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## Using Color with Care: An Exploration of the Application of Psychological Color Theory within Language Classrooms

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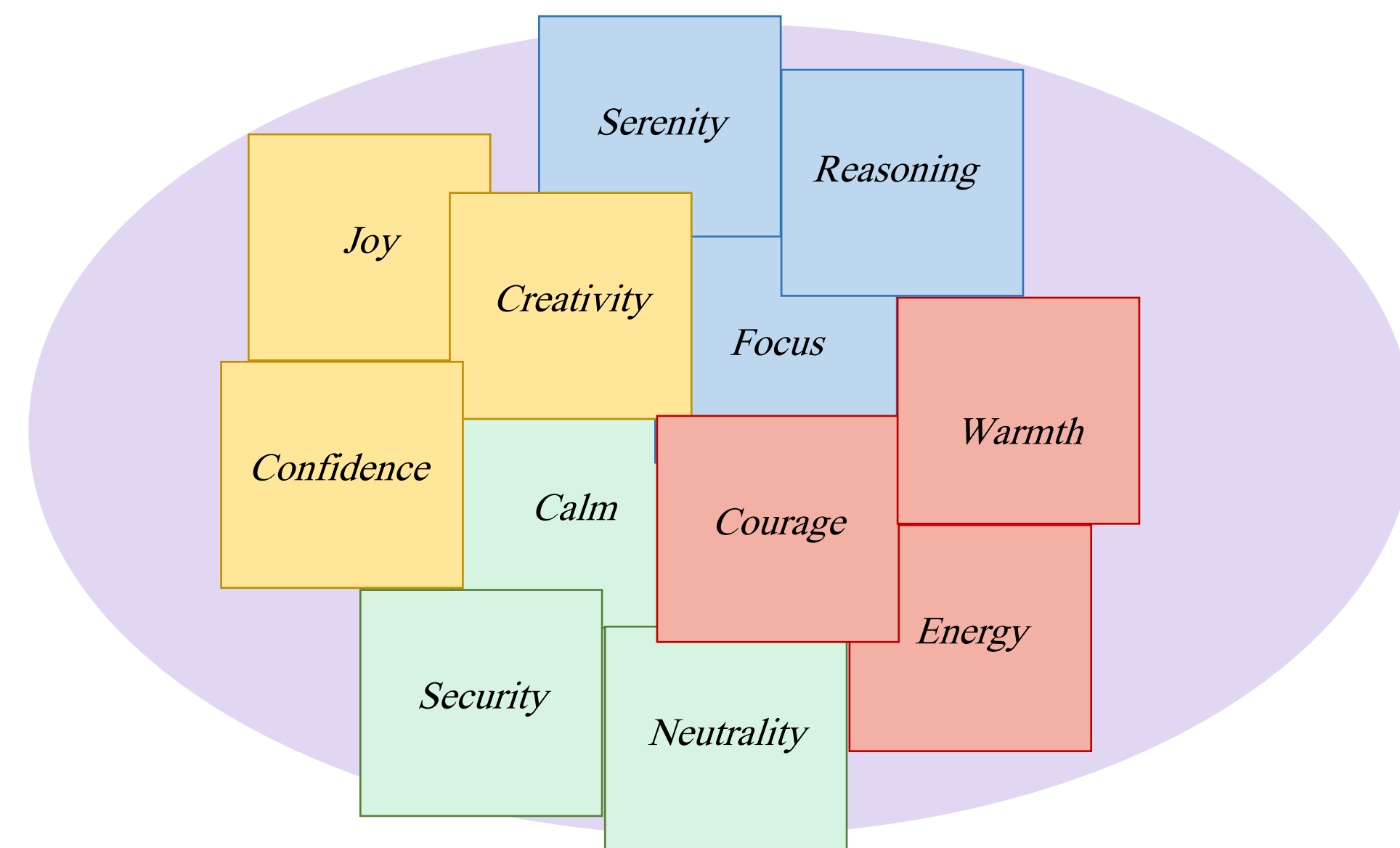
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# Using Color with Care: An Exploration of the Application of Psychological Color Theory within Language Classrooms

Mackenzie Wisneski – University of Northern Iowa

The following figure depicts common sentiments as represented by the color with which they are most often associated:



(Kurt & Osueke, 2014)

## Summary:

I am examining current teaching spaces and practices to evaluate correlations surrounding

*using color as a social-emotional tool in facilitating language learning*

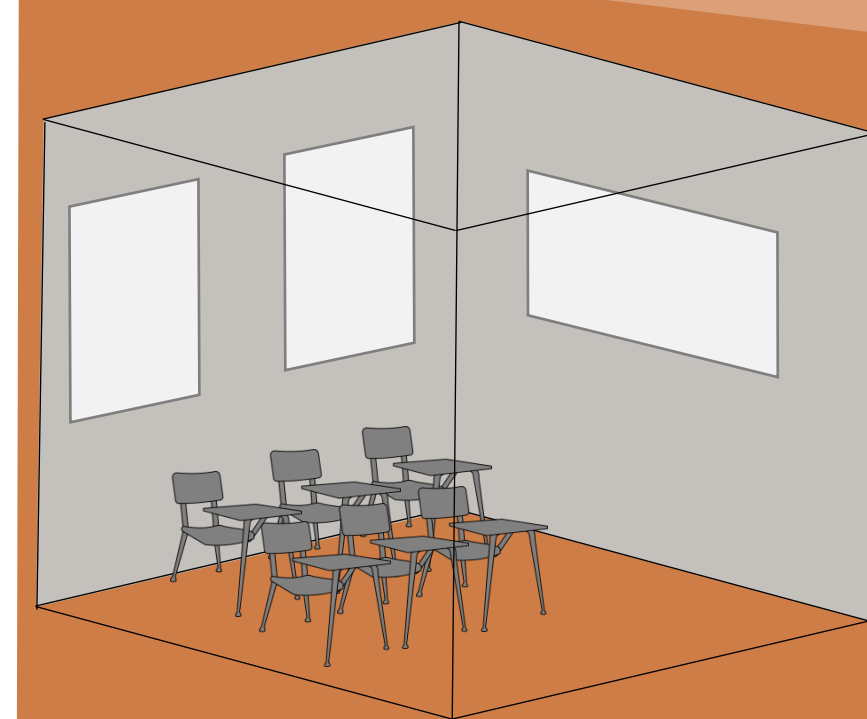
maximizing environmental features for students' psychological benefit

supporting the multi-faceted needs of emergent bilingual students

## Why Emergent Bilingual Students?

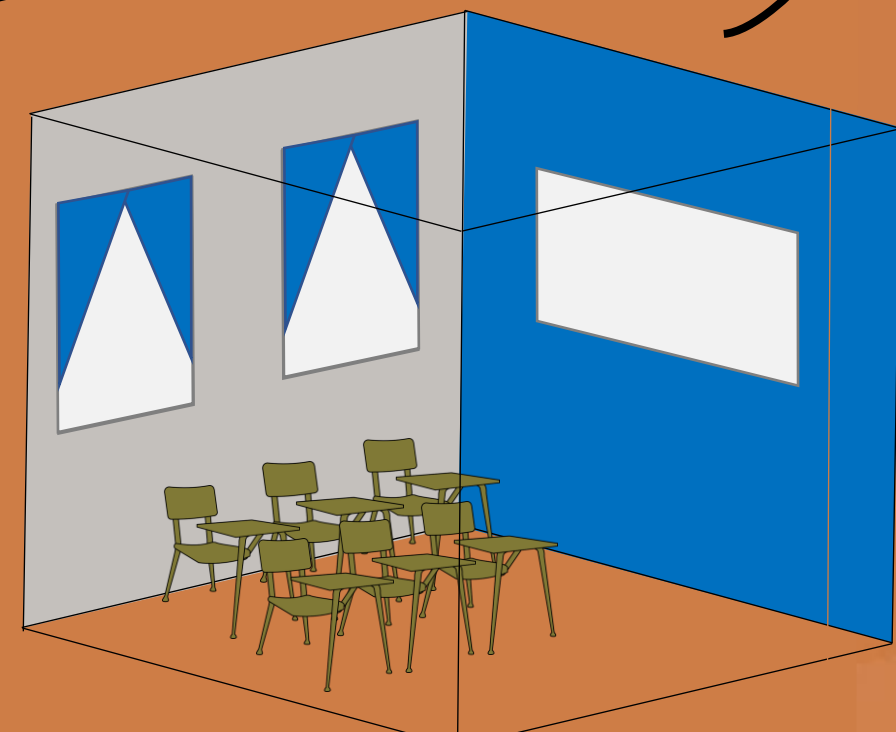
- ❑ Disproportionately exposed to additional academic, emotional, socio-economic, and cultural challenges within and outside of classroom (Benesch, 2012; Beyer, 2017; Heineke & Vera, 2021)
- ❑ Examples of these experiences may include:
  - ❑ Trauma or PTSD
  - ❑ Insecure food or shelter
  - ❑ Interrupted or limited formal education
  - ❑ Financial instability
  - ❑ Cultural isolation or oppression
  - ❑ Familial separation
- ❑ Presented unique set of obstacles related to language learning such as heightened need for emotional consciousness and strategy
- ❑ Significant correlation between teachers' social-emotional competence and students' motivation to learn English (Suganda 2019)
- ❑ Implementation of self-management and emotional-regulation strategies and practices on behalf of the language teacher contribute greatly to student motivation
- ❑ Teachers who can recognize and navigate their own emotional challenges are much more equipped to assist students in doing the same (Suganda 2019)

This research explores the following questions:

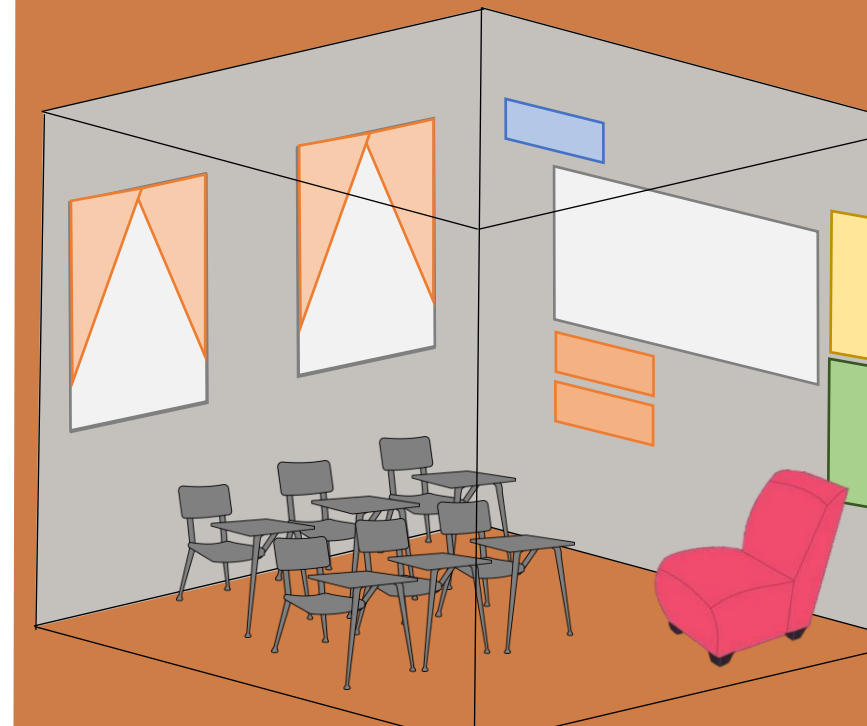


What is the current **baseline** for color usage within language teaching classrooms?

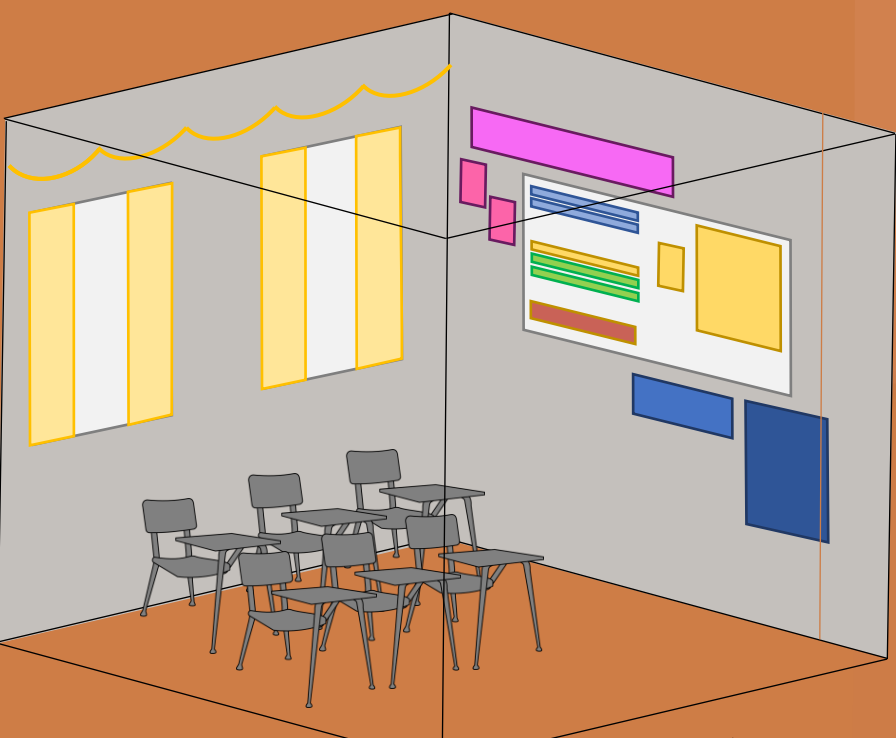
What is the **structural** presence of color within language teaching classrooms?



How is color used **decoratively** or **subconsciously** by teachers?



Is color being used **organizationally** or to serve an academically or emotionally **functional** purpose?



## Methodology:

- ❑ Observational and surveyed data collection pending IRB approval
- ❑ Current teachers within K-12 public schools in Iowa serving emergent bilingual students with the ability to control or manipulate the use of color within teaching space or materials
- ❑ Five questionnaire respondents selected for an in-person interview to elaborate on the responses provided within questionnaire and have teaching space(s) or materials photographed
- ❑ Analysis of classroom arrangement and practices including classroom layout, color schemes, and the use of color within classroom décor, including whether choices were made consciously
- ❑ Searching for correlations between intentional use of color and its social-emotional effect on students as seen within items such as structural surfaces, furniture, décor, presentation materials, and student resources
- ❑ This project is expected to commence in late February of 2022

## Anticipated Results:

- ❑ Connection between color and emotion and lesser-known relationship between student learning and classroom environment
- ❑ Educators may define relationships but not apply reasoning to classroom practices
- ❑ Educators may be aware of the effects of students' physical environment on student learning but with more respect to space, lighting, and temperature, rather than more integrated visual aspects such as color

## Items of interest include:

- ❑ Paint
- ❑ Lockers/cubbies/student storage
- ❑ Labels
- ❑ Desk chairs
- ❑ Flexible seating
- ❑ Rugs
- ❑ Posters
- ❑ Curtains
- ❑ Alternative lighting
- ❑ Handmade decor

## Visual References

Kelly, (2012). Red Armless Chair [Photograph]. <http://www.clipart.com/clipart-220692.html>  
"540x595 Blue Desk Clip Art" by Clipartmag CC by - NC 4.0

*Developing practices that strengthen aspects of two fundamental layers to the daily life of an individual is helpful for the psychological regulation of those within any environment (Güneş & Olguntürk, 2020).*

*Students encounter walls and their displays daily, thus enhancing the importance of utilizing structural spaces in a way that benefits students (No, et al., 2007).*

*Environmental color has a significant effect on concentration and stress experienced by students in the classroom (Kurt & Osueke, 2014; Llinares et al., 2021).*

## Why Color?

- ❑ Strong relationship between color and human psychology; such relationships are often activated subconsciously
- ❑ Subtle visual or emotional cues may be implemented to provide support for students with limited linguistic communication within learning environment while causing minimal distraction to others
- ❑ Can improve legibility of environments through use and presentation in static spaces: i.e., emotional cue on walls or doorways, signaling which spaces are treated as calm or lively
- ❑ Fundamental emotional similarities among colors as they are used in physical spaces regardless of cultural background, especially natural or serene colors such as green and blue (Ou et al, 2018; Yu, 2014).
- ❑ Brighter or saturated colors are associated with positive emotions, while darker or duller samples provoked more negative emotions (D'Andrade & Egan, 1974).
- ❑ Inexpensive, accessible, and effective method of visual control within a learning environment.
- ❑ Most items within teaching space(s) contain color, regardless of if items were chosen for their aesthetic or social-emotional appeal.

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