Language Portraits:
A Space to Explore Identities in a Graduate Course

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Presentation Overview

Background

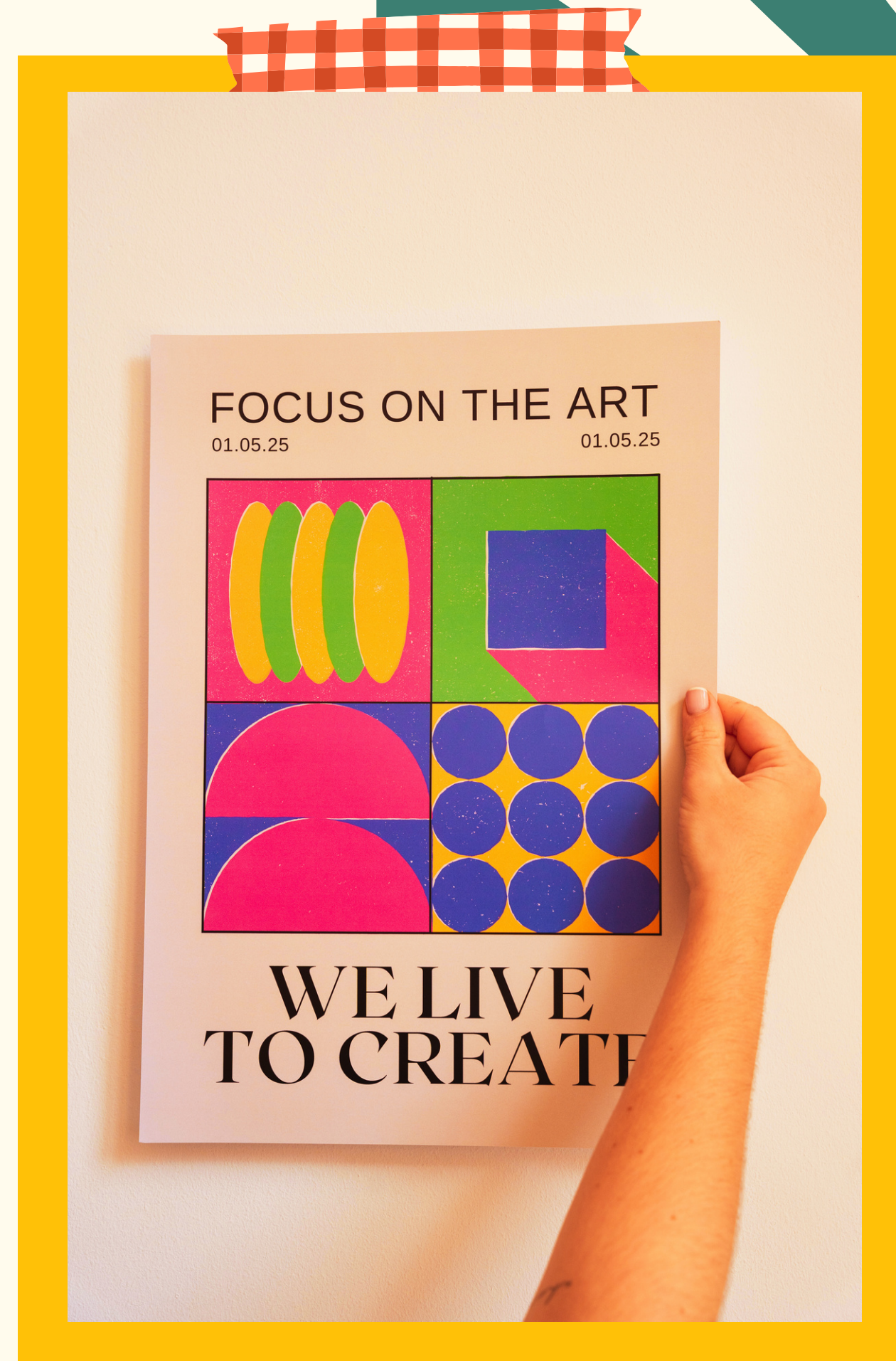Context & students

Assessment: Language Portrait

 -What is it?

 -How did I implement it in the course?

Language Portraits Examples

Language Portraits: What was learned?

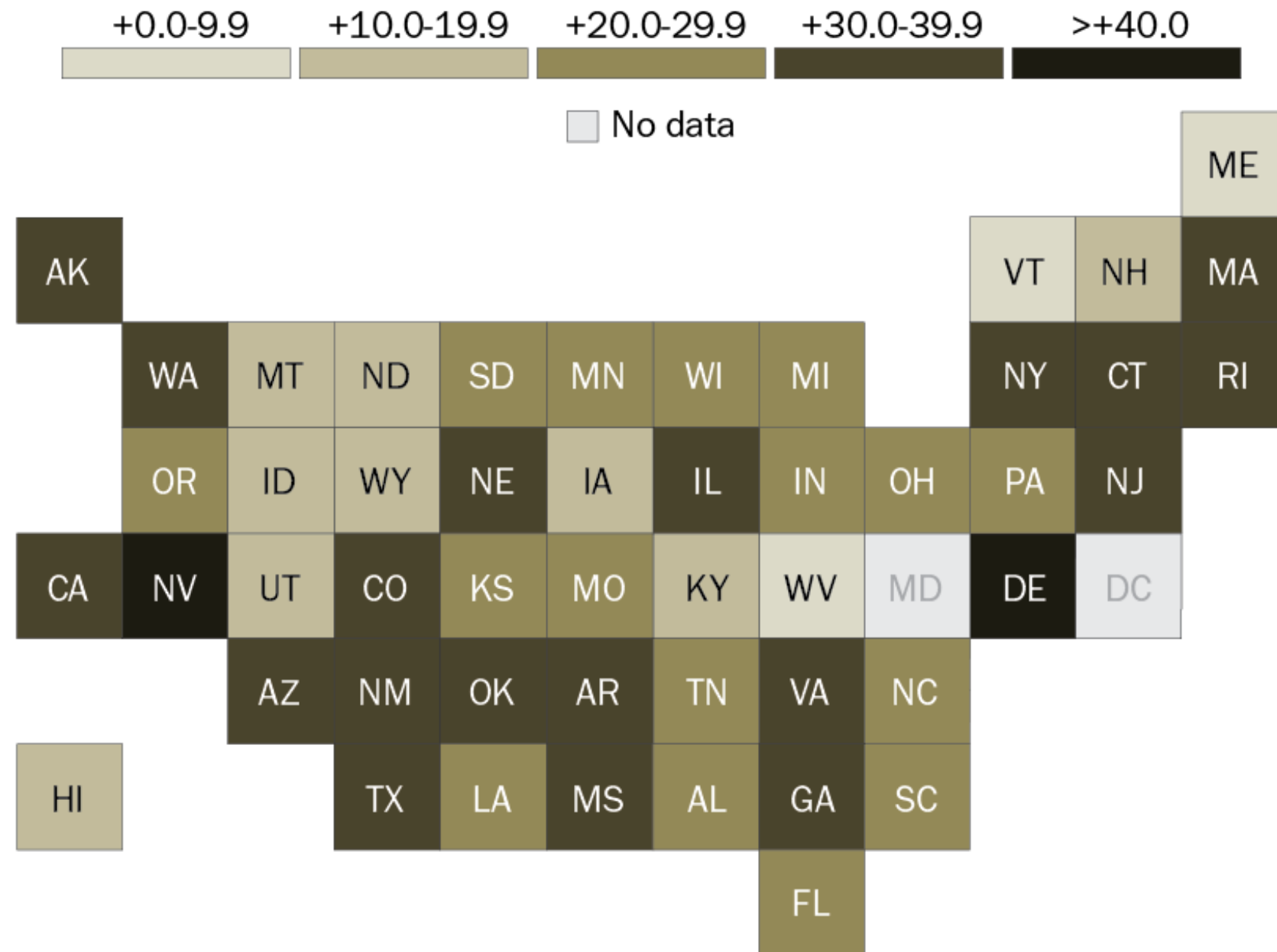Language Portraits: What can we learn?
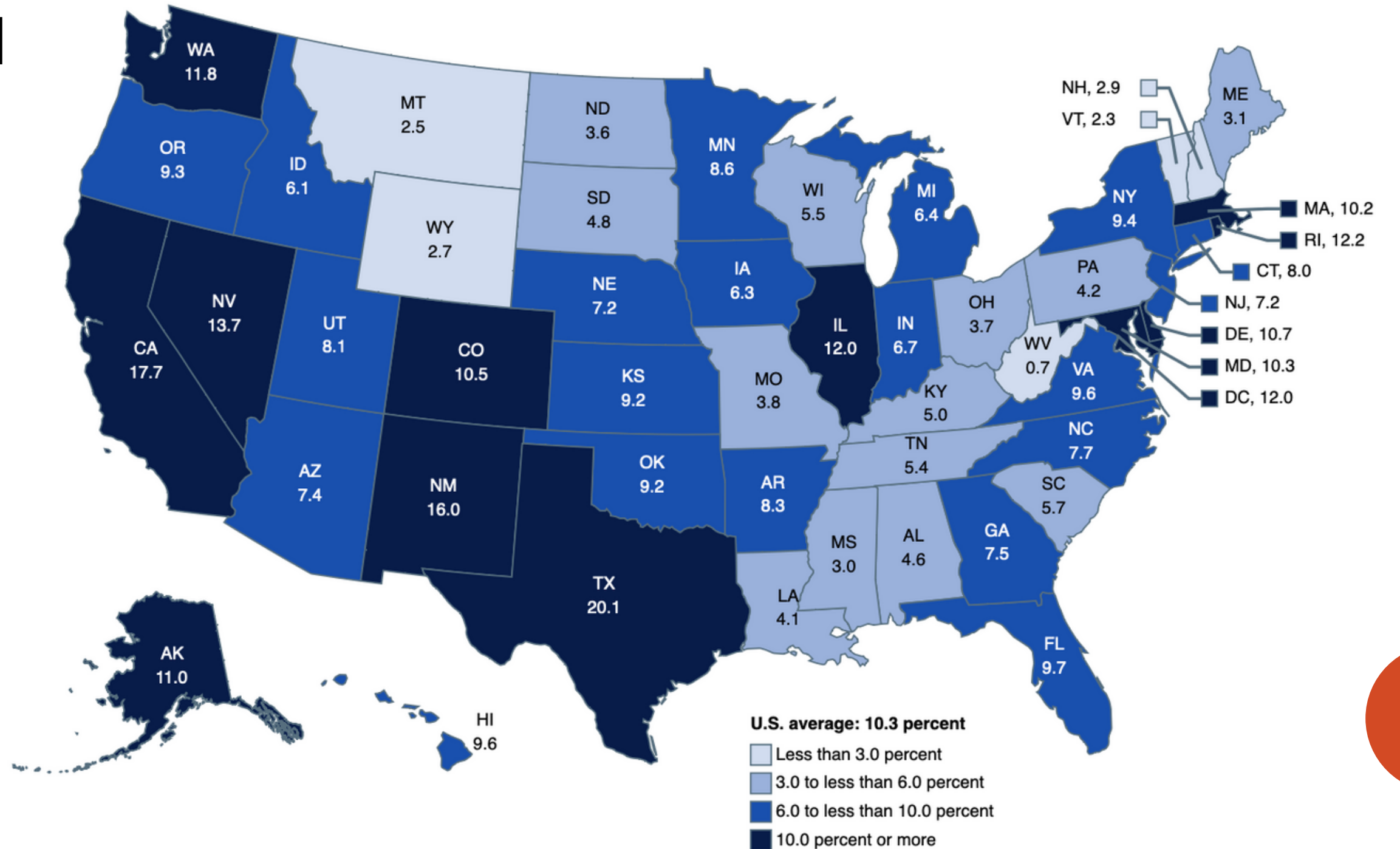
Background

★ **Teacher Diversity vs. Student Diversity**

Percentage point difference in White teachers and students, based on the 2017-18 school year

Background

Increased Cultural and Linguistic Diversity

U.S. map showing percentages by state:

WA 11.8, OR 9.3, ID 6.1, MT 2.5, ND 3.6, MN 8.6, WI 5.5, MI 6.4, NY 9.4, ME 3.1, NH 2.9, VT 2.3, MA 10.2, RI 12.2, CT 8.0, NJ 7.2, DE 10.7, MD 10.3, DC 12.0, PA 4.2, OH 3.7, IN 6.7, IL 12.0, IA 6.3, NE 7.2, SD 4.8, WY 2.7, NV 13.7, UT 8.1, CA 17.7, CO 10.5, KS 9.2, MO 3.8, KY 5.0, WV 0.7, VA 9.6, NC 7.7, TN 5.4, SC 5.7, AZ 7.4, NM 16.0, OK 9.2, AR 8.3, MS 3.0, AL 4.6, GA 7.5, LA 4.1, TX 20.1, FL 9.7, AK 11.0, HI 9.6

U.S. average: 10.3 percent

- Less than 3.0 percent
- 3.0 to less than 6.0 percent
- 6.0 to less than 10.0 percent
- 10.0 percent or more

What does this mean for teacher preparation?

Specialized professional development

Tools for teacher reflection

Culturally sustaining pedagogies

Context & Students

Masters' in Literacy
2-year online program

Cultural Diversity
Fall 2023

25 experienced teachers
From 6 school districts in SC

Language Portrait

A language and culture portrait is a visualization of a person's linguistic and cultural identity that involves (1) identifying the languages/cultures that are part of one's identity, (2) assigning each language or culture a color, and (3) mapping those colors onto the image of a body silhouette.
(Hamman-Ortiz, 2021)

Language Portrait in the Course

My Language Portrait

Name:

My languages:

Can you say a bit about why you chose to draw your language portrait the way you did?

Lost Wor(l)ds – www.multilingualism-in-schools.net

Embedded in a discussion board (week on linguistic diversity)

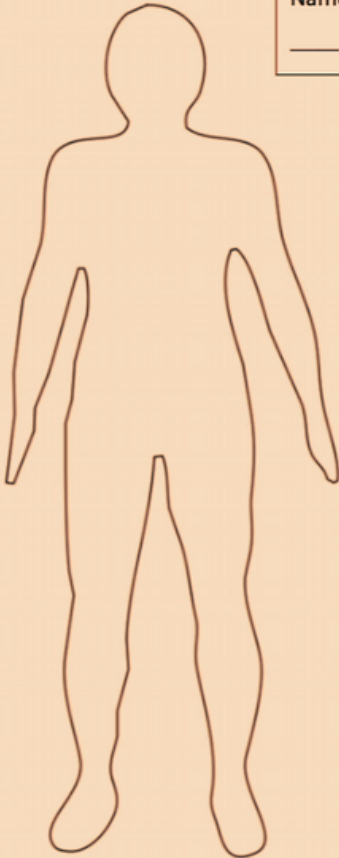Sample language portrait & online article

Directions in writing and video

Guiding questions:
- What languages and cultures make up who you are and influence your life?
- Use colors/patterns to represent the languages and cultures in your life. How/where on your body would you *"map"* your different languages and cultures? (Adapted from Man Chu Lau (2016)
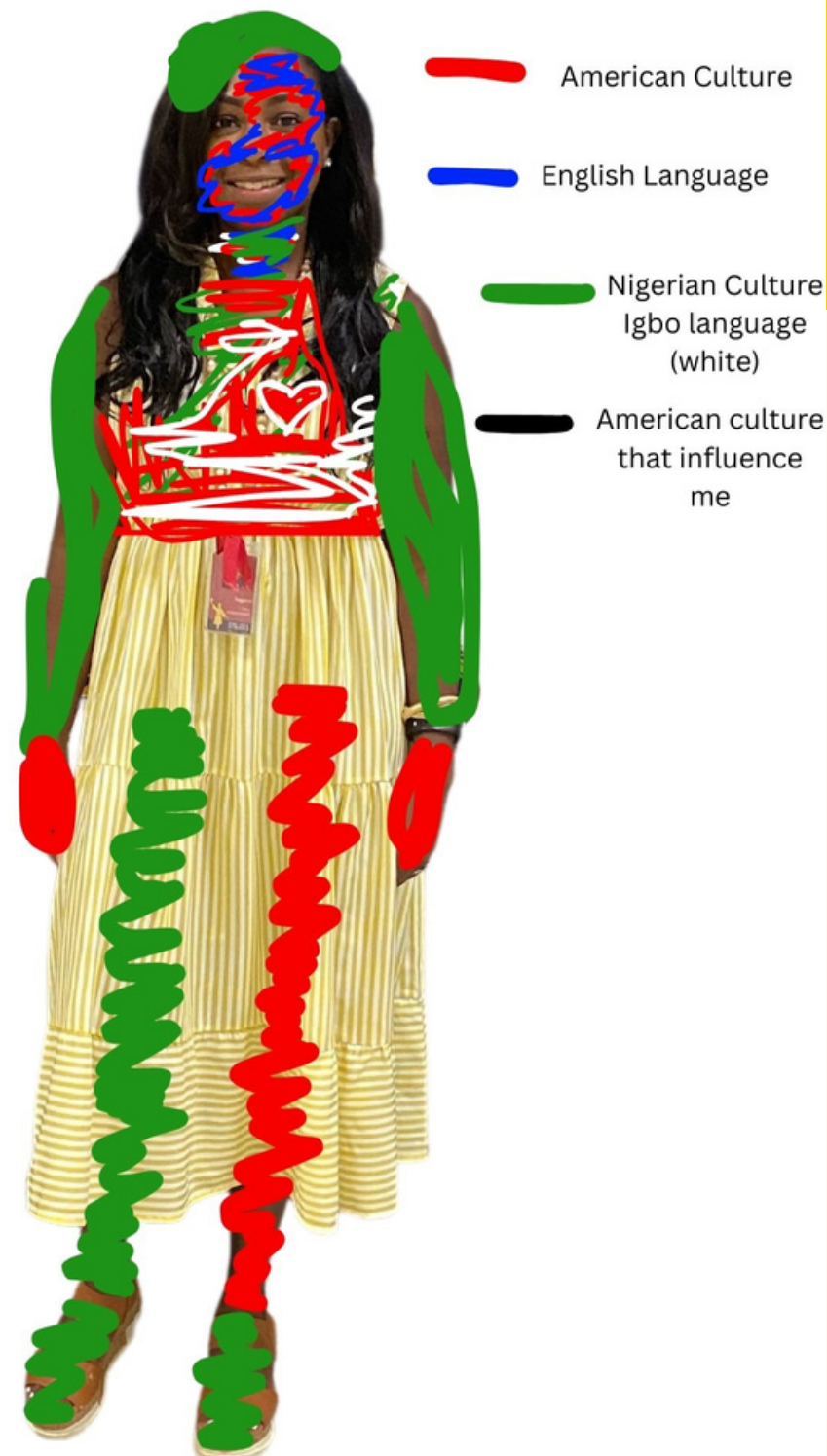
Teachers' Portraits

Cultural and linguistic heritage

Belonging to the United States and English dominance

American Culture
English Language
Nigerian Culture Igbo language (white)
American culture that influence me

My Language Portrait

Name:

Hola!

Dónde está el baño?

Como estas?

My languages:
English
limited Spanish

Can you say a bit about why you chose to draw your language portrait the way you did?
I colored my feet & legs in the colors of the German flag. My family migrated from Germany so I "rooted" there. The rest in the U.S. flag. I was born & raised here. I put a couple of Spanish words/phrases because I can speak a little Spanish from 4 years in high school.

Lost Wor(l)ds – www.multilingualism-in-schools.net

Teachers' Portraits

Awareness of linguistic diversity: *"Southern Accent"*

My Language Portrait

Name:

My hands are colored red and green to represent some of the countries my Spanish speaking students come from. I work w/these children to help them learn to read & write in English.

I chose blue because blue represents the South Carolina flag & Michigan state flag. My family is originally from MI. I grew up around people with a mid-western accent. I moved to SC when I was very young & have always had a southern accent. I was known as a "Southern Bell" to my MI family.

My languages:
English
Spanish

"Hey Y'all" "Hola!" "Hi, You Guys"

Can you say a bit about why you chose to draw your language portrait the way you did?

I drew English at my head, mouth, and heart b/c it is what I speak. But I am also a teacher of reading English and that is something I am always learning more about. It is a passion of mine as well.

My Language Portrait

Name:

Work   Friends

Family

My languages:
American English
Southern dialect (sc flag)
Irish family roots (socks)

Can you say a bit about why you chose to draw your language portrait the way you did?

I speak American English w/ a Southern dialect. Most of my ancestors came from Ireland, but I do not feel closely connected to that since those relatives were many generations ago. I wrote the words "Work," "Friends," and "Family" to the side b/c I feel my accent changes (more or less southern) depending on the setting and who I am around.

st Wor(l)ds – www.multilingualism-in-schools.net

Teachers' Portraits

Religion

My Language Portrait

Name:

FREE

IN GOD WE TRUST

Land That I LOVE PSALM 33:12

GOD BLESS THE USA

My languages:
English

French

Can you say a bit about why you chose to draw your language portrait the way you did?

My family have farmed in South Carolina for many years. I'm not sure of ancestry beyond great, great grandparents. I speak very little French. I chose to focus on our Christian origins as a country and our freedoms. "Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord." Psalm 33:12

Lost Wor(l)ds – www.multilingualism-in-schools.net

Teachers' Portraits

Representing students' linguistic diversity

My Language Portrait

Name:

es:
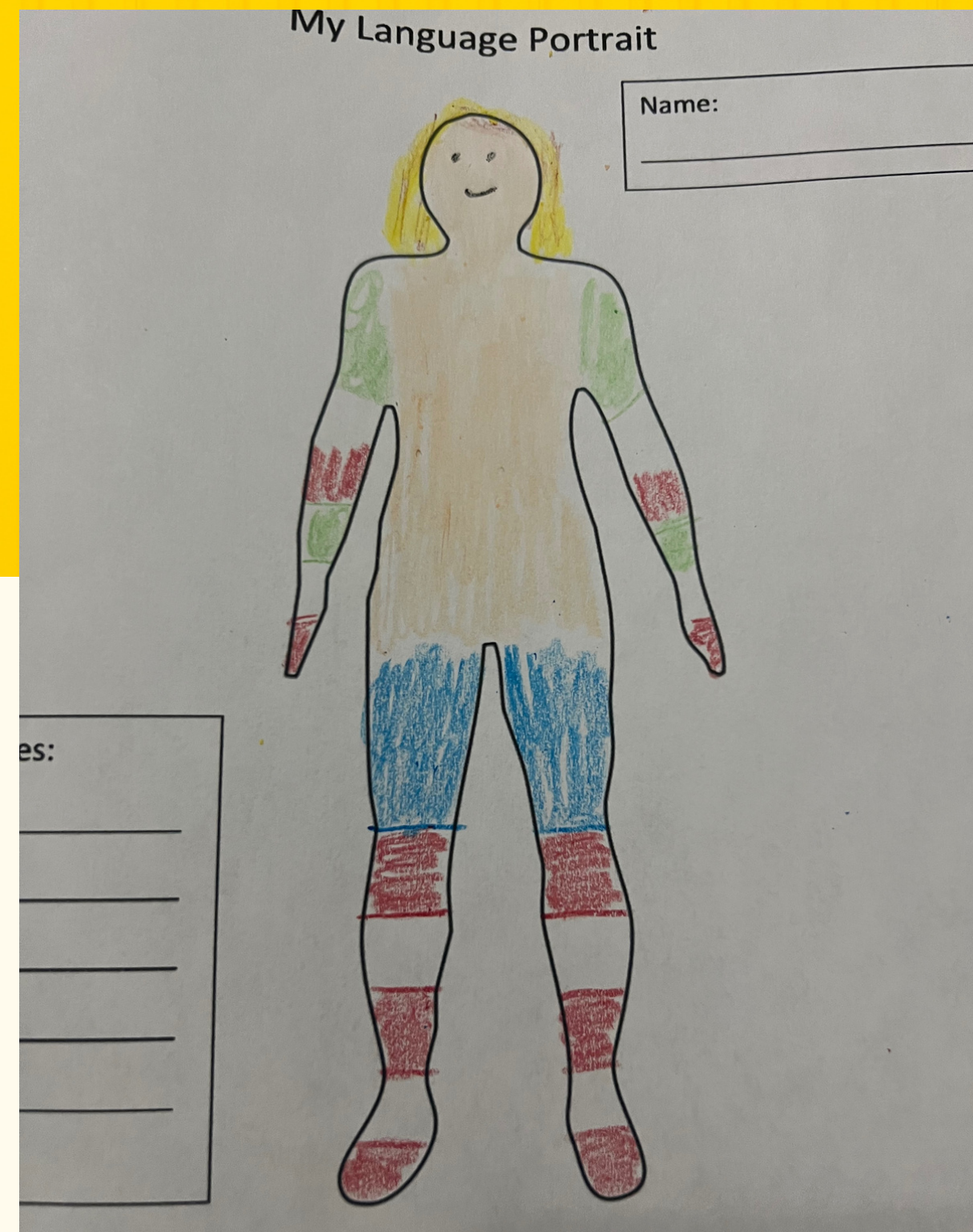
Spanish is becoming more and more important to me, like a new piece of who I am. This is especially true when I'm helping my students with their lessons. When I plan, listen, and write notes for them, using Spanish feels really natural. In my picture, you'll see red, white, and green colors. These colors show how Spanish is becoming a bigger part of who I am, along with English. I also have symbols on my clothes and legs that represent America. This shows that my language and who I am are connected to the whole United States. It reminds me that language is about more than just words – it's about the culture and community it represents. All of this put together shows how language is a big part of me. It affects how I talk to the world, especially as a teacher. It's like a beautiful mix of colors, symbols, and words that make up my special way of speaking.

Language Portraits
What was learned?

Language portraits enabled students to share aspects of their identity that were not apparent to them or that they rarely thought about

The meaning that students assigned to color and symbols in the silhouette facilitated a multimodal analysis of cultural and linguistic diversity

Language Portraits
What can be learned?

Shape this activity as a scaffold for a (bigger) narrative assignment

Task can be used to diversify the format of student posts in forums

Task can be used with other identity markers and in courses or activities where students need to reflect on themselves/their context (use the color and representation for different purposes)

Thank you!

Questions?

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