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Beyond Bilingual: Identifying Effective Methods For Teaching French as a Third Language

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Despite limited studies on teaching French to third language learners, current research on language acquisition and cultural identity suggests that learning a new language is meaningful when it acknowledges the learners’ prior understanding (Hancock, 2003; Mercado, 2002; Reeser, 2003; Rolstad, 1997). In this case, it is knowledge of other cultures and languages. The purpose of this study is to identify effective methods for teaching French to students who are bilingual in Spanish and English. The study was conducted at a high school in Chicago, Illinois, and participants included two French teachers and Spanish-speaking students studying French. Through surveys and interviews, the teachers and selected students were asked to discuss learning preferences, teaching methods, interest, motivation, and success in learning French. The findings of the study support the notion that French teachers who use alternative and relevant teaching methods are more effective in facing the challenge of a declining interest in French and the demands of a growing population of bilingual students.