

How Foreign Language Teachers Get Taught: Methods of Teaching the Methods Course

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Abstract: This study examined the methodological training of preservice secondary foreign language teachers through the lens of the college methodology course syllabus from 32 participating postsecondary institutions, survey data from the related methods instructors, and questionnaires from 10 of the instructors. The findings indicate that preservice foreign language methodological training, while based on common beliefs that theory informs practice and that the Standards for Foreign Language Learning in the 21st Century (National Standards, 1999) should frame instruction and assessment, is accomplished in a great variety of ways. Most significantly, because there are few courses that address meeting the needs of diverse learners, preservice teachers may not be connecting an eclectic blend of instructional practices to learner needs. There is also evidence that while the Standards are recognized in theory as important to instruction, they are not being fully integrated into teaching practices.

Key words: best practices, methodology, preservice teachers, teacher training, teaching methods

Language: Relevant to all languages

Introduction

Critics believe that teacher education has “failed to keep pace with the profound sociopolitical changes in society and contributed little to the current efforts to dramatically restructure and reform American K–12 schools” (Imig & Switzer, 1996, p. 213). The challenge is compounded by a lack of connection between the diversity of priorities found in the country’s school reform movements and efforts to include preservice teacher education in those movements (Hower, 1996).

The matter is further complicated in the area of foreign language education. Second language (L2) pedagogy has undergone numerous recreations over the past 50 years, largely in response to social forces and to a growing body of knowledge about second language acquisition (SLA) (Schulz, 2000). Current classroom teachers may have learned via the audiolingual or grammar-translation method, experienced the natural approach, seen the birth of the four-skills paradigm, and entered into newer communicative approaches in the late 20th century (Omaggio Hadley, 2001). According to Vélez-Rendón (2002):

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