Teachers' Pedagogical Beliefs and the Standards for Foreign Language Learning

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Abstract: *This study examined Midwestern foreign language teachers'* (n = *613) responses to the Foreign Language Education Questionnaire (FLEQ) in order to determine the extent to which their beliefs are consistent with major constructs underlying the* Standards for Foreign Language Learning in the 21st Century. *Additionally, respondents rated their familiarity with the standards and provided background information that was used to identify factors that influence their beliefs. The purpose of this study was to provide direction for teacher education, in-service professional development, and future research. Analysis of the data suggests that the teachers believe that foreign language instruction should be delivered in the target language, available to all students, consonant with the "Weave of Curricular Elements," included in early elementary school curriculum, and within the coverage model. Generally, the teachers felt somewhat familiar with the standards. Factors that have an impact on their beliefs include urban versus rural location, membership in professional organizations, gender, percentage of teaching assignment in a foreign language, highest educational degree earned, and private versus public school.*

Introduction

The *Standards for Foreign Language Learning in the 21st Century* (National Standards, 1999) provide a vision for foreign language education in the new century. Although they do not describe the current state of foreign language programs in this country (p. 28), there have been considerable efforts in the short time since their initial publication to make the shift towards standards-based instruction. Virtually every state has realigned its foreign language frameworks to be consistent with the standards (Phillips, 1999, p. 2), and numerous school districts within each state have redesigned their foreign language curriculum based on the standards (National Standards, 1999, p. 15). References throughout this article to the "standards," then, are references to *Standards for Foreign Language Learning in the 21st Century.*

However, rewriting state frameworks and local curriculum is not enough to ensure that standards-based foreign language teaching and learning will take place in the classroom. When it comes to modifying classroom practices, teachers are the most powerful agents (Prawat, 1992; Richardson & Anders, 1994; Tedick & Walker, 1996), and teachers change the way they teach when their beliefs about foreign language learning change (Freeman & Freeman, 1994, p. 41). "The only way to realize reform and pay attention to the new standards," Glisan (1996) maintains, "is by altering the way in which teachers think about teaching" (p. 74).

If the standards for foreign language learning are to achieve their potential impact, research that investigates what teachers know and believe about the standards is needed. Results of the studies would provide direction for preservice teacher education, in-service professional development, and future research. The study described here examined the extent to which the beliefs

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of teachers in three Midwestern states are consistent with the standards for foreign language learning, assessed their level of familiarity with the standards, and identified factors that affect their beliefs and familiarity.

Definition of Terms

Perhaps the most complex issue in current research on teaching and teacher education is the confusion between the terms *beliefs* and *knowledge* (Richardson, 1996). It is difficult to pinpoint where knowledge ends and beliefs begin. After reviewing 20 different researchers' definitions and distinctions between beliefs and knowledge and not finding a consensus, Pajares (1992) proposed the idea of a belief system, formed by an individual's beliefs, attitudes, and values, and suggested that belief systems and knowledge are inextricably intertwined. Alexander, Schallert, and Hare (1991, cited in Richardson, 1996) equate beliefs and knowledge. Woods (1996), in his study of English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers, found the distinction between knowledge and beliefs untenable. He suggested that the terms *knowledge, assumptions,* and *beliefs* do not refer to distinct concepts, but are points on a spectrum of meaning. Thus, he proposed an integrated network of beliefs, assumptions, and knowledge, to which he referred as BAK. Others have used the term *teacher cognition*, defined by Kagan (1990) as "pre-or inservice teachers' self-reflections, beliefs and knowledge about teaching, students, and content" (p. 421), and by Borg (1999) as "the beliefs, knowledge, theories, assumptions, and attitudes that teachers hold on all aspects of their work" (Borg, 1999, p. 95). In this article, the term *beliefs* is synonymous with *teacher cognition*.

Rationale

The need for research on teacher cognition has been justified on several grounds. First, examining the relationship between teacher beliefs and classroom actions can inform educational practices. Second, if teacher education is to have an impact on how prospective teachers will teach, it must engage participants in examining their beliefs. Third, attempts to implement new classroom practices without considering teachers' beliefs can lead to disappointing results. Each of these assertions is supported in the following paragraphs.

Relationship between Beliefs and Actions

Comprehensive reviews of teacher cognition support the notion of a reciprocal nature between teachers' educational beliefs and their classroom practices (Clark & Peterson, 1986; Kagan, 1992; Pajares, 1992; Richardson, 1996; Shavelson & Stern, 1981). "In most current conceptions, the perceived relationship between beliefs and actions is interactive. Beliefs are thought to drive actions; however, experiences and reflection on action may lead to change in and/or addition to beliefs" (Richardson, 1996, p. 104). In a method-comparison study on project-based learning, for example, Turnbull (1999) learned that ninth-grade French teachers modified their methods to render them compatible with their own beliefs. Peterson et al. (1989) discovered a relationship between mathematics teachers' pedagogical content beliefs and students' achievement.

Woods (1996) tracked eight teachers of English as a Second Language (ESL) and found that they relied on a network of beliefs, attitudes, and knowledge in creating their course curriculum, planning daily lessons, and interpreting classroom events. There were instances, however, when beliefs stated by the ESL teachers in Woods's study seemed to be in contradiction with their actions. Woods attributed the discrepancy to "an unconscious routine … carried out as an unanalyzed chunk" (p. 252). Inconsistencies were also noted by Sato and Kleinsassser (1999), when participants in their study claimed to believe in and use Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), but no evidence of CLT was observed in their teaching. Freeman and Freeman (1994) argue for a consistency among teachers' beliefs, knowledge of theory, and classroom activities. When tensions among the three components arise, Freeman and Freeman maintain, teachers must examine and analyze their beliefs in order to reestablish consistency.

Prospective Teachers' Beliefs

The goal of teacher education programs that are grounded in a constructivist theory of learning (von Glasersfeld, 1991) is to help prospective teachers identify and transform tacit or unexamined beliefs about teaching and learning into objectively reasonable or evidentiary beliefs (Fenstermacher, 1994; Richardson, 1996). Even before beginning their careers, teacher education students have strongly developed beliefs about teaching and learning (Brookhart & Freeman, 1992; Richardson, 1996). Their beliefs, developed during their "13,000 hour apprenticeship of observation" (Lortie, 1975, p. 160), have an impact on their learning to teach (Calderhead & Robson, 1991; Richardson, 1996; Pajaras, 1992). Thus, "teacher preparation courses can ill afford to ignore the entering beliefs of preservice teachers" (Pajares, 1992). Prospective teachers' prior beliefs must be modified and reconstructed for professional growth to occur (Kagan, 1992).

Although educational literature is replete with research that examines preservice teachers' beliefs (e.g., Johnson & Landers-Macrine, 1998; Stuart & Thurlow, 2000; Tillema, 1994), relatively few studies investigated the beliefs of prospective second and/or foreign language teachers. Fox (1993) examined teaching assistants' (TAs) assumptions about the nature of language and language learning. Based

on the results of her study, she recommended that TA trainers require TAs to uncover their beliefs about language by distributing a questionnaire similar to the one in her study.

Okazaki (1996, cited by Sato & Kleinsasser, 1999) administered a survey to preservice Japanese teachers both before and after a methodology course to measure changes in the participants' beliefs. She found that, although preservice teachers' beliefs are not easily swayed, some of their beliefs were influenced in the desired direction. Johnson (1994) investigated the interrelationships between preservice ESL teachers' beliefs about second language teachers and teaching through observations, interviews, and journals. Among the implications drawn from her study, Johnson suggested that teacher education courses must recognize that teachers make sense of their course content by filtering it through their own belief systems and should create opportunities for preservice teachers to reflect on and confront their own beliefs about teachers and teaching.

Educational Change

Beliefs are the focus of change; they influence the way teachers approach professional development, what they learn from it, and how they incorporate new instructional practices into their teaching (Richardson, 1996). Shaw and Jakubowski (1991) maintain, "For effective and continuing change to occur, each teacher must reflect on his or her own beliefs and must commit to modify them to include new recommendations" (p. 13). Although Kidder (1989) suggests that teachers get set in their ways after about four years of learning by experience, other research indicates that teachers change all the time (e.g., Richardson & Anders, 1994; Woods, 1996). "Because teachers construct their own meaning, their beliefs need to be illuminated, discussed and challenged.… It is only through extensive questioning, reflecting and constructing that the paradigm shift in education can occur" (Fosnot, 1996, p. 216).

An expanding body of research on the standards for foreign language learning recognizes the integral role that teachers' beliefs play in educational change. During the early stages of the implementation of the standards, Bartz and Singer (1996) surveyed a 10% random sample of Indiana's foreign language teachers. Five of the items on the questionnaire were designed to measure the extent of the teachers' agreement with issues of content, philosophy, and methodology. Teachers agreed with the first of the five items, which asked if each of the standards' five goal areas defined a desirable and attainable vision (communication 96%, cultures 93%, connections 91%, comparisons 95%, and communities 80%). For the second item, 84% of the teachers indicated that the standards sufficiently define the content necessary to achieve each goal. Seventy-three percent agreed that the sample benchmarks are grade-level appropriate, and 75% thought that the benchmarks and learning scenarios would be useful to them. Finally, 66% of the teachers believed that they were already using many of the suggested activities. Bartz and Singer concluded, "the crucial question, however, is not whether one is aware of the standards but rather whether one agrees with the vision, philosophy, content, and pedagogical implications that national standards set forth and ultimately whether they will cause the students' acquisition of skills and proficiency to improve" (p. 159).

Rhodes and Branaman (1999) conducted a national survey of elementary and secondary schools to gather information in five different areas of foreign language education, including reactions to the standards for foreign language learning. Their questionnaire was sent to a randomly selected sample of principals at 2,982 elementary schools and 2,801 secondary schools. Thirty-seven percent of the elementary and 62% of the secondary school respondents indicated that their teachers were aware of the standards, and over half of both of these groups said that their school's foreign language curriculum had changed in response to the standards.

As part of the Nebraska Frameworks Project, Bruning, Flowerday, and Trayer (1999) examined teachers' beliefs about foreign language teaching and learning. One set of data was gathered from 30 teachers who participated in a graduate course during which they developed implementation strategies based on the frameworks. A survey was administered both before and after the course to compare the participants' precourse and postcourse beliefs. Analysis of the data indicated a change in beliefs, with a movement toward a more standards-based teaching philosophy. The same survey, along with a project participation checklist on which respondents indicated their level of involvement with the multiple activities of the Frameworks project, was sent to approximately one third of Nebraska's foreign language and ESL teachers. An analysis of the relationship between the beliefs of the 126 teachers responding to the mail survey and the level of their involvement with Frameworks activities indicated that teachers who participated in more Frameworks activities tended to have a more standards-based philosophy of teaching. The researchers concluded that (1) teachers benefit from professional activities, (2) there may be a reciprocal relationship between beliefs and involvement, and (3) willingness to change may be related to willingness to explore new approaches.

Research Questions

Focused on foreign language teachers in three Midwestern states, the present study was designed to discern their beliefs about and familiarity with the standards for foreign language learning, and to identify factors that influence these beliefs and familiarity. The following questions guided the study:

1. To what extent are the beliefs of foreign language teachers in Nebraska, Iowa, and Missouri consistent with the standards for foreign language learning?
2. Are there any significant differences in the teachers' familiarity with the standards for foreign language learning based on: (a) the state in which they teach, (b) language taught, (c) years of teaching experience, (d) percentage of teaching assignment in foreign language, (e) membership in foreign language professional organizations, (f) school enrollment, (g) gender, (h) highest educational degree earned, (i) rural or urban school, and (j) private or public school?
3. Are there any significant differences in the teachers' beliefs about the standards for foreign language learning based on the 10 factors listed above?

Method

Participants

Selection of Sample

The sample was selected from foreign language teachers in Nebraska, Iowa, and Missouri. The study focused on Midwestern states because the author prepares teacher education students who will teach in schools in the Midwest and provides in-service opportunities for Midwestern foreign language teachers. Nebraska was chosen because in 1994 it was one of only two states (Texas was the other) to receive a federally funded three-year grant to create state standards-based frameworks. By the end of the second year of the Frameworks project, more than 50% of Nebraska teachers had been introduced to the state frameworks and/or had participated in at least one of the 30 project-sponsored activities (Bruning, Flowerday, and Trayer, 1999). Iowa, on the other hand, is the only state that has not developed state-level standards for its students (Jennings, 1996). Nor has it planned any systematic means of offering teachers professional development on the standards (C. Sosa, personal communication, May 23, 2001). Missouri was chosen because the author is familiar with the state's process in developing and disseminating state standards.

The three states' Departments of Education provided lists of foreign language teachers, and a computerized data randomizer (http://www.randomizer.org) was used to select four hundred teachers from each state.

Profile of Sample

The combined total number of teachers from the three lists was 2,923. This number included 621 teachers in grades 6–12 in public and private schools in Nebraska, 939 elementary and 6th–12th-grade level teachers in private and public schools in Iowa, and 1,363 teachers in grades 6–12 in public schools in Missouri.

The lists did not specify the grade level for each teacher or identify schools as public or private. However, respondents were asked for that information on the questionnaire. Because Iowa was the only one of the three states that included elementary schools, questionnaires returned from elementary teachers were not included in the data analysis.

The greatest proportion of the respondents teach Spanish (65%); 14% teach French; 9% teach German; the rest teach a variety of languages including Bosnian, Japanese, Russian, Latin, Mandarin, and Italian. Most of the respondents are female (85%) and teach at the high school level (64%) in public schools (92%). Slightly more than half hold a bachelor's degree (53%); 45% earned a master's degree; 2% have a doctoral degree.

Instrumentation

The Foreign Language Education Questionnaire (FLEQ), the instrument used in this study, was designed to assess teachers' beliefs about constructs underlying the standards for foreign language learning. The author developed the FLEQ after studying the *Standards for Foreign Language Learning in the 21st Century* (National Standards, 1999), reading other publications about the standards (e.g., Lafayette, 1996; Phillips, 1999), and attending numerous state, regional, and national conference presentations on the standards. The FLEQ consists of 32 items loaded over five separate but interrelated subscales that represent fundamental assumptions underlying the standards for foreign language learning. Respondents rate the extent of their agreement with each of the 32 statements on a five-point Likert scale (strongly agree, agree, undecided, disagree, strongly disagree).

The first subscale addresses the 21st-century profile of foreign language students. A high score on this subscale indicates a belief that foreign language classes include academically challenged as well as academically strong students, both college and non-college bound students, and students whose first language is English or a language other than English. The second subscale measures beliefs about the curriculum. A high score on this subscale indicates support for the "Weave of Curricular Elements" articulated in *Standards for Foreign Language Learning in the 21st Century* (National Standards, 1999, p. 33). Here, seven items (the language system, cultural knowledge, communication strategies, critical thinking skills, learning strategies, other subject areas, and technology) are interwoven with the five goal areas of communication, cultures, connections, comparisons, and communities. The third subscale assesses teachers' beliefs about the role of the textbook and the emphasis given to teaching the language system. The belief that instructional goals extend beyond coverage of the target language system (i.e., the grammat-

ical, lexical, phonological, semantic, pragmatic, and discourse features) and the belief that the textbook is a tool for instruction rather than the focus of instruction are consonant with the standards. The fourth subscale is concerned with the language of instruction. The belief that the foreign language is the dominant language of instruction is consistent with the standards. The fifth subscale measures beliefs about the ideal time for learners to begin the study of a foreign language. Agreement that foreign language study should begin in early elementary school is consistent with the standards.

Originally, approximately half of the statements on each of the subscales were worded so that agreement with the statement indicated beliefs consistent with the standards, whereas the other half of the subscale statements were worded so that agreement with them indicated inconsistency with the standards. However, results of the factor analysis used in validating the FLEQ regrouped the statements on subscales in such a way that not every subscale has an equal number of statements consistent and inconsistent with the standards. The relationship of statements to subscales is illustrated in Table 1. A copy of the FLEQ can be found in Appendix A.

The internal consistency of teachers' responses on each subscale and for the total instrument was estimated using Cronbach's alpha with the responses from the 613 returned questionnaires. The values found were as follows: student profile, .78; curricular elements, .83; textbook/language system, .75; language of instruction, .69; and total instrument, .87.

The final item on the FLEQ relates to teachers' familiarity with the standards. Respondents were requested to circle the extent to which they are familiar with the standards for foreign language learning among the three choices provided: (1) not at all familiar, (2) somewhat familiar, and (3) very familiar.

Procedure

Data Collection

A copy of the FLEQ was mailed to 1,200 randomly selected teachers, that is, 400 teachers in each of the three states selected for the study (Nebraska, Missouri, and Iowa). Two weeks after the requested return date, a second copy of the FLEQ was mailed. A total of 699 (58%) FLEQs were returned.

Data Analysis

Due to missing data on 86 of the returned FLEQs, only 613 questionnaires were used in the data analyses. Responses to the statements on the FLEQ were numerically coded in the following manner: strongly agree = 5, agree = 4, undecided = 3, disagree = 2, and strongly disagree = 1. Responses to the item that requested respondents to indicate their familiarity with the standards were coded as follows: not at all familiar = 1, somewhat familiar = 2, and very familiar = 3.

For items on the FLEQ where agreement indicated beliefs *not consistent* with the standards (see Table 1) a response of *strongly disagree or disagree* was interpreted as meaning agreement with the opposing viewpoint. For example, if a respondent disagreed with the statement "Only college-bound students should enroll in foreign language classes" (statement 15), the response was interpreted as, "Both college and non-college bound students should enroll in foreign language classes" and coded as 4. Thus, responses coded 5 or 4 always indicated consistency with the standards. However, if a respondent agreed with the statement, "Foreign language study is not for students who have difficulty with learning in general" (statement 24), the response was coded as 2, meaning the respondent did not believe that students with learning difficulties should study a foreign language. Thus, responses coded 2 or 1 always indicated beliefs that are not consistent with the standards.

Table 1

STATEMENTS LOADED OVER EACH SUBSCALE

Subscale	Statements Where Agreement Indicates Consistency with the Standards	Statements Where Agreement Indicates Inconsistency with the Standards
1. Student Profile	5, 7, 30, 32	15, 24, 25, 27
2. Curricular Elements	3, 4, 9, 10, 11, 12, 14, 16, 17, 19, 20, 26, 28	
3. Textbook/Language System		1, 8, 21, 22, 23, 29, 31
4. Language of Instruction	6	13
5. Grade Level	2	18

Note: The numbers refer to the numbered statements on the FLEQ.

Descriptive statistics were calculated for each of the 32 statements, the five subscales, and the one item dealing with familiarity. Mean responses to the 32 statements and five subscales were interpreted as follows: (a) means of 3.6 or higher as beliefs consistent with the standards, (b) means between and including 3.5 and 2.5 as undecided, and (c) means of 2.4 or lower as beliefs not consistent with the standards. Mean responses for familiarity with the standards were interpreted as follows: (a) means of 2.6 or higher as very familiar, (b) means between and including 2.5 and 1.5 as somewhat familiar, and (c) means of 1.4 or lower as not at all familiar.

To determine if there were any significant differences among the teachers' familiarity with and beliefs about the standards for foreign language learning based on states and other factors identified in the research questions, the data were submitted to tests of homogeneity of variances and one-way ANOVA, or in cases of factors with only two variables, independent sample *t*-tests. To reduce the chance of a Type I error, the Bonferroni correction was calculated and the level of significance was set at < .001. For means where significant differences were indicated, post hoc tests of multiple comparisons were conducted.

Results

Consistency of Teachers' Beliefs with the Standards for Foreign Language Learning

The responses to all the statements under the student profile, curricular elements, language of instruction, and grade level subscales were within the range established to indicate agreement with the standards. Under the third subscale, textbook/language system, means for 4 statements (1, 8, 29, and 31) fell in the undecided range, and one statement (21) fell in the inconsistent with the standards range. The mean responses (and standard deviations) for each of the five subscales are as follows:

1. Student Profile, 4.19 (.31)
2. Curricular Elements, 4.26 (.18)
3. Textbook/Language System, 3.40 (.35)
4. Language of Instruction, 3.94 (.03)
5. Grade Level, 4.57 (.02)

Familiarity with the Standards for Foreign Language Learning

The data analyses indicated significant differences in teachers' familiarity with the standards based on two of the ten factors identified in the research questions: rural or urban school location ($t = -3.789$, $p < .000$) and membership in professional organizations ($F = 13.74$, $p < .000$). The mean response (and standard deviation) for teachers' familiarity with the standards at rural schools was 2.10 (.65) and for urban schools 2.29 (.63). Results of the *t*-test indicated a significant difference between the means.

The professional language organizations in which respondents indicated membership included American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL), American Association of Teachers of Spanish and Portuguese (AATSP), American Association of Teachers of French (AATF), American Association of Teachers of German (AATG), American Classical League (ACL), and the local state associations. The number of respondents belonging to each organization and the mean responses (and standard deviations) for familiarity with the standards for foreign language learning for each membership is illustrated in Table 2.

Results of the ANOVA indicated that respondents who were members of only their state associations, respondents who claimed membership only in AATSP, AATF, AATG, or ACL, and respondents who didn't hold membership in any professional organization were less familiar with the standards than respondents who were members of two or more organizations or members of ACTFL only. The post hoc test of multiple comparisons indicated no significant differ-

Table 2

DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS FOR FAMILIARITY WITH THE STANDARDS FOR FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNING BASED ON MEMBERSHIP IN PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

Organization	Number	Mean Level of Familiarity
ACTFL only	15	2.47 (.64)
AATSP or AATF or AATG or ACL only	79	2.23 (.64)
State association only	161	2.24 (.65)
Two or more organizations	113	2.54 (.57)
No membership	318	2.05 (.62)

ences in the levels of familiarity among respondents who belonged to no organization, respondents who belonged to only the state association, and respondents who held membership in only AATSP, AATF, AATG, or ACL.

Finally, it is worth mentioning that the results of the ANOVA performed on the means for familiarity based on state indicate a level of significance that approaches that which was set for this study ($F = 4.13$, $p < .017$). The state mean responses (and standard deviations) for level of familiarity with the standards for foreign language learning are as follows: Nebraska, 2.14 (.63); Missouri, 2.31 (.62); Iowa, 2.17 (.66). The mean for all three states together is 2.20 (.65).The post hoc test of multiple comparisons indicated no differences in the level of familiarity between Missouri teachers and Iowa teachers and between Nebraska teachers and Iowa teachers. However, the analysis indicated a difference between the level of familiarity between Nebraska teachers and Missouri teachers.

Factors Influencing Teachers' Beliefs

Results of the data analyses indicated significant differences in teachers' beliefs with 14 of the statements on the FLEQ based on six of the ten factors identified in the research questions: (1) membership in professional organizations, (2) urban or rural location, (3) percentage of teaching time in a foreign language, (4) gender, (5) highest educational degree earned, and (6) private or public school.

In addition to greater familiarity with the standards, as discussed previously, respondents who were members of ACTFL or at least two professional organizations were more likely to believe that foreign language instruction should be conducted in the target language (statement 13, $F = 7.652$, $p < .000$), and include teaching communication strategies (statement 9, $F = 3.017$, $p < .000$), learning strategies (statement 17, $F = 5.902$, $p < .000$), and critical thinking skills (statement 14, $F = 5.705$, $p < .000$). They were also more likely to believe that the focus of assessment should not be on knowledge of vocabulary and grammar (statement 31, $F = 4.565$, $p < .001$) but should include open-ended activities (statement 19, $F = 4.867$, $p < .001$). Finally, respondents who were involved in ACTFL or at least two professional organizations believed that students should have opportunities to use the language for real communication both in the school and beyond (statement 12, $F = 6.10$, $p < .000$), and that culture instruction is as important as vocabulary and grammar instruction (statement 29, $F = 4.568$, $p < .001$).

Significant differences in the last five factors listed above are as follows. Teachers in urban schools believed more strongly about teaching learning strategies than did teachers in rural schools (statement 17, $t = -4.471$, $p < .000$). Teachers who taught full time in foreign languages were more likely to believe that the study of foreign languages enhances all professions (statement 27, $t = 3.34$, $p < .001$) than those whose assignment was less that 50% in foreign languages. Gender influenced teachers' beliefs on five statements. Female teachers believed more strongly about using authentic materials (statement 4, $t = -3.735$, $p < .000$) and relating instruction to students' lives (statement 16, $t = -3.244$, $p < .001$). Male teachers were more likely to believe in the importance of providing opportunities for students to use the language both in and beyond the classroom (statement 12, $t = -3.525$, $p < .000$), including open-ended activities in assessment (statement 19) ($t = -5.381$, $p < .000$) and relating instruction to what students already know (statement 28) ($t = -3.389$, $p < .001$). The factor of highest educational degree influenced teachers' beliefs on only statement 18. Teachers with a BA or MA believed more strongly than teachers who held a PhD or EdD ($F = 7.326$, $p < .001$) that foreign language study should not begin in high school. Finally, teachers in private schools were more likely than teachers in public schools to believe that all students, regardless of career objectives, can benefit from studying a foreign language (statement 32, $t = 3.58$, $p < .001$).

Discussion

Results and Implications

The results of this study suggest that teachers believe that foreign language instruction should be delivered in the target language, available to all students, consonant with the "Weave of Curricular Elements" in *Standards for Foreign Language Learning in the 21st Century* (National Standards, 1999, p. 33), and included in the early elementary school curriculum. However, the mean response of "undecided" for the textbook/language subscale on the FLEQ indicates that preservice and in-service teachers may benefit from opportunities that help them redefine the content of their programs.

Foreign language instruction traditionally followed the *coverage model* (Chaffee, 1992) in which the content of the course is defined by the textbook. Teaching and learning were viewed as a transfer of information. The teacher's responsibility was to cover the content as defined by the textbook; the students' responsibility was to memorize the information presented. The teacher held students accountable by administering tests that measured the extent to which the students learned the information. Standards-based instruction, however, is not tied to a textbook. Rather, teachers use a variety of sources (e.g., authentic materials, information from the Web, community resources, other academic content areas) from which students can obtain information. As students engage in tasks that allow them to use the language for real communica-

tion, they develop an understanding of the process by which target language speakers exchange, interpret, and present information. Their achievement is measured by authentic assessments that model real-world language use. The results of this study suggest that many foreign language teachers still believe in the coverage model, perhaps because that is what they have always done and lack direction to do something else.

The second finding, which uncovered the respondents' familiarity with the standards for foreign language learning, is quite interesting. It appears that Midwestern foreign language teachers are only somewhat familiar with the standards. How likely is it that teachers who have only a moderate familiarity with the standards will design and implement standards-based instruction? According to Bartz and Singer (1996), as long as the teachers agree with the vision, philosophy, content, and pedagogical implications underlying the standards, their familiarity with the standards is not crucial. However, there are important components in standards-based instruction that represent innovations with which teachers must be familiar if the standards are to achieve their potential impact. Examples include content goals that extend beyond the classroom, broad curricular experiences as suggested in the "Weave of Curricular Elements," and the integration of three modes of communication as defined in the framework of communicative modes.

It is intriguing to find that although Iowa has not adopted the standards for foreign language learning as their state frameworks and although Iowa teachers have not had the opportunities (e.g., workshops, summer institutes, pilot school programs, graduate courses) for learning about the standards that teachers from Nebraska and Missouri have had, Iowa teachers feel just as familiar with the standards as teachers in the other two states. Furthermore, even though Missouri did not receive federal funding to develop and disseminate state standards-based frameworks, Missouri teachers feel more familiar with the standards than foreign language teachers in Nebraska who received federal funding and provided more than 30 activities that involved over two thirds of the state's foreign language teachers (Bruning, Flowerday, & Trayer, 1999). It may be worthwhile to gather some empirical data on the specific activities offered by each state to identify which in-service professional development opportunities are the most effective in familiarizing teachers with the standards.

Finally, the factors that affect teachers' familiarity with and beliefs about the standards for foreign language learning present some challenges. One is providing professional development that focuses on designing and implementing standards-based foreign language instruction for teachers in rural schools. There are population groups in the states involved in this study that are too widely dispersed to bring teachers together for weekend workshops or evening and summer university courses. Possible options are to use distance education such as Iowa's Communication Network (ICN) and to develop Web-based courses for in-service teachers. Other means need to be investigated.

Another challenge is getting more teachers involved in professional organizations. The finding in this study regarding professional organizations is consonant with Bruning et al. (1999), who found a reciprocal relationship between beliefs and involvement. Yet, 52% of this study's respondents do not belong to any foreign language professional organizations. Research that identifies reasons for this lack of participation and suggests possible incentives for involving greater numbers of teachers may be worthwhile.

Limitations of the Study

Even though the design of the FLEQ was guided by recommended procedures for constructing and administering a research questionnaire (Gall, Borg, & Gall, 1996), the statements on the FLEQ are still open to individual interpretation, and there is the possibility that items may fall prey to what Pajares (1992) calls "it depends thinking." Beliefs are best accessed indirectly from what individuals say and do (Kagan 1990, Woods, 1996). However, there are many studies on teachers' beliefs in which data were collected uniquely by a questionnaire (e.g., Hoy & Woolfolk, 1990; Pigge & Marso, 1989; Zollman & Mason, 1992), some of which are in the field of foreign language education (e.g., Fox, 1993; Okazaki, 1996). Additionally, Bruning et al. (1999) analyzed and drew conclusions for their study from data collected by a mailed survey. Nonetheless, perhaps questionnaires are most useful, as Pajaras (1992) suggests, in detecting inconsistencies and areas that merit attention.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to gather information about teachers' beliefs and familiarity with the standards for foreign language learning, in order to provide direction for teacher education, in-service professional development, and future research. The results of this study suggest that preservice teachers, because their classroom language learning experiences were most likely guided by the coverage model, need exposure to other models that are based on contextualized, meaningful language use. In-service teachers may benefit from opportunities to experiment and interpret standards-based models in the context of their own teaching circumstances. Research that examines programs that have already abandoned the coverage model for standards-based foreign language instruction and explores the effects of standards-based approaches on the development of students' language proficiency would inform edu-

cational practices. Additionally, investigating avenues for providing teachers in rural areas with professional development may be productive. Finally, case studies that triangulate data from teachers' responses to the FLEQ with qualitative data would discover whether the teachers actually do what they say they believe in doing, and may lead to positive educational change.

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Appendix A

Foreign Language Education Questionnaire (FLEQ)

Please read each statement and indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the statement. Put an X over the appropriate box to the right of each statement to indicate your opinion. Respond according to what you believe, not necessarily what you actually do. There are no right or wrong answers.

1. The major curricular focus of effective foreign language programs is on the adopted textbook and accompanying ancillaries.
   ☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Undecided ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

2. The ideal time to begin the study of a foreign language is in early elementary school.
   ☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Undecided ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

3. The effective foreign language teacher provides opportunities for interdisciplinary learning (i.e., relating the content of the foreign language class with that of other school subjects).
   ☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Undecided ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

4. Effective foreign language instruction incorporates authentic materials.
   ☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Undecided ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

5. Students who have learned a language other than English somewhere other than in school can benefit from taking courses in the language they have learned elsewhere.
   ☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Undecided ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

6. The effective foreign language teacher uses the foreign language as the dominant language of instruction.
   ☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Undecided ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

7. All students, regardless of future educational plans, can benefit from studying a foreign language.
   ☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Undecided ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

8. In effective foreign language programs, nearly all of class time is devoted to learning the language system (i.e., pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, spelling, and syntax).
☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Undecided ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

9. In effective foreign language instruction, some time is devoted to teaching students how to use specific communication strategies (e.g., circumlocution, approximation, gestures).
☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Undecided ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

10. Effective foreign language programs include opportunities for students to access a variety of technologies.
☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Undecided ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

11. The effective foreign language teacher provides opportunities for students to explore topics of personal interest through the foreign language.
☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Undecided ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

12. Effective language programs provide students at all levels of instruction with opportunities to use the target language for real communication, both in the school and beyond.
☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Undecided ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

13. English is the dominant language of instruction in effective foreign language programs.
☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Undecided ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

14. Effective instruction in the foreign language class is designed to promote the use of critical thinking.
☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Undecided ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

15. Only college-bound students should enroll in foreign language classes.
☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Undecided ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

16. Effective foreign language instruction is related to students' real lives within the school, community, family, and peer group.
☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Undecided ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

17. Effective foreign language teachers plan instruction on how to use specific learning strategies (e.g., previewing, skimming, inferring information.)
☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Undecided ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

18. The ideal time to begin the study of a foreign language is in high school.
☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Undecided ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

19. Effective foreign language instruction uses open-ended activities (e.g., portfolios, demonstrations, presentations, projects) to determine a portion of the students' grade.
☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Undecided ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

20. Effective instruction in culture leads to an understanding of the underlying values and beliefs of the target society (societies).
☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Undecided ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

21. The primary focus of effective foreign language programs is on the development of vocabulary and knowledge of grammar.
☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Undecided ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

22. The role of the effective foreign language teacher is to help students learn what is in the textbook.
☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Undecided ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

23. The chapter tests that accompany the textbook provide an adequate means of assessment in effective foreign language programs.
☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Undecided ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

24. Foreign language study is not for students who have difficulty with learning in general.
☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Undecided ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

25. There is little or no benefit for students who have learned a language other than English somewhere other than in school to take courses in that language.
☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Undecided ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

26. Effective foreign language instruction defines and assesses cultural learning objectives just as systematically as grammatical and lexical learning objectives.
☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Undecided ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

27. The study of foreign languages enhances only certain professions.
☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Undecided ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

28. The effective foreign language teacher creates opportunities for learning that relate foreign language instruction to that which the students already know.
☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Undecided ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

29. The role of cultural instruction in effective foreign language programs is secondary to that of vocabulary and grammar.
☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Undecided ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

30. Students who have learning difficulties can be successful foreign language learners.
☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Undecided ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

31. The focus of assessment in effective foreign language programs is on students' knowledge of vocabulary and grammar.
☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Undecided ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

32. All students, regardless of career objectives, can benefit from studying a foreign language.
☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Undecided ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

Please circle the extent to which you are familiar with the Standards for Foreign Language Learning:
:
Not at all familiar Somewhat familiar Very familiar