

Abstract

This Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) project investigates the impact of the Transparency in Learning and Teaching (TILT) approach on students’ perceptions of belonging and critical thinking in an intermediate-level Spanish course. The course aims to foster deep connections between students and Hispanic and Latinx communities through a relationship-rich classroom environment (Felten and Lambert, 2020). A key component of the course is a podcast project that allows students to create narratives about minority groups (Kernahan, 2019). Research indicates that transparent assignments enhance students’ sense of belonging and critical thinking skills (Artze-Vega et al., 2023). The podcast assessments are designed to clearly outline what, why, and how tasks should be completed.

Background

- Spanish 332: Spanish Speakers in the US
- Required course for our two Spanish Certificates
- Intermediate mid/low proficiency goal
- Anxiety speaking in Spanish
- Collaborative Project

Objectives

- Examine students’ perspectives of their sense of belonging in a Spanish classroom.
- Increase transparency in high-stakes classroom assignments.
- Develop students’ critical thinking skills through a relevant research assignment.

Methods

Two surveys conducted during the semester assess students’ sense of belonging, while qualitative analysis of assignment reflections evaluates the development of critical thinking skills. Data collection started in October 2024 and will conclude in May 2025.

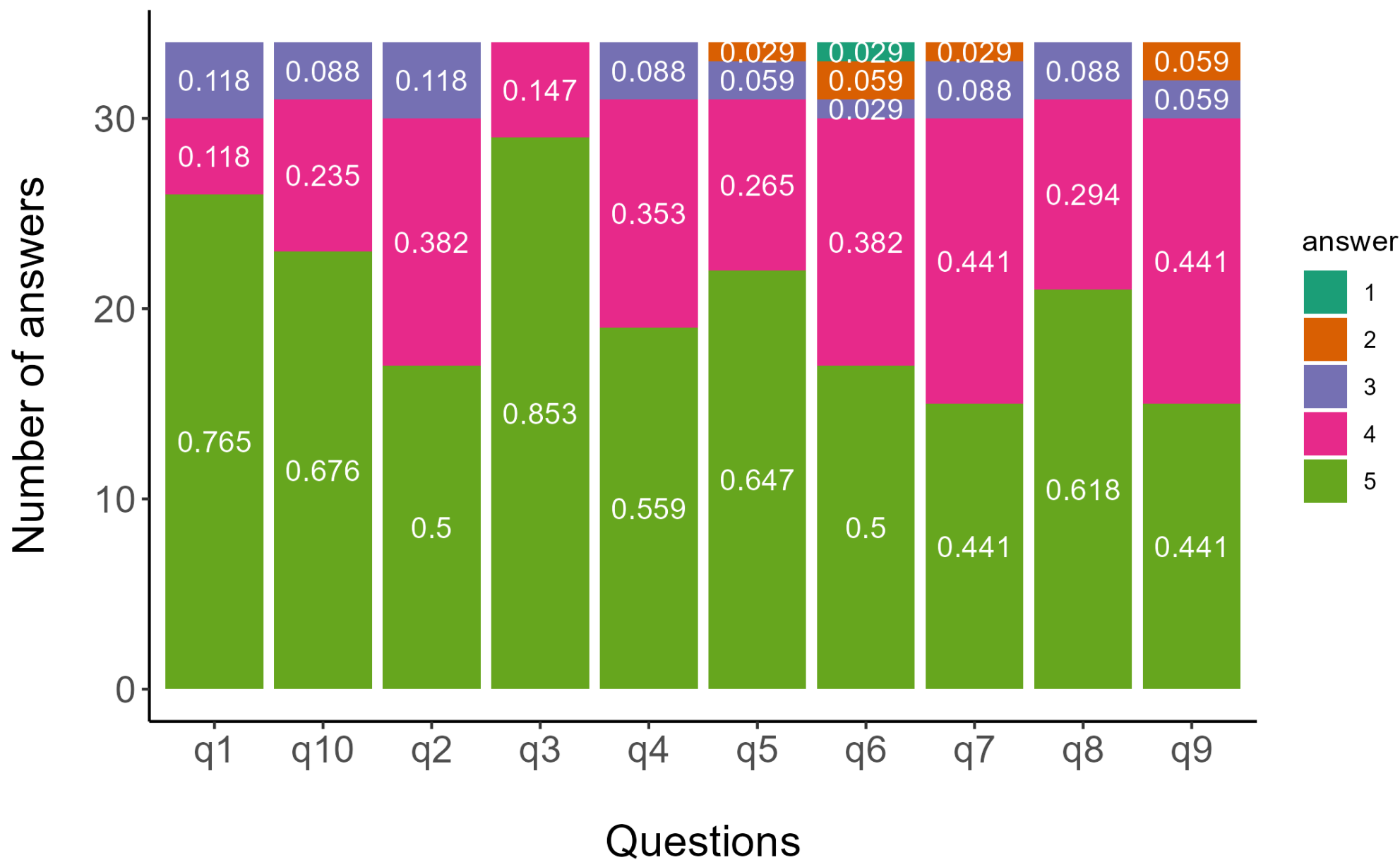
Belonging Survey

Selected Questions

q8	I can work well with anyone in my class.
q9	I'm a good student and a strong thinker.
q10	I belong in my classroom community.

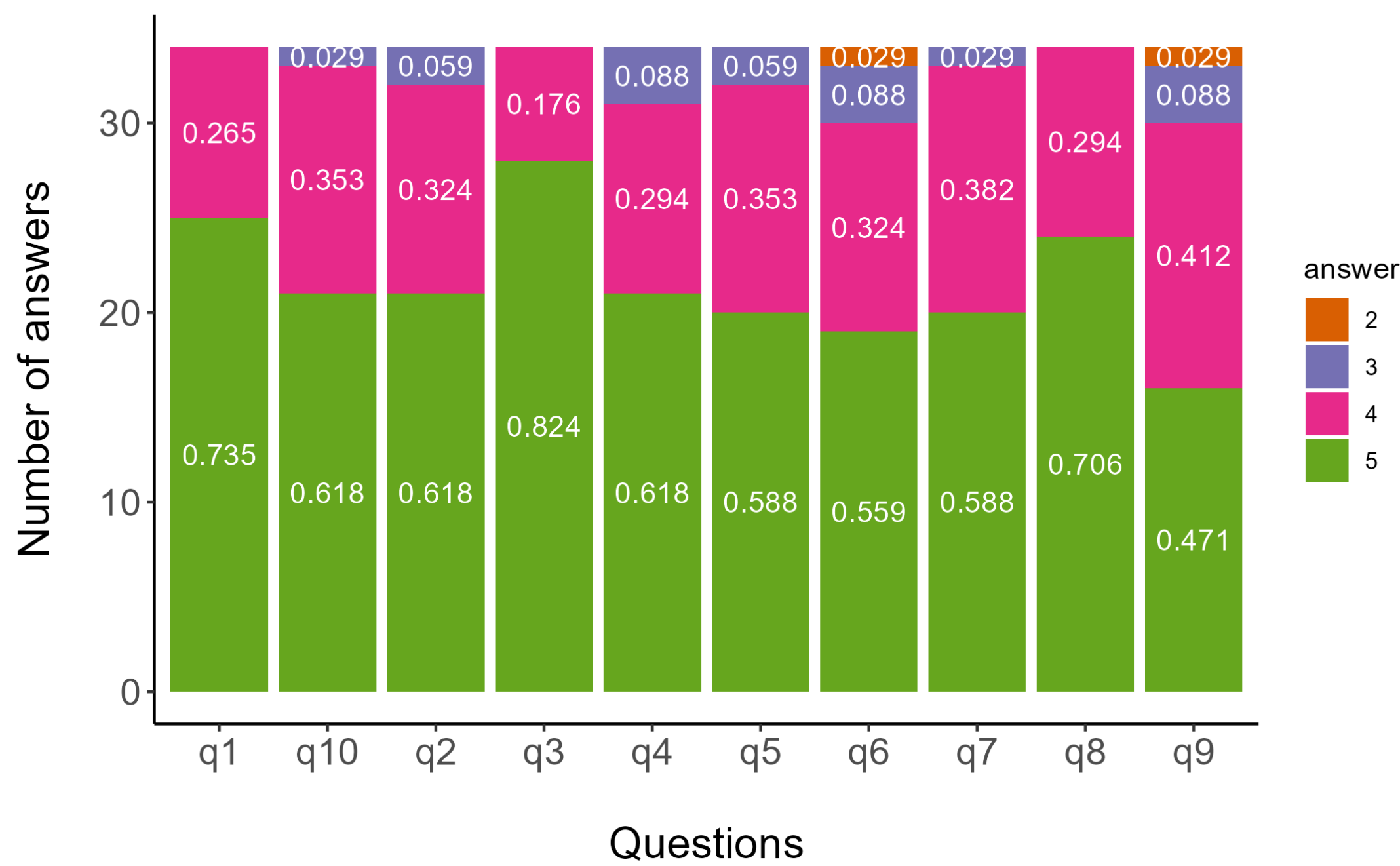
Results

Belonging Survey 1



Results

Belonging Survey 2



Conclusions

Preliminary quantitative data from the fall 2024 surveys show improvements in students’ peer-to-peer relationships, confidence in their critical thinking skills, and sense of belonging in the classroom. Qualitative data suggest that the TILT approach provided the necessary scaffolding to complete the podcast project and motivated students to excel due to its relevance to their lives and future careers.

References

Artze-Vega, Isis, Flower Darby, Bryan Dewsbury, and Mays Imad. 2023. *The Norton Guide to Equity-Minded Teaching*. New York: W.W. Norton and Company.

Felten, Peter. 2020. *Relationship-Rich Education : How Human Connections Drive Success in College*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Kernahan, Cyndi. 2019. *Teaching about Race and Racism in the College Classroom: Notes from a White Professor*. First edition. Morgantown: West Virginia University Press.

Rodrigue, Tanya K. and Kyle D. Stedman. 2022. *Soundwriting: A Guide to Making Audio Project*. Ontario, Canada: Broadview Press.

Acknowledgements

This project was possible with funding from the University of Wisconsin Teaching Fellow Programs and a CATL grant. I thank my research assistants, Liv Sarasio Meyer and Omar Rodríguez, for their insights and dedicated work.