

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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