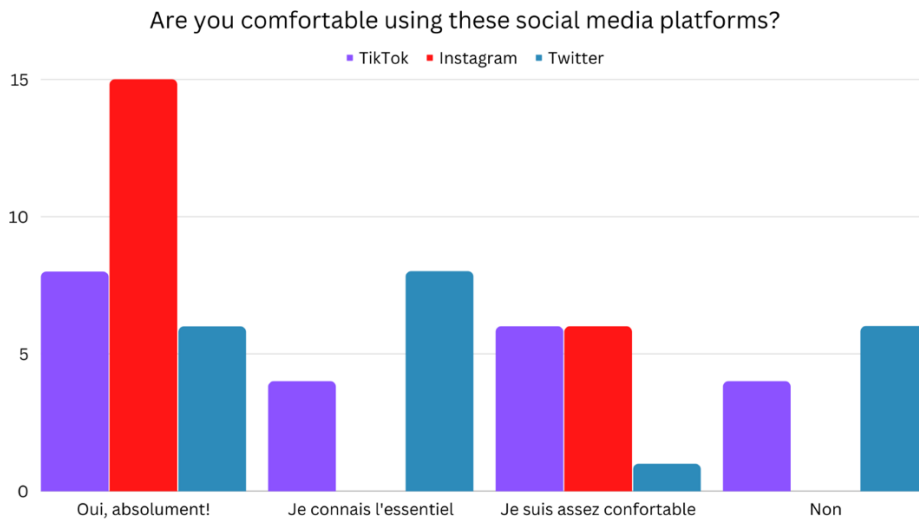
Through the first Questionnaire that was administered during the first class of the semester, students were asked many questions about their existing digital practices and competencies. While fifteen social media platforms were mentioned (Figure 2), the three most popular social media platforms were Instagram (90%), TikTok (62%) & Snapchat (66%). When asked which platform they use the most frequently, TikTok was highlighted by 44% of students. This aligns with Muliadi's suggestion that "just as Millennials fueled the rise of earlier social media platforms, like Facebook, Generation Z is fueling the rise of TikTok" (2020, para. 5). Facebook and Twitter were only mentioned by 36% and 27% of students, respectively and neither were mentioned as their most frequently used platform.

Figure 2
Social Media Platforms



Students were then asked about their comfort levels using three social media platforms – TikTok, Instagram, and Twitter (Figure 3). Overall, students were the most comfortable with using Instagram – 71% said that they are *absolutely comfortable*, while 27% said that they are comfortable enough.

Figure 3
Comfort Using TikTok, Instagram and Twitter



As was suggested by Reinhardt, “most students now come to L2 learning with a range of dispositions or habitus associated with everyday technology-mediated literacies” (2022, p. 1), in this case, 71% of students were completely comfortable with using and navigating Instagram as a platform. They were not explicitly taught these skills, but rather have acquired them over time in their personal lives.

Interestingly, only 36% of students believe they are absolutely comfortable with using TikTok while 45% said they are comfortable enough or know the essentials. Only 4 students (18%) said they are not comfortable with using this application. TikTok is the newest platform of the three investigated, so it is logical that students would still be acquiring the skills required to navigate this platform in comparison to Instagram which they have had much more exposure to. Also, according to Sloane and Rittenhouse (2019), 69% of TikTok’s user base is aged 16 to 24, all members of Generation Z. Bernard Ining (2021) also suggested that because the videos on TikTok are shorter in duration, they are “able to capture better interest and the short attention span for many learners” (p. 172).

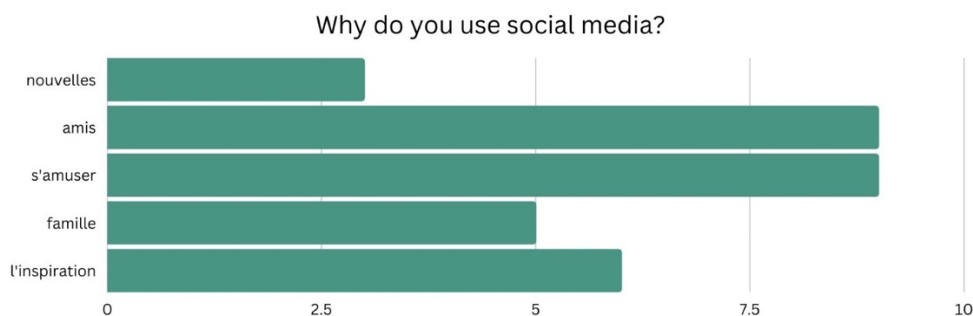
Twitter had the lowest reported levels of comfort with only 27% of students reporting that they are absolutely comfortable with the app and 38% of students stating that they know only the essential aspects of navigating the application and 32% stating that they aren’t comfortable at all.

As previously suggested, it seems that the younger generations are moving away from Facebook and Twitter towards newer platforms such as TikTok and Instagram. As previously explored, Lomicka and Lord (2016) suggested that there is (1) a move towards mobility, (2) a focus on ephemerality and digital tribalism and (3) a reduction of text and subsequent increase in images (Friedman 2013; Beck 2014). While Generation Z is still forming digital connections like those

before them, there is less of a focus on “status updates, likes, followers, connections and notifications” and more focus on digital tribalism, “the push towards smaller subpopulation groups with shared interests” (Beck, 2014 cited in Lomicka and Lord, 2016, p. 264). The apps that Generation Z prefers also make use of more visual elements such as photos and videos, rather than text (Lomicka and Lord, 2016). For this reason, it is logical that Instagram and TikTok would be more popular with these learners.

Students were then asked why they use social media (Figure 4); the three most mentioned reasons were (1) interacting and keeping in touch with friends and family (64%); (2) for general amusement and passing time (42%); and (3) for inspiration (29%).

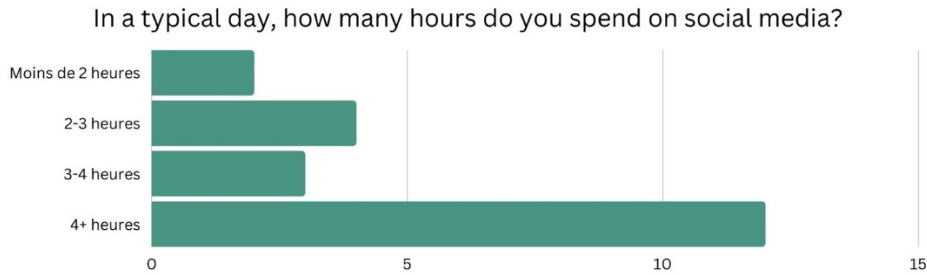
Figure 4
Reasons for Using Social Media



One student elaborated by mentioning that they use social media to stay “en contact avec ma famille/mes amis qui habitent d’ailleurs, regarder les photos/vidéos intéressantes et de me connecter plus avec mes intérêts en utilisant certains médias sociaux.” These findings support, even indirectly, that Generation Z is using technology and social media to communicate with their circle and to learn new skills (Fromm and Read, 2018; Prioparas et al., 2017; Smith, 2019; Schnackenberg and Johnson, 2019).

When asked how many hours they spend a day on social media (Figure 5), on average, 57% of students reported that they spend more than 4 hours a day on social media platforms. Only 34% of students reported spending 2-4 hours a day and only 2 students (9%) less than 2 hours a day.

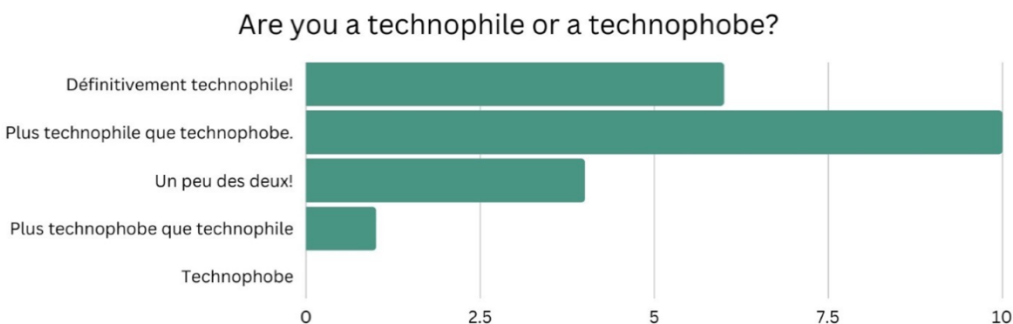
Figure 5
Time Spent on Social Media



Mobile technologies nowadays allow for anytime, anywhere access to social media (Reinhardt, 2020). This means that students are accessing their social media profiles not only from home but also while on the go, at school, at work and when with friends. Generation Z students are using social media more than half of the average workday.

Overall, 48% of the GenZ students view themselves as *more technophile than technophobe* while 29% view themselves as *definitely technophile* (Figure 6). Crucially, 0 students identified themselves as *technophobe*.

Figure 6
Technophile vs. Technophobe

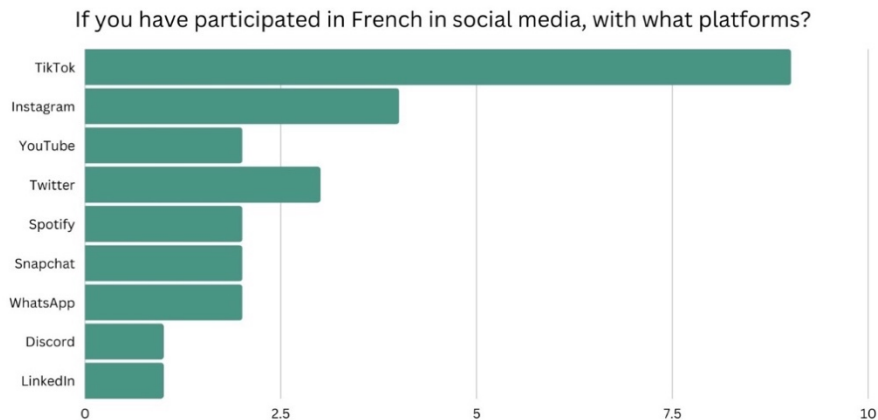


The majority of students (57%) believe that they are fairly active and engaged digital citizens overall. As previously mentioned, Generation Z is considered to be the "digital natives" (Prensky, 2001), meaning that they have “grown up surrounded by computers and laptops and by an array of increasingly sophisticated communication devices that support personal, portable, wirelessly networked communication” (González-Lloret, 2017, p. 234) and consider these technologies to be essential to their daily existence. Evidently, these findings align with the fact that Generation Z has been using technology and social media their whole life to communicate with their circle and to learn new skills (Fromm and Read, 2018; Prioparas et al., 2017; Smith, 2019; Schnackenberg and Johnson, 2019).

When asked how they perceive their own generation, 48% of the students mentioned social media and general ‘techiness’ as pillars of Generation Z. Interestingly, 19% also mentioned diversity and inclusivity. It is evident that this generation perceives technology as a key aspect of their identity. Indeed, these "digital natives" (Prensky, 2001) consider these technologies to be essential to their daily existence and have been using technology and social media their whole life (Fromm and Read, 2018; Prioparas et al., 2017; Smith, 2019; Schnackenberg and Johnson, 2019).

As the main premise of the course is analyzing “the language and conventions used on the internet and in French social media,” the students were asked if they have ever used social media in French, and if so, which platforms (Figure 7).

Figure 7
Social Media in French - Platforms



Only 14% of students regularly participated on social media in French before this course while 24% said that they sometimes do, and the majority (38%) said they rarely do. For those that had participated on social media in French, TikTok & Instagram were the platforms they were using (Figure 7). Due to the popularity of these two platforms with the learners, it is logical that this is where they would be exposed to French in the digital world. As previously mentioned, TikTok has a young user base: 69% of the users aged from 16 to 24 (Sloane and Rittenhouse, 2019). So, the majority of TikTok's users are of the Generation Z who are highly educated, tech-savvy, and constantly connected to their mobile devices (see Fromm and Read, 2018; Prioparas et al., 2017; Smith, 2019; Bernard Ining, 2021). Additionally, both TikTok and Instagram also operate within an algorithm, meaning that due to the learner's geographical location and use of French on their mobile devices, the applications would be pushing French content onto their feeds.

5.2 RQ2. What digital literacy and language competencies are the Generation Z learners able to further through this real-world digital citizenship project?

To answer my second research question, I will first discuss my findings regarding the students' perceptions of the language skills they feel they acquired through this digital citizenship project.

Then, I will discuss my findings regarding the students' interpretation of the project in terms of their digital literacy development. These results are taken from my thematic analysis conducted with NVivo of the students' project final reports.

5.2.1 Language Skills

One of the main goals of the course, and the digital citizenship project, was for the students to develop and advance their language skills in real-world contexts. As such, in their final reports, students were asked what language skills they feel like they developed. Overall, students reported the following skills which were tagged in my thematic analysis as: oral expression, speaking naturally, using and understanding slang, using authentic real-world French, interacting with native speakers, and being okay with language imperfection. As suggested by Lafford (2009), language is a context-bound phenomenon, its role is to mediate relationships between people and the world, and its use is subject to the communicative needs of the people involved in specific authentic situations (Wong et al, 2017). Through this digital citizenship project, students were able to experience language authentically in the real world, outside of the classroom.

Regarding their overall oral expression competencies, one student expressed that they feel as if they developed in tandem with their confidence:

“Je pense que mes capacités à parler en français se sont améliorées, principalement grâce à une nouvelle confiance. Le fait que j’ai parlé en français sur une plateforme publique m’a donné des raisons de croire que j’avais la capacité de communiquer clairement en français.”

One student also elaborated, explaining that it was through their TikTok voice overs that they really improved: “Je pense que cette expérience a vraiment amélioré mes compétences en français, spécifiquement quand j’ai fait mes enregistrements audio pour les vidéos sur TikTok.”

Many students also mentioned that the digital citizenship project helped them speak more naturally in French. One student even suggested that it became easier for them to speak naturally to a camera over the course of the semester:

“Le fait de devoir filmer des voix off et de les rendre naturelles a demandé beaucoup d’efforts, mais je trouve maintenant qu’il est beaucoup plus facile de parler français devant une caméra sans être timide ou avoir l’air d’un robot!”

When asked why they chose to take this course, 43% of students identified wanting to learn to use French online, and 48% learning more “everyday” non-academic French as their main reason. Once again, social media is a wild environment as it is dynamic, unpredictable, and erratic. However, these characteristics are part of what makes learning experiences with these platforms so valuable for learners. By using SM for pedagogical purposes, students are exposed to how their target language is used outside the boundaries of the classroom. Many students seemed to be excited by this prospect as they explained that because they only use French in educational and professional contexts, their opportunities to make use of more casual French are lacking. Many, however, mentioned that this project helped them become more accustomed to informal language. A student elaborated by explaining how it was through reading comments on TikTok and Instagram that they learned about French slang and abbreviations:

“Au cours de cette expérience, mon argot et mes formules courtes en français se sont améliorés. Comme j’ai appris le français toute ma vie dans un cadre très institutionnel, je n’ai pas été exposé au français conversationnel de la même manière que je le suis à l’anglais. Lorsque je cherchais l’inspiration, je lisais beaucoup de commentaires en français, et j’ai appris d’eux.”

Initially, when asked what difficulties they believe exist for language learners to participate on social media in their L2, 62% of the GenZ language learners suggested that understanding and using informal language such as slang and short forms is what they struggle with the most.

Evidently, this project was able to help some of the learners move past this difficulty.

This understanding of slang and abbreviations goes hand in hand with being able to understand and employ real-world, authentic online French. Many students felt like this experience allowed them to be integrated authentically into an online French society, allowing them to explore and expand their language skills. One student argues that while an understanding of grammar and structure is important, it is the real-world uses that allow for one to fully master a language:

“J’ai interagi fréquemment avec d’autres comptes Tik Tok français: ce qui m’a aidé à apprendre un langage approprié pour les médias sociaux - un langage plus authentique pour le style de vie que pour les études. Je trouve que l’apprentissage de la grammaire et de la structure de la langue nous donne les bases de l’apprentissage de la langue, mais le fait d’être authentiquement intégré dans la société où la langue est utilisée, comme nous l’avons été dans le cadre de ce projet, nous aide à vraiment la maîtriser.”

Interestingly, some students found that this experience allowed for them to feel more comfortable interacting with “native” French speakers. For example, one student expressed that their understanding “de l’argot utilisé par les francophones” is one of the competencies that they are happy to have developed throughout the course. Throughout my corpus analysis, I tagged the terms “native speakers” and “des personnes de langue maternelle française” as they were mentioned by five learners. However, it is important to note that the terms “native speaker” (NS) and “non-native speaker” (NNS), while still used within the field of applied linguistics, do face much criticism (Slavkov, et al., 2022, p.31). Indeed, these so-called “native speakers” tend to be put on a pedestal by both language teachers and learners alike for the expertise that they hold when it comes to the target language. For example, Hattem and Lomicka (2016) suggest that “interaction with NSs can provide opportunities for authentic communication an exchange, motivation, engagement, negotiation of meaning, the development of intercultural competence, and input/output” (p. 15) for language learners.

Throughout this study, I reconceptualized the affordance of “native speaker” interactions as *language user interactions*, as various other scholars in the field have begun to do (Slavkov, et

al., 2022). The Internet is a virtual space in which users engage in real cultural discourse, especially within social media (Wiemeyer and Zeaiter, 2015), and so the real affordance is not that language learners have opportunities to engage with so-called “native speakers”, but any language user at all. This is especially true for foreign language contexts, especially where interlocutors of the target language are not readily accessible outside the classroom. Bridging this gap is one of the main goals of SMLL, as it seeks to connect interactive social media opportunities with language learners around the world, thereby expanding the opportunities for input and output practices within the target language.

It seems, however, that the learners also valued interacting with “native speakers”, as many of them noted this in their final reflections. One student even suggested that this project allowed for them to feel more comfortable speaking with their non-native accent in public: “Cette expérience m’a également aidé à interagir avec d’autres créateurs français et à ne pas avoir peur de parler avec mon accent devant un public français.” Throughout this project, social media facilitated “dynamic and dialogic relationships” (Gomes Junior, 2020, p. 3).

This, of course, is intrinsically linked to linguistic insecurity and the learners accepting their “imperfection”. While the affordance of language user interactions is certainly an exciting opportunity made possible through SMLL, this perspective may be altered depending on learners’ opinions of their linguistic proficiency (Aloraini and Cardoso, 2020). It follows that the affordance of language user interactions is two-fold. On one hand, these experiences can be “engaging while increasing intercultural awareness, as well as linguistic proficiency” (Hattem and Lomicka, 2016). Such as in the case of the one student who explained that she believes it to be more important to say something at all than to focus on saying it correctly:

“Pour cette compte Instagram, il était nécessaire de développer ma confiance et de poster ce que j’ai écrit. J’ai réalisé que c’est plus important de dire quelque chose que dire quelque chose correctement. Personne va croire que notre équipe sont les francophones, mais ce n’est pas l’objectif de ce projet. En somme, ce projet m’a enseigné à être d’accord avec l’imperfection de mon français.”

This quote highlights the goal of this project, regardless of their language learner status, this student was able to gain confidence using the target language in a virtual space. On the other hand, however, language user interactions may provoke anxieties in language learners (Simons & Smits, 2021), therefore lessening the impact of the experiences. So, while social media allows learners to get in touch with other users of their target language (Wiemeyer and Zeaiter, 2015), thereby increasing the opportunities for ubiquitous real-time communication, this opportunity may not be viewed positively by all learners.

5.2.2 Digital Literacy Skills

The other main goal of this digital citizenship project was, of course, to further the students' already existing digital literacy skills. As previously established, digital literacies are not simply technical competencies, but rather the skills needed to successfully interact with “the myriad of social practices and conceptions of engaging in meaning-making [...] via digital codification” (Lankshear & Knobel, 2008; p. 5). A division of this, social media literacies, such as knowing how to curate one’s profile, how to traverse connections, and how to articulate one’s network (Ellison & boyd, 2013), was also explored within this project. Overall, students reported the following digital literacy skills which were tagged in my thematic analysis as: improved understanding of hashtags, how to plan and edit videos, and how to track trends.

The students were explicitly taught about hashtags, though many of them also discovered the importance of this feature on their own. One student reported that using appropriate hashtags expanded their reach significantly:

“Une chose très intéressante que j’ai appris est que l’inclusion d’un « mot-dièse » ou « mot-clic » peut complètement augmenter le nombre des gens qui regardent la vidéo. Par exemple, pour l’une des TikToks, j’ai mis le mot-clic, « #explorezottawa », et le lendemain la vidéo était regardée par 150 personnes !”

Many students also had to discover new ways to plan and edit their short-form videos if this is not something they were already doing in their personal lives. Students mentioned many different software and applications that they made use of such as CapCut and Canva. One student explained that exploring other options, rather than editing their videos directly in the TikTok app made the process much easier:

“Avant, je n’avais jamais fait de vidéo courte (reels, Tiktoks), et maintenant je suis très familier avec chaque plateforme de médias sociaux et comment éditer et poster des vidéos. De plus, j’ai appris qu’utiliser Capcut est un moyen très facile d’éditer de courtes vidéos avant de les poster! Pour ma toute première vidéo, j’ai utilisé Tiktok pour le montage et cela a pris beaucoup de temps.”

Another student found that Canva was an easy way to improve their content: “À part de la planification, j’ai appris comment créer les vidéos en utilisant Canva . J’ai trouvé que la variété d’images et d’icônes gratuites était très utile pour rendre mes posts plus intéressants et attirants.”

By learning to plan and edit videos, students were able to critically analyze the affordances and possibilities of various resources, applications and tools. This is one of the main educational objectives of the course, and through the students’ interpretations of the experience, it seems that they were consciously aware of the critical usages of the tools they made use of throughout the course of this macro task.

Tracking trends was another concept that was explicitly taught to the students. In order to succeed on social media platforms, content needs to be relevant and aligned with the current trends. One student experienced this first-hand, finding that using trending content allowed for their accounts to receive more views:

“De plus, j’ai appris l’importance de chercher les tendances sur les médias sociaux. En suivant quelques tendances, j’ai augmenté la quantité de vues que j’ai reçues sur mes vidéos de TikTok. J’ai utilisé les sons et les actions populaires pour rendre mes vidéos plus attirantes.”

Once again, students had to critically analyze trends on their various social media platforms throughout this experience. Multiple groups made use of trending audios and filters and were able to make use of them in relation to their niche. For example, the group whose niche was sandwiches used a [trending audio and associated filter](#) to introduce themselves (Figure 8).

Figure 8

Trending Audio and Filter



Tracking trends is an essential digital literacy skill, as the algorithms of platforms such as TikTok prioritize content that is using filters, audios, and effects that are trending. Interestingly, two groups were able to consistently use trending audios, while the other groups did not seem to

prioritize this aspect of their videos. There is a multitude of reasons as to why some groups used more trending audios than others, however, a key aspect of tracking trends is spending time consuming content. So, if some groups are using social media in their free time more than others, they would be more aware of the trends that are occurring and thereby able to make use of them for their own content.

5.3 RQ3. How do the learners individually describe and interpret the task process and outcome?

My thematic analysis of the students' final project reports also found four common themes regarding the learners' interpretations of the macro task: challenges and difficulties, the relevance of the experience for their futures, their digital citizenship in FLS, and their real-world interactions.

5.3.1 Challenges & Difficulties

Despite all the digital literacy and language skills that the students acquired, there were, of course, some difficulties that they encountered. The main difficulties mentioned were that the process was time-consuming, that they struggled to plan their content, they didn't enjoy working in groups, they struggled to stay focused, and they struggled to create a following. All of these difficulties are to be expected, and are part of the learning experience, however, they are worth mentioning.

Many students underestimated the amount of time and effort that goes into creating social media content. One student mentioned that she struggled to juggle all of her responsibilities:

“ce projet prendraient plus de temps que nous avons estimé. J'ai réalisé que d'équilibrer ce projet, ainsi que la création de contenu, avec mes autres engagements et tâches étaient difficiles.”

Some students were also shocked by how much effort it took to compile everything for a video:

“le processus de montage d’une vidéo a pris beaucoup de temps et a parfois été frustrant! Trouver les bonnes applications, faire des voix off, découper toutes les vidéos a été un processus très long, surtout pour la première vidéo.”

One student also explained that she hadn’t realized how long it would take to create a short one-minute video: “Il y avait beaucoup plus d’étapes que je ne le pensais et je n’avais aucune idée du temps qu’il faut pour réaliser une vidéo aussi courte qu’une minute!” Creating content also involves planning content, especially when one is posting across multiple platforms. Many students found this aspect of the project to be much more difficult than they had anticipated: “Je n’ai aucune idée du niveau de planification requis.”

Interestingly, five students mentioned that it is difficult to remain on task while using platforms that are designed to distract you: “Il est tellement difficile de se concentrer sur les tâches que je suis venu pour faire quand la plateforme fait de son mieux pour me détracter.”

One of the most frequently mentioned difficulties was creating a following on their various social media platforms. This was to be expected, as growing an audience takes time, and it was highly unlikely that any of the groups would go viral over such a short period of time. One student explained that this was frustrating, as you cannot control if or when you go viral:

“En termes de visibilité également, je ne sais pas ce qui rend quelque chose viral et parfois je pense que c’est le hasard, mais avec notre contenu, obtenir plus de spectateurs était difficile et je ne sais toujours pas comment développer notre marque.”

Finally, three of the four groups also mentioned that they struggled with keeping to a posting schedule. While posting across multiple platforms, it was essential that the students had some kind of schedule in place. However, as the semester progressed and their coursework no doubt increased, many groups struggled to maintain their schedule, no matter how valiant their intentions had been. One student explained that this was their biggest difficulty with the project:

“Le plus grand défi auquel nous avons été confrontés en tant que groupe a été de nous en tenir à un horaire régulier. Au début, nous avions de bonnes intentions et nous avions même un calendrier pour nous montrer quand nous devions publier du contenu sur nos comptes. Mais l'école s'est souvent interposée et il était difficile de se rappeler de ce que nous devons faire chaque semaine.”

5.3.2 Relevance of the experience for learners' futures

This project was designed specifically with the students' futures in mind. The development of both their language and digital literacy skills are beneficial for their potential future careers in a variety of fields. Many students who are hoping to become French teachers themselves expressed that this project would be very useful in their future careers:

“À l'avenir, je voudrais devenir enseignante de français, donc je peux utiliser ce que j'ai appris de l'utilisation de TikTok dans ma salle de classe. Par exemple, au lieu de faire des présentations avec les diapositives, je peux encourager mes étudiants de créer les courtes vidéos pour présenter leur recherche.”

Another student who works as a Drag Queen also mentioned that this project is beneficial to them currently, as well as in the future:

“C'était une expérience que je n'oublierai jamais et j'ai hâte de continuer à utiliser les compétences que j'ai acquises dans ma vie quotidienne ainsi que dans mes médias sociaux, étant donné que je suis une drag queen et que m'ouvrir dans la deuxième langue officielle du Canada peut m'ouvrir encore plus de portes.”

5.3.3 Digital Citizenship in FLS

Another key tenant of this project was evidently for the students to experience digital citizenship in FLS. To reiterate, digital citizenship in this context involves developing a set of skills, attitudes, and knowledge to navigate the digital world effectively and responsibly as a language learner and user (cf. Ollivier, 2021). This goal looked different for each student depending on what kind of a social media user they are, but many expressed that they will continue to use social media in French moving forward. Some students found that they are now seeing more videos on their TikTok For You Page and also chose to follow more French creators:

“maintenant il y a beaucoup des vidéos sur mon FYP qui est en français qui m’intéresse. Maintenant je suivi plusieurs comptes en français pour rester dans le coup et développer mes compétences linguistiques d'une manière moins formelle.”

Many also mentioned that they are finding it much easier to understand French in digital environments after the project and hope to continue to expand their competencies moving forward:

“Je trouve que maintenant mes plateformes sont beaucoup plus bilingue, et que c'est beaucoup plus facile a comprendre les contenus français sur les applis - e.g. Tik Tok, Instagram, etc. Avec ça, je me sens plus à l'aise en parlant le français parce que je pense que maintenant j'ai un meilleur connaissance de comment le faire au quotidienne avec les personnes bilingue et non seulement en classe avec les autres Angolophones. Je pense que pour améliorer, et être de plus un citoyenne numérique je devrai participer plus en ligne, comme faire des commentaire, partager des contenus français sur mes propres pages, etc.”

Because this project was developed with the eLANG real-world task-based approach (Ellis, 2003, 2009, 2017; Long, 2015) in mind, many students found this project to be useful when it came to learning “everyday” French, rather than the academic and professional French that they are accustomed to. One student found that this project prompted them to use their devices in French much more frequently:

“Ce cours m'a vraiment montré comment utiliser le français non seulement en classe mais aussi sur le lieu de travail ou dans la vie de tous les jours. Je me retrouve maintenant à utiliser tous mes appareils électroniques en français et j'utilise même parfois Siri pour m'entraîner à parler. Bien que j'aie encore beaucoup de chemin à parcourir, ce cours m'a donné une longueur d'avance et un défi que j'ai vraiment apprécié.”

While some students were initially scared to post online in the target language, many discovered over the course of this project that it is not as frightening as they had originally thought:

“J'ai toujours eu trop peur ou mal à l'aise d'utiliser le français sur les réseaux sociaux, mais maintenant je me rends compte qu'il y a des gens à tous les niveaux qui utilisent le français sur Internet et que personne ne se moque de vous. Je me sens plus exaspéré avec ça maintenant et je n'ai plus aussi peur de sortir et de parler français en ligne”

Some students also found that they are now using social media in French much more actively than passively. For example, one student now makes comments on TikTok in French, rather than just watching the videos:

“je regarde les Tiktoks français quand je le peux et LE PLUS IMPORTANT c’est que je participe en français en faisant des commentaires sur des vidéos français. Cela pour moi c’est toujours le plus gros obstacle, donc je suis fière de moi-même pour le pouvoir de la surmonter et pas ne pas se soucier de ce que pensent les autres.”

5.3.4 Real-World Interactions

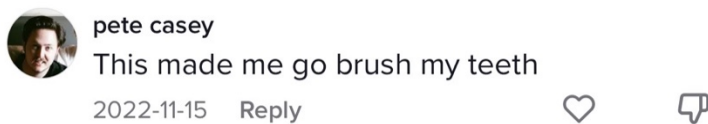
Because this project took place in a real-world environment, students were interacting with authentic language users, beyond the language classroom. Two students in particular noted their experiences, one received an unkind comment, one was reposted by a local business. The first student explained that:

“Nous avons reçu un commentaire haineux sur TikTok, ce qui n’est pas bon, mais je comprends que ces commentaires sont attendus avec les comptes publics. Quoi qu’il en soit, je pense qu’il est important d’ignorer les commentaires négatifs et de continuer à publier du contenu.”

As the student notes, receiving comments like this is to be expected. For example, in Figure 9, one user suggested that the drink recipe a group posted was filled with too much sugar for their liking. Posting content for a public audience involves knowing that you may receive unkind comments, and while this is unfortunate, it is clear that the student understood this aspect of the experience.

Figure 9

“Commentaire haineux sur TikTok”



The second student decided to create a video featuring a local business:

I made “une vidéo de critique dans le style d’un vlog pour une sandwicherie d’Ottawa appelée La Bottega Nicastro et, à ma grande surprise, j’ai reçu une mention spéciale de leur part. Cette mention sur leur histoire Instagram a vraiment renforcé ma confiance et m’a fait sentir extrêmement fier de ce que j’ai créé. C’était vraiment sympa de voir que mon dur labeur a été remarqué et apprécié par la sandwicherie que j’ai visitée.”

As the student notes, having this kind of interaction with a real business was motivating for the student and enhanced her confidence. This authentic interaction exemplifies the sort of possibilities created by this project. This macro task was created with the Seamless Language Learning Model (Wong et al., 2017) in mind, and as such, it facilitates social interactions in authentic learning contexts with social media in the target language. As previously explored, one of the key aspects of this model is that language learning should be contextualized to support the learners’ communicative goals and should make use of authentic language experiences to foster the skills that will be relevant to them in the classroom and beyond. Through this experience, students experienced many authentic real-world interactions, thereby providing them with skills relevant to their futures.

5.4 RQ4. How were the students able to make use of social media as a mirror, window, doorway, and playground through the digital citizenship project?

As previously mentioned, this digital citizenship project was designed with Reinhardt’s (2020) metaphors for Social Media Language Learning in mind: windows, mirrors, doorways, and playgrounds.

5.4.1 Windows

Through the window of social media, learners can observe how language users interact with one another and experience authentic language and cultural interactions without having to be directly involved in the conversation. To make use of the window of social media, the learners were

asked to form online communities by following other creators related to their theme. Some groups did this very well, while others focused more on posting rather than forming a community. Group 1 (*entre_2_tranches*) did not follow any other creators on Instagram nor YouTube but did follow a few relevant accounts on TikTok: *lacuisine_12*, *badr_chq*, *seizemay*, *alexcook.in*. Group 2 (*vivre_mieux*) formed small communities on Instagram and Twitter (*Ottawahealthsante*, *uocampus*, *vivreavecmoins*, *uOttawa*, *GC Mental Health*) but none on Tiktok. Group 3 (*mlle.mixologue*) did not follow any creators on any of their accounts and focused on posting content. Finally, group 4 (*disparetres*) formed the largest community by following relevant creators on all three of their platforms: *Deforestation.jmss*, *criseclimatique2021*, *partivertqc*, *shityoushouldcareabout*, *thegreenparty_canada*, *pattiegonia*, *conservationcorpscan*, *sciencecdn*, *environmentcan*, *helpourearthnow*, *savannahrosewildlife*. It is clear that some groups were more eager to create content than form and observe communities. Though their reasoning for this was not determined, it may be related to a belief that posting is more important than following others, especially when it is for a school project.

In alignment with the Seamless Language Learning Model, we can view social media as a digital space which facilitates “dynamic and dialogic relationships, one can assume that interaction with environments stimulates the creation and reinforcement of networks” (Gomes Junior, 2020, p. 3). As previously discussed, for Generation Z, these approaches have logically become interconnected with SMLL since social media has become a social “space” and “environment” where the majority of their digital communication takes place (Kick, Contacos-Sawyer, and Thomas, 2015). It is for this reason that establishing communities in digital spaces was so important for the students to experience. They likely already have multiple digital communities

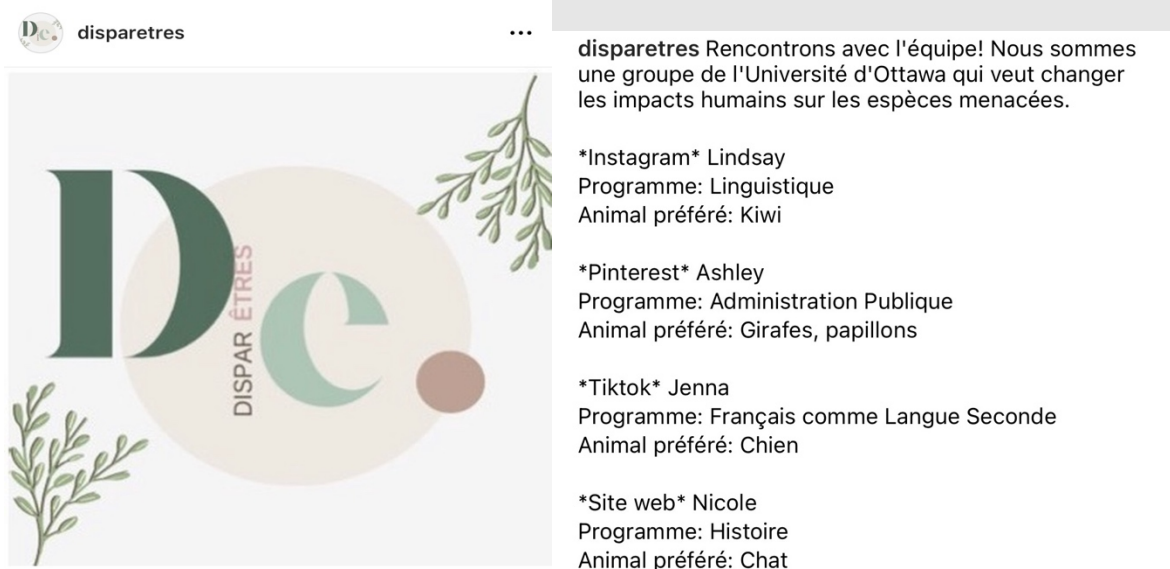
that they are a part of in their L1, this experience allows them to form them in the target language as well.

5.4.2 Mirrors

By creating and projecting an identity of their choosing, language learners may also use social media as a mirror. As previously mentioned, online social media platforms and their associated communities create numerous opportunities for language learners to “write, read, and speak their worlds into existence” (Alvermann, 2008, p. 13). This aspect of the project was explored through whether or not the students chose to link their personal accounts to that of their project. The students were never explicitly told that they had to, nor that they should not. They were also never told that they had to make a post introducing their group members. Interestingly, three of the four groups did introduce their members, though only one tagged their personal accounts. Groups 1 and 2 did not do an introductory post on Instagram – though the group members did show their faces on their accounts, they did not tag their personal accounts. Group 3 was the only group to both introduce their members and tag their personal accounts. Group 4 (Figure 10) created an introductory post but did not tag the personal accounts of their members. Group 1 created an introductory TikTok video but did not tag their personal accounts.

Figure 10

Identity & Social Media – Group 4



It is understandable that many students did not want to link this project to their personal lives.

Language learners can develop and enhance their identity in virtual spaces by carefully curating the communities they wish to engage with, and the roles they fill. In this way, learning and identity are “dialectically bound to one another” (Thorne, Sauro, and Smith, 2015, p. 217). Many students may have felt uncertain about creating a link to their carefully curated personal profiles for this reason. One student noted that it feels “cringey” to post online in a language that they are learning, but found that this project helped them overcome this fear:

“le cours m'a permis d'être plus à l'aise avec les médias sociaux et moins effrayé par le fait d'être "cringe online", tout peut être quelque chose qui sort un peu de votre zone de confort, pour cette raison, je suis reconnaissant à ce cours de m'avoir poussé à poster différemment sur mon instagram personnel, j'ai réalisé que le monde continuera même si un post est quelque chose de nouveau par rapport à votre norme !”

Group 3 (Figure 11) on the other hand, was evidently proud of the content they were producing for the project and were happy to have it connected to their personal lives. While there is no

“correct” way to formulate an identity online, it is important to remember that students will feel differently about associating a school project with their personal lives.

Figure 11
Identity & Social Media – Group 3



This formulation of identity is intrinsically linked to the notion of digital literacy skills. Today’s digital spaces like social media have diversified our literacy practices to include “the entwining of written communication with socially relevant issues of participation and identity formation” (Reinhardt and Thorne, 2019, p. 211). Literacy is strongly implicated with social practices and the development of identity (Street, 2003; Hafner, 2014). This means that learning a second language is understood as “a social process in which language learners actively participate, enacting particular social roles and negotiating their situated identities” (Lam, 2000 cited in Chen, 2013, p. 143). While some students proudly created a link to their digital language learning identities, others were more hesitant to do so. The key is that no group was forced to create links to their personal lives, as learners’ identities are created through their ongoing

performance of various roles in different social contexts, and interactions with others in specific communities of practice (Chen, 2013; Hafner, 2014). To maintain the authenticity of this task, it was crucial that students were able to curate their identities in whichever way they saw fit.

One student also mentioned that it was difficult to maintain a coherent identity online from a “branding” perspective. This is the other side of the identity coin, picking and choosing what sort of brand you want to maintain in virtual spaces.

“Ce que j’ai appris au cours de cette expérience, c’est qu’il est très difficile d’avoir une identité cohérente sur les médias sociaux. Être un influenceur ou gérer une entreprise de médias sociaux serait très difficile seul. J’ai découvert tout au long de cette expérience que, comme nous projetons une marque sur plusieurs plateformes, tout doit avoir l’air cohérent. Cela signifie avoir les mêmes formulations, photos, logos, polices et couleurs pour que toutes vos pages indiquent à vos followers qu’il s’agit de la même marque.”

As previously mentioned, in their personal time, Generation Z learners are consistently engaging with multimodal content in virtual spaces “to share with others, using new tools to show and tell, and rewriting their social identities in an effort to become who they say they are” (Alvermann, 2008, p. 10). These pre-existing skills of identity and digital literacy development may be replicated and transformed for their second language, allowing them to portray themselves in another language entirely. Some learners may wish to align their language learner identity with their already curated online identities, while others may not.

5.4.3 Doorways

Once the learner feels ready, they can pass through the “doorway” and participate with the target language directly. All of the groups passed through the social media doorway in one way or another, some much more assuredly than others. While all the groups posted content, some posted static content such as text posts and photos much more frequently than dynamic content like videos. Though their reasoning for this was not explored, this could be due in part to

anxieties surrounding recording voice-overs in French. One student explained that their oral communication in both virtual and in-person scenarios is always frightening for them:

“Les défis de ce cours pour moi sont les mêmes pour chaque cours FLS que je prend: Parler le français oralement est toujours mon ennemi la plus effrayant. Je veux pratiquer en parlant le français mais je n'ai pas assez de confiance, je n'ai pas de confiance à cause du fait que je ne pratique pas avec les autres.”

For example, Group 4 (Figure 13) did not post any reels or dynamic content on Instagram and only made use of static posts. The other three groups, however, made use of both static and dynamic content: Group 1 (Figure 15) posted 2 reels, Group 2 (Figure 12) posted 4 reels, and Group 3 (Figure 14) posted 5 reels.

Figure 12:
Group 2 Instagram

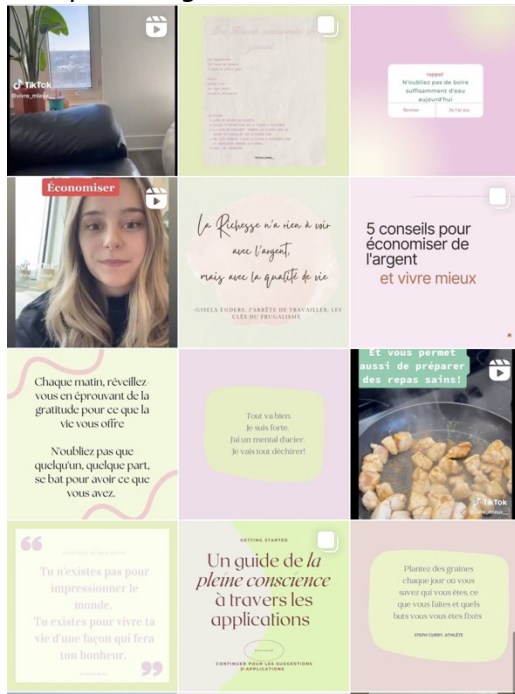


Figure 13:
Group 4 Instagram

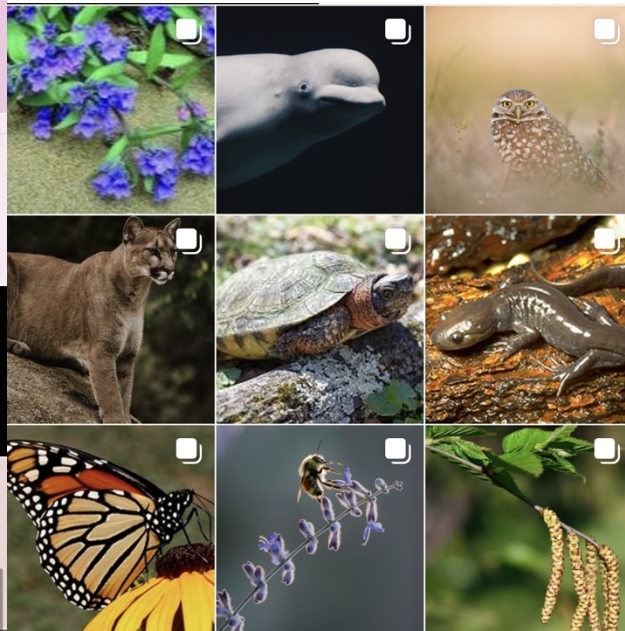
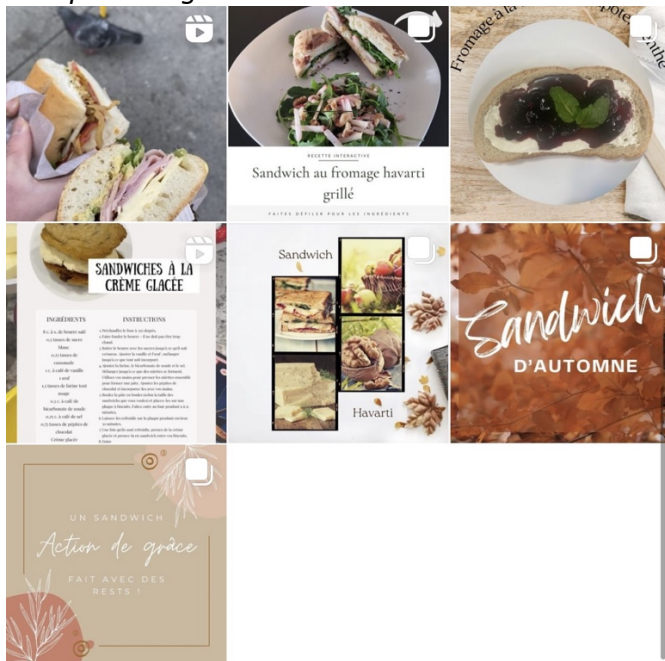


Figure 14
Group 3 Instagram



Figure 15
Group 1 Instagram



This could also be due in part to linguistic insecurity and fear of judgement and criticism. One student explained that she feared ridicule from her friends and family for her “imperfect” French:

“Quelques défis rencontrés dans ce cours inclus la timidité d'avoir une présence sur les médias sociaux en utilisant le français puisque la plupart de mes amis et famille l'utilise tous en anglais alors un défis était de surmonter la peur d'être interrogé ou ridiculisé parce que mon français n'est pas parfait”.

Another student explained she was timid to post in French, also due to fear of judgement: “j'étais vraiment un peu timide à l'idée de poster en français, simplement parce qu'avoir un public signifiait que n'importe qui pouvait juger mon français.”

However, some students seemed to gain confidence over the course of the semester, as suggested by one student: “J'ai amélioré mes capacités d'expression orale. Je deviens parfois nerveux quand je dois parler français et je trébuche sur mes mots. Dans cette classe, j'ai rarement ressenti cela.”

Many students found that this experience helped them gain confidence in their language skills: “Je suis devenu beaucoup plus confiant pour utiliser le français en ligne et dans des scénarios où je n'aurais normalement pas parlé français. J'ai également pu voir différentes façons d'interagir avec les gens en ligne en français, ce qui m'aidera à l'avenir.” This shows that this macro task allowed for authentic, real-world interactions to take place, something that is very motivating for learners.

5.4.4 Playgrounds

Finally, social media also acts as a playground for most of the groups, a space where learners can learn and play in “informal, autonomous, and gameful ways” (Reinhardt, 2020, p. 239). Many students expressed that they had fun with this project, especially regarding the non-academic content matter they were able to explore. For example, one student expressed that she really appreciated this experience because “la préparation des boissons était très amusante. Je vais certainement continuer à préparer des boissons pour mes amis et peut-être même garder Mlle Mixologie actif sur TikTok !” As post-secondary students, the vast majority of these learners'

assessments are regarding more formal topics related to their domain of study. However, with a project such as this, students are able to enhance both their digital literacy and language skills in more gameful and informal ways while exploring topics such as mental health, or even sandwiches and drinks. This highlights one of the strengths of this project: learners are able to explore the target language through a topic that they are genuinely passionate about, rather than one that is assigned to them. This may lead to the learners viewing the experience more positively, or as the student above expressed, have fun with the project while also learning.

As previously mentioned, students were not given explicit instructions as to how many posts, or the types of posts they were meant to be making. For this reason, each group had vastly different amounts of posts. Some groups had over 15 posts, while others had less than 7. However, we enforced that quality is more important than quantity, and urged students to put time and effort into their posts, rather than posting just for the sake of posting. Nonetheless, it seems that because of the lack of specific instructions, students were able to be creative in ways that they may not have been, had there been strict rules. The reason that explicit instructions were not given, and general guidelines were provided instead, is because of the concept of digital wilds. As the data analyzed shows, this project that is rooted in the “real-world” was an opportunity for the learners to experience authentic and wild language with an emphasis on structured unpredictability (Sauro & Zourou, 2019; Thorne, 2022).

5.5 Summary of Research Findings

Overall, before taking part in a digital citizenship project such as this, the Generation Z learners are using Instagram, TikTok and Snapchat the most frequently to communicate with their family and friends, entertain themselves and find inspiration for an average of four or more hours a day. They are the most comfortable using Instagram as a platform, followed by TikTok. They

consider themselves to be active and engaged on social media and are more technophiles than technophobes. However, they rarely use social media in French but engage with French content occasionally on TikTok and Instagram. Many consider general “techiness” to be a key quality of their generation as a whole.

Through this project, the students reported developing the following language skills: oral expression, speaking naturally, using and understanding slang, using authentic real-world French, interacting with native speakers, and being okay with language imperfection. In terms of digital literacy skills, the students reported that they improved their understanding of hashtags, how to plan and edit videos, and how to track trends. The students had multiple real-world, authentic interactions and felt that this project was useful for their personal and professional futures by helping them acquire both digital literacy and language skills that remain relevant beyond the classroom. Students also reported that it helped them become enhanced digital citizens in FLS by increasing the amount of French content they are consuming on social media and helped them gain confidence interacting in these digital spaces in their L2. However, it is important to note that the students did encounter some difficulties throughout this experience, most notably that the process was time-consuming, they struggled to plan their content, they didn’t enjoy working in groups, they struggled to stay focused, and they struggled to create a following. Many students also expressed that they were hesitant to post publicly in their L2 at first, but, crucially, then gained confidence over the course of the term. These difficulties will be explored further in the limitations and pedagogical implications sections of this thesis.

The analysis of the major project shows that students were able to make use of social media as a mirror, window, doorway, and playground. Students formulated their identities while becoming digital citizens in FLS, observed established communities and language users, partook in these

communities directly, and learned in “informal, autonomous, and gameful ways” (Reinhardt, 2020, p. 239). Most notably curating digital identities was heavily discussed by students more than any of the other aspects of the metaphors for SMLL. It seems that the students are very aware of and care about how they are perceived in digital spaces, even more so than the communities they are forming.

It is evident from the results of this study that this digital citizenship project supports the seven proposed affordances of employing social media for language learning purposes. Most notably, enhanced authenticity (Wiemeyer & Zeaiter, 2015), the expansion of the classroom (Aloraini & Cardoso, 2020; Sun et al., 2017), increased motivation (Liu et al. 2013; Wiemeyer & Zeaiter, 2015; Aloraini & Cardoso, 2020), the fostering of communication skills (Elola & Oskoz, 2017; Wiemeyer & Zeaiter, 2015; Sun et al., 2017), and the development of digital literacy skills (Blattner and Fiori 2011; Blattner and Lomicka 2012; Lomicka and Lord 2012; Chen, 2013; Thorne, 2013; Elola & Oskoz, 2017; Han, 2021). Data shows that students were motivated by this project and were able to find value in the process. They were also able to experience enhanced authenticity in FLS through real-world interactions outside of the language classroom. Most importantly, however, they were able to develop their language and digital literacy skills.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

6.1 Summary of Thesis

Through this exploratory case study, I aimed to address a gap in the field of SMLL by exploring the digital practices and literacies of Generation Z language learners using newer social media platforms and how their digital practices could be better addressed in the LL classroom through “Real-World” tasks (Caws, et al., 2021). To do so, four research questions were explored, including what digital practices Generation Z learners bring to the course, what digital literacy and language competencies they can develop through the project, how they describe and interpret the task process and outcome, and how they use social media as a mirror, window, doorway, and playground through the project. The objective was to assist educators in effectively implementing SMLL in their classrooms with Generation Z learners and taking advantage of its numerous benefits, thereby transforming the target language into a "living" language for learners.

Chapter 2 (pp. 9-31) provided a brief overview of the literature on social media language learning. The discussion included the redefinition and reevaluation of traditional approaches to literacy to consider the shift to digital literacies, as well as the concept of digital wilds that encouraged the consideration of authentic experiences for language learners. The use of social media platforms as primary settings for identity construction and curation through textual and multimodal expression was highlighted. The Seamless Language Learning Model was discussed as a means of facilitating social interactions in authentic learning contexts. Finally, Reinhardt’s Metaphors for Social Media Language Learning were presented as a way to better capture the unique opportunities and affordances of social media platforms for language learning.

Chapter 3 (pp. 32-43) of the research focused on the Theoretical and Pedagogical framework. Firstly, the Sociocultural Approach to Language Learning (Vygotsky, 1978) and Social Pedagogies were discussed, and the connections between these frameworks and the possibilities created through SMLL were explored. The Real-World Task-Based Language Teaching approach, which aims to promote language acquisition along the dimensions of fluency, accuracy, and complexity, was explained and its relevance to the application of SMLL was explored, drawing from works by Ellis, Long, and González-Lloret. The eLANG citizen project was also highlighted as a framework that motivates students to develop language competence and digital citizenship by allowing them to interact authentically in digital spaces. Finally, the research questions for the case study were outlined.

Chapter 4 (pp. 43-53) provided an in-depth explanation of the methodology used in the research. I justified my decision to conduct an explorative case study based on my position as both a researcher and teaching assistant for the course. I explained the qualitative approach taken for the data collection and analysis process and outlined the data collection methods. The methodological procedure was then outlined, including the six-step process of thematic analysis conducted on the corpus of collected course artifacts. The course context in which the case study was conducted was explained, including how it aligned with the theoretical and pedagogical framework of the research. Finally, I explained how the findings will aid in creating a detailed portrait of the learners' digital practices.

Chapter 5 (pp. 54-82) focused on the results of this exploratory case study through which it has been shown that employing Generation Z's pre-existing digital literacy skills in a real-world, task-based project for language learning can be motivating for the learners and facilitative of enhanced language and digital literacy skills. In terms of language skills, it was found that

students felt as if they improved their oral expression, speaking naturally, using and understanding slang, using authentic real-world French, interacting with native speakers, and being okay with language imperfection. In terms of digital literacy skills, the students reported that they improved their understanding of hashtags, how to plan and edit videos, and how to track trends.

Crucially, through this digital citizenship project, the students had opportunities to use social media “as something to look through, look at, go through, and play in” (Reinhardt, 2020, p. 240). More specifically, students had multiple real-world, authentic interactions and felt that this project was useful for their futures and that it helped them become enhanced digital citizens in FLS. Students were able to formulate their identities while becoming digital citizens in FLS, observe established communities and language users, partake in these communities directly, and learn in informal, gameful ways (Reinhardt, 2020, p. 239).

I propose that based on the findings of this case study, implementing the digital practices of Generation Z learners for language learning purposes may enhance the relevance and authenticity of the activities for the students and may also help to achieve various pedagogical objectives. By making use of their pre-existing skills and seeking to enhance them in tandem with their language comprehension and production skills, educators are able to prepare learners for their futures in today’s technology-saturated world and become effective members of society (Blattner and Fiori, 2011). As such, I believe that employing Generation Z’s digital practices for language learning is the next relevant step in sociocultural language pedagogy.

6.2 Implications & Recommendations

Generation Z is already using a variety of socially-minded technologies and tools for enjoyment (Blattner & Lomicka, 2012), if educators can convince learners to dedicate a small portion of their social media time to the target language – such as during a digital citizenship project such as this – this will provide them with increased digital literacy skills that can be transferred into their futures and simultaneously enhance their language learning.

This project could easily be replicated in various language-learning contexts with Generation Z learners, whether it be in groups or individually, or on a larger or smaller scale. The key tenant of this project is to allow students to explore the target language authentically in the real-world digital wilds. A project such as this requires guidelines, but not restrictions nor rules for it to truly allow for the students to experience authentic language usage outside of the formal classroom context. Based on the results of this study, it would be prudent to include both Instagram and TikTok in a similar project, as these are the applications that the learners are the most comfortable with and use the most frequently in their personal lives.

Based on the results of this small-scale case study, it is evident that Generation Z language learners arrive in the language classroom with “a range of dispositions or habitus associated with everyday technology-mediated literacies” (Reinhardt, 2022, p. 1) that can be integrated into their language learning. These learners find it motivating and relevant to expand their learning outside of the usual formal educational contexts and experience the target language authentically in the real world. Not only does a digital citizenship project such as this allow for learners to guide their own learning in a way that’s meaningful to them, but also helps them develop and enhance both their digital literacy and language skills. Educators can expect students to report developing and enhancing their language skills when it comes to oral expression, speaking naturally, using

and understanding slang, using authentic real-world French, interacting with native speakers, and being okay with language imperfection. Students may also report improving their digital literacy skills, specifically their understanding of hashtags, how to plan and edit videos, and how to track trends. Expanding the language classroom to include real-world interactions allows learners to better prepare themselves to continue to grow and evolve as language users in their futures, albeit professionally or not.

However, based on the results of this study and the students' own interpretations of the challenges and difficulties they faced throughout the experience, there are a few key suggestions for educators that are worth mentioning.

Firstly, based on the learners' feedback regarding the macro task, it would be prudent to provide the learners with in-class time to work on their projects. Many students reported that time constraints and juggling the work for this task with their other responsibilities was difficult.

While time management and planning are also key skills that can be learned through this experience, it may be useful to provide some time for the students to work on their projects or collaborate with their groups to eliminate some of the stress of this experience so that the focus may remain on enhancing their digital literacy and language skills.

Additionally, it is recommended that educators provide learners with resources and techniques to plan their content. Many students reported that planning and brainstorming content was difficult, and as such, educators might provide them with a list of digital content tools such as Canva's Content Planner, ClickUp, or Later. It may also be useful to conduct an activity at the beginning of the experience where students explore their social media platforms and compile a database or create a mood board of posts they can replicate or use as inspiration in their niche. This could be

done with Pinterest – each group creates a Pinterest board with posts that inspire them so that when they are unsure what kind of content to create, they simply have to consult their board.

It is also important for educators to remind students of the realities and time required to create a following. It is highly unlikely that any student will gain the hundreds or thousands of followers they desire over the course of the semester unless they happen to have a post that goes viral.

While this is something that could occur, it is important that educators remind students to remain resilient and consistent with their posting. An exercise for this could be to have students investigate their favorite influencers and internet personalities to see how long it took for their accounts to grow a following.

As previously mentioned in section 2.7, educators must assure that students are aware of the potential negative impact of public exposure on social media. This involves their digital footprint and the image they are creating for themselves in digital spaces. Educators should include explicit discussions about responsible usage of social media platforms to assure that students are aware of the implications of posting publicly so that this experience can be rewarding and enriching, rather than something that could have a negative impact on the students' digital footprint. As technologies continue to emerge and evolve, it is essential that teaching pedagogies change and adapt in tandem. This, however, does not only include implementing these technologies in the language classroom, but educating ourselves, and our students, about the negative outcomes they could potentially have. Today's technology-saturated world will only continue to grow, and as such, it is pertinent that educators are explicitly teaching their students about internet and data safety, their digital footprints, and the potential negative effects of social media on mental health. With mature learners in post-secondary and beyond, while it is likely that they will have a basic understanding of these concepts, it is still worth discussing as this

awareness is a key aspect of digital citizenship. According to Finkelhor et al., educating learners about these risks is “best carried out through integrated and comprehensive programs that focus on both off-line and online risks and dynamics conjointly” (2021). There are many programs and frameworks that have been created with this goal in mind that focus on responsible and ethical communication, secure browsing and interactions, and internet safety as a whole (cf. Common Sense Media, 2017; 2019; Family Online Safety Institute, 2020; Google, 2023; MediaSmarts, 2023). The eLANG citizen project, which seeks to help learners become digital citizens and develop the capacity to use digital media critically, creatively and autonomously is a project that focuses on the importance of critical usages in regard to digital citizenship. More specifically, eLANG focuses on helping learners “evaluate the information published on the Internet in a critical and autonomous way; understand how the participatory web works, how information is created and disseminated; become critical, creative and responsible actors in the participatory web; and, become citizens of an inclusive (multilingual and multicultural) society” (eLANG, 2023). For a digital citizenship project such as this to be successful, these aspects must be explicitly discussed with learners. Overall, when sending learners into digital wilds for learning, it is essential that we prepare them with a toolkit of sorts for their survival, most notably the knowledge of the potential negative aspects of the experience.

Once again, it is the general guidelines rather than specific instructions for this macro task that students are able to engage and explore authentically in digital wilds. It is essential that educators do not give explicit instructions as to how many posts, or the types of posts the students are meant to be making. Instead, it is prudent that educators remind learners that quality is more important than quantity and urge students to put time and effort into their posts, rather than posting just for the sake of posting.

Overall, the role of the language educator in this project is to provide resources and guidance. The guidance provided should be appropriate to student needs, which may vary with their familiarity with the social network and its conventions, as well as their own level of autonomy (Mangenot, 2013, cited in Fuchs and Snyder, 2013). Failure to gain these skills may lead to a frustrating experience for the learner (Fuchs and Snyder, 2013), and as such, guidance and resources are an essential component of the success of such a macro task. So long as general guidelines, support, and resources are provided, the educator will be able to facilitate a macro-task that allows for students to learn authentically in digital wilds.

6.3 Strengths & Limitations

6.3.1 Strengths

While I aimed to create a detailed portrait of Generation Z's digital skills, this exploratory case study was equally rooted in the learners' own interpretations of the digital citizenship macro task that they were a part of. For this reason, I believe that the most valuable aspect of the study was the thematic analysis of a corpus of authentic learner's opinions and perceptions regarding the experience. Rather than focusing simply on quantitative data about whether or not they enjoyed the experience, and what skills they feel as if they acquired, I instead collected direct and meaningful quotes from the learners that delve further into their perceptions of the macro task. I believe that the findings of this study would not be as relevant or meaningful if the analysis had been simplified to solely the questionnaires. By conducting a thematic analysis of their final reports, I was able to create a much more detailed report regarding the learners' perceptions of the task, and create connections between these opinions, and their digital practices as a whole.

I believe that another key strength of this study is that it is focused on French as a second official and minority language spoken in Canada. Hence it contributes to the body of research in the field of SMLL that highlights digital practices in languages other than English (cf. Hamel, 2019).

Based on the existing literature within the field, it was hypothesized that Generation Z learners would use Instagram, TikTok, Snapchat, and YouTube the most frequently as these three applications are statistically the most popular with social media users of their age (Briggs, 2022).

I also suggested that they would use these platforms primarily for amusement, learning new skills, and keeping in touch with family and friends. It was likely that they would use social media for more than four hours a day and consider themselves to be active and engaged social media users. I also believed that very few learners will use social media in French prior to this course but may have encountered French content occasionally. Each of these predictions was found to be correct, suggesting that this small-scale case study aligns with the findings of other scholars within the field of SMLL.

This digital citizenship project was created specifically for Generation Z language learners with a real-world, task-based approach (see eLANG). Using the Seamless Language Learning Model (Wong et al., 2017), this project transforms the target language into a “living” language for the learners by bringing the nature of communication into context (p. 10) thereby providing students with the skills needed to succeed in the target language for the modes of communication they will be using. For Generation Z, these modes of communication have logically become interconnected with SMLL since social media has become a social “space” and “environment” where the majority of their digital communication takes place (Kick, Contacos-Sawyer, and Thomas, 2015).

I believed that this digital citizenship project would provide authentic opportunities for students to enhance both their language and digital literacy skills. I hypothesized that they would be able to make use of social media as a window, mirror, doorway, and playground. I was not oblivious to the fact that there would no doubt be numerous challenges faced, though I was hopeful that the real-world interactions would prove to be motivating for the learners. Overall, I believed that this project would be received positively by the learners who would see the value and affordances of the experience.

Based on the learners' own interpretations of the project, it was clear the learners found that using social media was motivating in many respects (Wiemeyer & Zeaiter, 2015) and enabled them to develop and enhance their language and digital literacy skills while better preparing them for their futures as real-world language users outside of the classroom context. While there were some difficulties faced by the learners, it was clear that they were able to perceive the value and affordances of the experience.

6.3.2 Limitations

This case study was rooted in exploring the digital competencies of one specific group of learners: Generation Z. As such, it is important to mention that these findings may not be able to be generalized to other generations as well. Each generation learns and partakes in digital spaces in different ways (Prensky, 2001), and just as studies involving Millennial learners cannot be necessarily applied to GenZ learners, nor should the findings of this case study be blindly applied to Gen Alpha (born between 2012-2026) learners at a later date. People coevolve with the technologies that emerge and develop alongside them in their youth (Reinhardt, 2022) and, as such, it is important that these qualitative studies continue to be produced to better prepare educators to educate the learners of both today and tomorrow with their digital competencies in

mind. Once again, as Sauro and Thorne (2020) advise that “innovative pedagogy needs to be adaptive” (p. 238) meaning that educators need to consistently experiment and modify their teaching to be relevant and authentic to their learners.

It is also worth mentioning that since the main goals of this FLS course are to develop language and technology skills that will enable the student to be comfortable participating in French on the Internet and on social media, the results of this research may not be representative of Generation Z learners as a whole. While some students may enroll in this course simply to fulfill an elective requirement, or because it fits into their schedule, many may choose it specifically because they already enjoy, and regularly use social media. So, while I hypothesize that the students will generally enjoy applying their digital practices for language learning, this could be due in part to them already being interested in doing so.

It is also important to reiterate that the students did encounter some difficulties throughout this experience, most notably that the process was time-consuming, they struggled to plan their content, they didn't enjoy working in groups, they struggled to stay focused, and they struggled to create a following. Should this experience be replicated, it would be prudent to provide the learners with in-class time to work on their projects, provide them with resources and techniques to plan their content and stay focused, and remind them of the realities and time required to create a following. Though these difficulties may have been disheartening at times for the learners, they are just as important to the experience as their triumphs. These challenges are the very same that would be experienced in the real-world, and as such, only enhance the authenticity of the task.

I also believe that the groupwork component of this project lessens the authenticity of the task. For the purposes of classroom management and assessment, forming groups was the most logical option. However, it is rare that these learners will be maintaining a social media presence collaboratively in the future and many suggested that the groupwork was a hindrance to their overall success with the project. One student mentioned that the work was not divided equally:

“Il était difficile de s’assurer que chacun avait la même quantité de travail.” Another student explained that their group’s communication was a difficulty for them: “J’ai constaté que la communication était également un problème, et je pense donc avoir appris des stratégies de communication de groupe très complètes pour garantir que les choses soient communiquées clairement entre les membres du groupe.”

However, other students seemed to enjoy the groupwork aspect of this project: “J’ai trouvé que, comme groupe, nous voulions que notre projet réussisse et que nos contenus numériques soient bien faits et de bonne qualité. Nos buts et aspirations pour nos contenus nous ont inspiré de travailler de manière ciblée et efficace.” If replicated, this project could be done individually, though perhaps with each student only maintaining a social presence on one social media platform of their choosing.

Once again, this research is a case study, which Gall et al. (2003) consider to be “the in-depth study of instances of a phenomenon in its natural context and from the perspective of the participants involved in the phenomenon” (p. 436). In other words, while the results of this study are enlightening, they are not necessarily generalizable to other contexts.

6.4 Future Research

In the future, during a larger-scale research project, it would be beneficial to conduct this digital citizenship project with a larger group of learners from a less homogenous group to explore the reliability of these findings. Due to the small number of participants, the data collected in this study is not generalizable whatsoever for Generation Z as a whole. If a large-scale study could be

conducted, with students from various programs and backgrounds rather than a course geared towards the use of social media, these findings would be much more useful in forming pedagogical recommendations for employing the digital practices of GenZ in the language classroom. Diversifying the research participants may prove that the findings of this study were exaggerated slightly, because, as previously mentioned, students who choose this course may already possess the desire and skills necessary to partake in such an experience. Further, it would be interesting to conduct a similar study in a different cultural and educational context. Whether this be in a college setting rather than university, or in a different country, the findings could support this study, or prove that there are less homogeneity regarding Gen Z's digital practices than anticipated. This study was conducted with a very small, homogenous group in a restricted context, and as such, more expansive studies are needed to solidify these findings.

Moreover, it would be valuable to the field for this study to be replicated with students working individually. As previously mentioned, I believe that the groupwork component of this macro task lessens the authenticity of the experience slightly. Moreover, many students in this study expressed that the most difficult aspect of the experience was the groupwork component. If this element was to be eliminated, the findings regarding the difficulties the students faced may be more relevant to their digital literacy and language skills, rather than the collaborative aspect.

In addition, to build upon the findings of this research, future studies might conduct interviews with students, thereby enhancing the depth and relevance of the data. Because students' critical reflections were submitted as a graded written final assignment, students may have answered the questions in a way that they predicted the professor wanted them to. Conducting interviews that are not attached to the students grade whatsoever may reveal more in-depth interpretations of the experience.

In conclusion, rather than being a concrete answer to the question “what digital practices of Generation Z can be better addressed in the LL classroom through “Real-World” tasks?”, this research acts as a starting point for future studies – a prompt that suggests the feasibility of such a project or experience.

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Appendices

A: Questionnaire 1 (Quizziz)

1. Êtes-vous technophile ou technophobe ?
 - a. Définitivement technophile!
 - b. Plus technophile que technophobe.
 - c. Un peu des deux!
 - d. Plus technophobe que technophile
 - e. Technophobe

2. Dans une journée habituelle, combien d'heures passez-vous sur les médias sociaux ?
 - a. Moins de 2 heures
 - b. 2-3 heures
 - c. 3-4 heures
 - d. 4+ heures

3. Quelles sont les plateformes de médias sociaux que vous utilisez ? Laquelle utilisez-vous le plus ?
réponse ouverte: _____

4. Pour quelles raisons utilisez-vous les médias sociaux ?
réponse ouverte: _____

5. Vous considerez-vous comme une personne active, engagée dans les médias sociaux?
 - a. très engagé
 - b. plutôt engagé
 - c. moyennement
 - d. très peu
 - e. non, pas du tout

6. Êtes-vous à l'aise avec l'utilisation de TikTok ?
 - a. Oui, absolument!
 - b. Je connais l'essentiel
 - c. Je suis assez confortable
 - d. Non

7. Êtes-vous à l'aise avec l'utilisation d'Instagram ?
 - a. Oui, absolument!
 - b. Je connais l'essentiel
 - c. Je suis assez confortable
 - d. Non

8. Êtes-vous à l'aise avec l'utilisation de Twitter ?
 - a. Oui, absolument!
 - b. Je connais l'essentiel

- c. Je suis assez confortable
 - d. Non
9. Est-ce qu'il vous arrive de participer en français dans les médias sociaux?
- a. Régulièrement
 - b. De temps en temps
 - c. Rarement
 - d. Jamais
10. Si vous avez déjà participé en français dans les médias sociaux, dans quels contextes et avec quelles plateformes.
réponse ouverte: _____
11. Selon vous, quelle est la plus grande difficulté pour un apprenant de participer dans les médias sociaux en français ?
réponse ouverte: _____
12. Pour vous, que signifie être de la génération Z ? Quelles sont les caractéristiques de la GenZ ?
réponse ouverte: _____
13. Pourquoi avez-vous choisi de suivre ce cours ?
réponse ouverte: _____
14. Quels sont vos objectifs pour ce cours ?
réponse ouverte: _____

B: Questionnaire 2 (SurveyMonkey)

Autoévaluation de votre participation - FLS3791 Automne 2022

* 1. Inscrivez votre nom. 

* 3. Parmi les travaux pratiques (TP) notés, lequel(s) vous a/ont le(s) plus apporté(s)? Pourquoi? 

- TP1 - Ma bio langagière géolocalisée
- TP2 - Vidéo de blogueur/euse
- TP3 - Ma chaîne musicale francophone
- TP4 - PROJET Citoyen.n.es numériques en FLS

Pourquoi?

* 2. Quels modules (thèmes abordés) dans ce cours avez-vous trouvés les plus intéressants? Pourquoi?




- M1 - Faire connaissance
- M2 - Citoyenneté numérique et applis pour le FLS
- M3 - Les forums de discussion
- M4 - Les blogues et les vlogues
- M5 - Instagram et TikTok
- M6 - Culture francophone : musique
- M7 - Culture francophone : cinéma, télé
- M8 - LinkedIn et réseautage professionnel
- M9 - Les wikis
- M10 - Conclusion synthèse

Pourquoi?


* 4. Quelle(s) activité(s) à faire en ligne avez-vous préférée(s)? Pourquoi? 

- Concevoir la carte conceptuelle de votre univers numérique (MindMup)
- Participer à des forums en ligne (Routard et PopCorn)
- Discuter des bloggeurs et des influenceurs en ligne
- Développer votre profil professionnel bilingue (LinkedIn)
- Améliorer un article de ville en français (Wikivoyage)

Pourquoi?


* 5. Quelles sont les connaissances et les compétences que vous avez développées à travers les contenus, tâches et activités proposées dans ce cours ? 

* 6. Quels sont les défis rencontrés dans ce cours? 


* 7. L'objectif du cours visait vous amener à devenir des citoyen.ne.s, usagers du FLS et du numérique. A-t-il selon vous rencontré cet objectif? 





Pourquoi?

* 8. Pensez-vous continuer à participer en ligne et dans les médias sociaux en français? Si oui, comment? Et sur quel médias sociaux en particulier? 

* 9. Ce cours a-t-il changé votre perspective de l'utilisation de l'internet et des médias sociaux en français ? Si oui, comment ? 

* 10. Comment avez-vous vécu l'expérience de ce cours en format hybride (à distance, avec une partie en ligne)? 

* 11. Quelles seraient vos recommandations d'améliorations possibles pour ce cours? Avez-vous d'autres commentaires à ajouter? 

* 12. Auto-évaluez votre participation hebdomadaire dans ce cours (en classe, aux activités à faire en ligne; vos partages d'expériences et d'opinions dans le forum de discussion sur Brightspace; vos interventions en classe et interactions en ligne avec vos pairs). (10% de la note finale) 



Justifiez votre réponse.

C: Digital Citizenship Project Instructions

FLS3791 Automne 2022

PROJET Citoyen.n.es numériques en FLS (30%)

Engagé.e.s en FLS sur la toile et dans les médias sociaux

L'objectif du projet Citoyen.nes numériques en FLS

Développer une présence sur divers médias sociaux autour d'une thématique choisie. Il s'agit d'un travail d'équipe pour lequel chacun des membres aura un rôle assigné et développera des compétences spécifiques. Tout au long du semestre, vous allez participer en ligne sur des plateformes comme Instagram, Tiktok et Twitter et produire des contenus selon les normes et conventions attendues de ces plateformes. À la fin du semestre, vous ferez une synthèse de votre projet sous forme d'un ePortefolio qui rassemblera l'ensemble de vos participations et productions. Vous rédigerez un rapport individuel sous forme d'une réflexion critique de votre expérience de citoyen.ne numérique engagé.e sur la toile en FLS.

Résultat final attendu

Un site web/une plateforme qui rassemblera les concepts vus en classe, la mise en œuvre de ces concepts par votre groupe à travers le thème/sujet choisi, une analyse des méthodes et des stratégies utilisées, et une réflexion critique de l'expérience.

CONSIGNES

Au cours du semestre, vous travaillerez en groupe pour créer et maintenir des comptes de médias sociaux sur un thème ou un sujet de votre choix. Ce projet devrait inclure du contenu français sur les médias sociaux (Instagram, TikTok, Twitter) ainsi que provenant de ressources web et de forums dédiés à ce sujet.

ÉTAPE 1 : Former des groupes

Sur Brightspace, allez à la page "groupes" et rejoignez un groupe de votre choix.

ÉTAPE 2 : Choisir un thème ou un sujet

En tant que groupe, vous choisirez un sujet ou un thème de votre choix. Les thèmes possibles comprennent la santé mentale, l'environnement, les vaccins, la justice sociale, le gaming, l'alimentation (végétalienne, par ex.), la pratique d'un sport ou d'un hobby, etc. Vous pouvez également proposer un sujet de votre choix, mais vous devez le faire approuver par la professeure Hamel ou l'assistante Shayna.

ÉTAPE 3 : Attribuer les tâches/rôles du groupe

Chacun a ses talents ! Pour que le projet soit un succès, nous recommandons à chacun de jouer un rôle qui corresponde à ses aptitudes et à ses compétences. Il y a plusieurs façons de procéder, et c'est à votre groupe de décider de la méthode qui lui convient le mieux. Voici une suggestion de répartition des tâches :

Étudiant 1: Twitter	Cet étudiant sera chargé de créer, de publier et de gérer le compte Twitter.
Étudiant 2: Instagram	Cet étudiant sera chargé de créer, de publier et de gérer le compte Instagram.
Étudiant 3: TikTok	Cet étudiant sera chargé de créer, de publier et de gérer le compte TikTok.
Étudiant 4: Planification du contenu et brainstorming	Cet étudiant sera chargé de planifier et de trouver du contenu pour les trois applications. Cela peut inclure la recherche de ce que les organisations ou les comptes pertinents publient, la recherche de statistiques et l'élaboration d'un contenu amusant que les élèves 1-3 peuvent créer.
Étudiant 5: Gestion des comptes et engagement	Cet étudiant sera chargé de gérer les trois comptes et de s'assurer qu'ils sont à jour et cohérents. Cela peut également inclure l'engagement sur les trois applications, comme répondre aux commentaires, s'engager avec d'autres organisations et comptes pertinents et superviser la présence sociale globale du groupe. Cet étudiant pourrait également être chargé de créer la plate-forme pour le projet final du groupe.

ÉTAPE 4 : Créez votre marque ('brand')

En tant que groupe, vous devez rechercher quels autres comptes et organisations existent et discutent également de votre sujet. À partir de là, vous devez trouver un nom pour votre groupe. Ce nom sera utilisé sur toutes vos plateformes sociales. Ensuite, vous devez créer un logo ou un visuel pour votre groupe. Cela peut être fait très facilement avec Canva.

ÉTAPE 5 : Créez vos comptes sociaux (spécifique au projet)

Ensuite, selon la façon dont vous avez réparti les rôles, votre groupe devra créer ses comptes sociaux. Si possible, essayez d'avoir le même @handle sur les trois comptes. Veillez à utiliser le logo que vous avez créé et à inclure une biographie informative.

ÉTAPE 6 : Maintenir les comptes de médias sociaux

Au cours du semestre, votre groupe est chargé de gérer vos comptes de médias sociaux. Bien que ce projet doive être remis à la fin du semestre, il est fortement recommandé de créer du contenu tout au long du semestre. C'est très évident lorsque tout le contenu a été créé quelques jours avant la date d'échéance. Ce projet vise à interagir avec d'autres utilisateurs sur les plates-formes et à créer une communauté, et pas seulement à publier du contenu.

ÉTAPE 7 : Synthèse sous la forme d'un ePortefolio et un rapport individuel

ePortfolio synthèse

À l'aide d'une plateforme choisie par votre groupe (telle que Notion, Google sites, OneNote, Wix, Weebly, Book Creator, WordPress, Seesaw, Blogspots, Canva, etc.) vous présenterez et soumettrez l'ensemble de votre contenu du semestre. Cela devrait inclure:

- € Une page qui décrit le sujet et l'initiative de votre groupe. Pourquoi avez-vous choisi ce sujet ? Quel était votre objectif ? Comment avez-vous décidé de le réaliser ?
- € Des liens vers chacune des plateformes de médias sociaux, sites et ressources web..
- € Une page sur le nom de votre groupe, son logo, sa biographie et d'autres informations clés. Pourquoi avez-vous choisi ce nom ? Pourquoi ce logo ? Où avez-vous puisé votre inspiration ?
- € Une page sur la stratégie de votre groupe. Comment avez-vous réparti vos rôles ?
- € Une page pour chaque plateforme de médias sociaux qui comprend des liens vers votre contenu, ou votre contenu directement intégré à la page. Il s'agit ici de montrer et de raconter vos participations, vos contributions en ligne.
- € Une page qui raconte votre parcours de participation.

Rapport individuel

Vous devez rédiger un rapport individuel sous forme d'une réflexion critique **(500 à 750 mots)**. Vous répondrez à ces questions:

Comment s'est déroulée cette expérience ? Qu'avez-vous appris ? De quoi êtes-vous le plus fier ? Qu'est-ce qui a posé défi ? Feriez-vous quelque chose différemment ? Quelles compétences numériques avez-vous développées? Avez-vous l'impression que cette expérience a amélioré vos compétences en français, si oui lesquelles en particulier? Comment pensez-vous que cette expérience vous aidera à l'avenir ?

Ce projet (ePortfolio d'équipe et le rapport individuel) doit être soumis dans Brightspace d'ici au lundi **16 décembre 2022, avant 17h**. Assurez-vous que le lien URL de votre site en ligne fonctionne et n'exige pas de demande d'accès.

D: Consent Form

Student Consent Form (*data collection*)

Title of the study: Language learning processes revisited: Adaptive instruction in technology-mediated contexts (Research Chair: Axis 1)

Principal Investigator:

Marie-Josée Hamel,
Professor and Research Chair in Computer Assisted Language Learning
Official Languages and Bilingualism Institute
University of Ottawa
marie-josee.hamel@uottawa.ca
Tel.: 613 562-5800, ext. 3994

Invitation to Participate: I am invited to participate in the abovementioned research study conducted by Marie-Josée Hamel.

Purpose of the Study: The purpose of the study is to understand how language learners perform in technology-mediated contexts so to better adapt language instruction to their needs. This study funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.

Participation: My participation will consist of giving the researcher permission to access the all coursework that I have produced for this class. This may include completed written assignments, as well as other types of assignments that may include voice recordings, videos and photos and in which my voice, face or person can clearly be physically identified. This coursework will be used for research purposes only and samples could be presented at conferences and/or published in scientific journals.

Risks: Since this study is limited to the use of documents produced as part of the regular course of my class, my participation in this study will entail no foreseeable risks or negative reactions nor inconveniences.

Benefits: My participation in this study may allow me to gain a greater understanding of technology-mediated language learning and/or teaching, its benefits and challenges. In addition, I may develop further information and communication technology skills in the context of this technology-mediated language learning and/or teaching course. I am aware that this research may also advance the understanding of the impact and importance that digital learning tasks and environments play for university students.

Direct benefits: Fostering my reflection on the uses of digital technology in my second language practice.

Confidentiality and anonymity: I have received assurance from the researcher that the information I will share will remain strictly confidential. I understand that the contents will be used only for identifying learner profiles and adapting relevant and engaging language learning activities to their needs. I also understand that my confidentiality will be protected by restricting access to the full data set to the research investigator, research collaborators, and the research assistants who sign a confidentiality agreement prior to their involvement in the research project. **Anonymity** will be protected in the following manner: all personal information will be coded with research identification numbers or pseudonyms instead of student numbers for all data analyses, reporting and publication.

Conservation of data: The data collected for this study will be stored in a locked filing cabinet to which only the investigator and the research assistants will have access. Study data will be kept for a minimum of 5 years after the study is over.

Voluntary Participation: I am under no obligation to participate and if I choose to participate, I can withdraw from the study at any time and/or refuse to answer any questions, without suffering any negative consequences or impact on me, or my grades for any of my classes, now and in the future. If I choose to withdraw, all data gathered until the time of withdrawal will be omitted and not be analyzed with the other results. If I choose not to participate, this will have no negative effect on my now and in the future.

Acceptance: I, _____, agree to participate in the above research study conducted by Marie-Josée Hamel of the Official Languages and Bilingualism Institute, University of Ottawa.

If I have any questions about the study, I may contact the researcher.

If I have any questions regarding the ethical conduct of this study, I may contact the Protocol Officer for Ethics in Research, University of Ottawa, Tabaret Hall, 550 Cumberland Street, Room 154, Ottawa, ON K1N 6N5
Tel.: (613) 562-5387
Email: ethics@uottawa.ca

Please keep a copy of this consent form.

Participant signature: _____

Date: _____