

Fostering Global Competence Among Pre-Service Language Teachers: A Comparison of Teacher Beliefs and Practices Between Language Teachers from the U.S. and Spain

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Abstract

This chapter describes an effort to internationalize a foreign language education initial teacher certification program through a Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) grant project that was funded by Valdosta State University. The purpose of the QEP grant was to foster discipline-specific inquiry skills among undergraduate students and to promote the development of global competence. With the guidance of faculty, the teacher candidates who participated in the project conducted a research study that examined teacher beliefs and practices between 18 foreign language teachers from the U.S. and 15 foreign and second language teachers from Spain. The results revealed that both teacher groups share many similar beliefs; however, they diverge in the areas of knowledge and application of language learning standards and the amount of instruction delivered in the target language. The teachers from Spain demonstrated greater knowledge and application of language learning standards, and they also reported spending more time teaching in the target language compared to their U.S. counterparts. Through this research project that took place at home and abroad, the teacher candidates met four global competency learning goals: (1) students investigate the world beyond their immediate environment, (2) students recognize their own and others' perspectives, (3) students communicate their ideas effectively with diverse audiences, and (4) students translate their ideas into appropriate actions to improve conditions (U.S. DOE International Strategy, 2012-2016, p. 6).

Key words: *internationalization, study abroad, teacher preparation, world language education*

Background

In August of 2014, the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) released a position statement on global competence that recognizes the key role that language learning plays in students' development of global competence. Through language study at home and abroad, learners are exposed to cultural products and practices as well as the perspectives that underpin them while communicating and interacting in multicultural communities. According to the position statement, all subject areas should strive to foster global competence from primary through post-secondary education. The position statement also lists five practices that are effective for the development of global competence. These include:

1. Recognize the multiplicity of factors that influence who people are and how they communicate.
2. Investigate and explain cultural differences as well as similarities, looking beneath the surface of stereotypes.
3. Examine events through the lens of media from different countries and cultures.
4. Collaborate to share ideas, discuss topics of common interest, and solve mutual problems.
5. Reflect on one's personal experiences across cultures to evaluate personal feelings, thoughts, perceptions, and reactions. (ACTFL, 2014)

Global competence is closely related to the construct intercultural communicative competence (ICC) and learning environments that foster global competence may provide the ideal conditions for the development of ICC. Byram's (1997) notion of ICC includes how learners view the contact and communication between themselves and members of the target language culture as an "opportunity to learn and be educated, acquiring the capacity to critique and improve their own and others' conditions" (p. 2). Scholars in the area of ICC emphasize the need to prepare learners to engage and collaborate within a global society by figuring out how to interact appropriately with those from other cultures (Sinicrope, Norris, & Watanabe, 2007). Similarly, ACTFL (2014) asserted that the development of global competence is essential for successful interactions between diverse groups in local, national, and international settings. Byram (1997) claimed that speakers who possess ICC not only attempt to gain an inside view of another's culture, they also attempt to understand their own culture from an alternate cultural perspective. This may be achieved by investigating the world beyond the learners' immediate environment, identifying and evaluating perspectives, obtaining and applying both disciplinary and interdisciplinary knowledge, expressing ideas, and taking action, all of which are essential for the development of global competence (ACTFL, 2014).

ACTFL's position statement on global competence is well aligned with the U.S. Department of Education's (DOE) International Strategy 2012–2016, which is a fully articulated plan to prepare today's youth for a globalized world and to improve education at home through engagement with the international community. According to this document, U.S. students must broaden their understanding and perspective of the world in order to compete in the global job market. This includes knowledge and understanding of the practices of other countries as they apply to students' specific

disciplines and future professional practice. As a result, the lessons learned abroad could promote innovation and excellence at home. The International Strategy 2012–2016 includes four global competency learning goals for 21st century skills applied to the world: (1) students investigate the world beyond their immediate environment, (2) students recognize their own and others' perspectives, (3) students communicate their ideas effectively with diverse audiences, and (4) students translate their ideas into appropriate actions to improve conditions (U.S. DOE International Strategy, p. 6).

During foreign language coursework in the U.S., teacher candidates are typically exposed to the products, practices, and perspectives of other cultures. However, learners do not always develop awareness and/or connect the importance of learning about the practices of the foreign culture; furthermore, they often fail to understand the applicability of this knowledge to their future professional activities (Bringle & Hatcher, 1999). In support of the DOE's global competency learning goals, a Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) grant was secured to internationalize a foreign language education (FLED) program at a regional university in the Southeast. The teacher candidates who participated in the project were all undergraduates who were seeking initial certification in Spanish. Not only did they participate in a summer study abroad program where they took teacher preparation coursework with native Spaniards who were training to teach Spanish as a second language in Spain; but prior to studying abroad, the candidates also took a research seminar course in which they developed knowledge of discipline-specific inquiry skills. Namely, they completed a Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) module on Human Research Ethics, they learned about survey design and quantitative methods (*t*-tests), and they conducted a review of the literature on foreign language teacher beliefs and practices, which they compiled into annotated bibliographies. In addition, they designed a survey instrument, translated it into Spanish, and piloted it prior to traveling abroad. This chapter describes the research study that stemmed from the grant project to internationalize the FLED curriculum. By designing the study, conducting the research at home and abroad, and analyzing and disseminating the results, the teacher candidates met all four global competency learning goals outlined by the DOE's (2012-2016) International Strategy.

Review of Literature

The teacher candidates discussed potential areas where teacher beliefs might differ between foreign and second language teachers from the U.S. and Spain. Based on their discussion, they researched beliefs about language learning (Horwitz, 1985, 1988, 1989, 1990) as well as three additional constructs to include on the survey. This literature review highlights the research studies that were compiled, analyzed, and synthesized by the teacher candidates to inform the survey instrument used in this study. The review of literature presented below focuses on the four constructs that were investigated in the present study: (1) beliefs about language learning, (2) beliefs about knowledge and application of language learning standards, (3) beliefs about the importance of teaching grammar, and (4) beliefs about the amount of instruction that should be delivered in the target language.

Beliefs about Language Learning

Horwitz (1985, 1988, 1989, 1990) asserted that responses on the Beliefs about Language Learning Inventory (BALLI) can indicate whether an individual's beliefs about foreign language learning are comparable with what scholars know about how people learn foreign languages. The BALLI measures beliefs about language learning in the following five areas: (1) foreign language aptitude, (2) difficulty of language learning, (3) nature of language learning, (4) learning and communication strategies, and (5) motivation and expectation.

With respect to foreign language aptitude, Horwitz (1985) claimed that some teacher candidates tend to believe that certain individuals have an innate ability for language learning while others do not. She suggested that this perception could have negative consequences for learners because teachers may have lower expectations of students whom they view as lacking an innate aptitude for languages. Regarding the difficulty of language learning, Horwitz (1985) asserted that when some languages are perceived as being more difficult than others, then teachers could become frustrated when students have difficulty learning an "easy language" (p. 336). With respect to the nature of language learning, she claimed that when teachers believe that foreign language instruction is different than teaching other academic disciplines, then they are less likely to spend the majority of their instructional time teaching grammar rules and/or translation. In the area of learning and communication strategies, Horwitz (1985) stated that teacher candidates have begun to show greater acceptance of communicative approaches; however, she suggested that they often do not incorporate them into their classrooms effectively because they lack sufficient models of communicative activities from their own language learning experiences. Finally, Horwitz (1985) asserted that teacher candidates often begin their methods course believing that motivating students is the responsibility of the teacher. Over time, however, teachers often become frustrated and begin to blame students for their lack of motivation for language learning.

Since the BALLI was developed by Horwitz (1985, 1988, 1989, 1990), it has been widely used as a research instrument in the fields of foreign language education and second language acquisition (Abraham & Vann, 1987; Cotterall, 1995; Holec, 1987; Horwitz, 1988, 1989, 1990; Mori, 1999; Victori & Lockhart, 1995; Wen & Johnson, 1997). In addition to the BALLI's use with pre-service teachers, it has also been used to uncover the beliefs of in-service language teachers and foreign language students across various levels (Kern, 1995; Peacock, 1999, 2001; Rifkin, 2000; Samimy & Lee, 1997; Siebert, 2003; White, 1999). Furthermore, it has been demonstrated to be a valid and reliable instrument (Horwitz, 1988, 1989, 1990; Kern 1995).

Knowledge and Application of Language Learning Standards

Apart from the five areas examined by the BALLI, the present study also investigated beliefs and practices related to knowledge and application of language learning standards. Within the U.S., many foreign language educators adhere to the ACTFL Standards for Foreign Language Learning (1996, 1999, 2006); the most current (fourth) edition is known as the World-Readiness Standards for Learning Languages (2015). Similarly, second and foreign language teachers in Spain employ

the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, and Assessment (CEFR) standards (2011), which are published in 39 languages. Both the ACTFL and the CEFR standards are used to identify what students should know and be able to do in the foreign language.

The two frameworks (ACTFL and CEFR) provide guidelines for teachers that explain what topics need to be covered and the skills that need to be fostered in classroom instruction at specific levels. Both systems also provide proficiency guidelines to determine the level of the student based on specific tasks they are able to perform in the target language. The main differences between the two frameworks can be found within the evaluation scales for students. The ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines (2012) divide proficiency into five main levels (novice, intermediate, advanced, superior, and distinguished); the first three of which are further broken down into the sub-categories of low, mid, and high. In the CEFR framework (2011), there are three main levels (A or basic, B or independent, and C or proficient), which are broken down into two subcategories for each that are marked with either a 1 or a 2 (i.e. A1, A2, B1, B2, C1, and C2). While the categories are marked differently, both systems run more or less equivalent in the major markers for changing from level to level. Mosher, Slagter, and Surface (2010) found no difference in the ability to classify proficiency accurately between the two systems with the exception that the ACTFL self-assessment speaking statements provide a slightly more accurate description than their CEFR counterparts.

With respect to teachers' use of language learning standards, Bärenfänger and Tschirner (2008) suggested that the CEFR standards could be used to create a quantifiable quality management system for foreign language educators and curricula in order to improve foreign language teaching and learning in Europe. Furthermore, they asserted that the CEFR framework is especially useful for prompting language educators to reflect on their current practices and for helping teachers, learners, course designers, administrators, and examining bodies to "situate and coordinate their efforts" (Bärenfänger & Tschirner, 2008, p. 81). Conversely, Liskin-Gasparro (2003) asserted a more skeptical view for teachers within the U.S. by stating that the ACTFL standards and the idea of "proficiency" are grounded more in theory than in real world application. Moreover, Quinn Allen (2002) found that there are a diverse number of variables that can impact U.S. teachers' knowledge and use of the ACTFL standards, including: location, membership in professional organizations, gender, and the type of school at which they teach. Another possible factor in U.S. teachers' application of the ACTFL standards is their knowledge of research and theory in the field. Byrd, Cummings Hlas, Watzke, and Montes Valencia (2011) found that U.S. teacher educators who were experts on second language acquisition theories perceived the standards as a greater resource than language teachers who did not have a strong background in research and theory.

There have been relatively few studies conducted that investigate teachers' knowledge and use of language learning standards within either the ACTFL or the CEFR frameworks and even fewer studies have compared the two frameworks. More research is needed in this area; in particular, research that compares teachers' understanding and use of the CEFR versus ACTFL language learning standards.

Importance of Grammar Instruction

The third area of focus for the present study was to compare European and U.S. teacher beliefs and practices with respect to grammar instruction. Research findings suggest that teachers and learners alike perceive grammar instruction to be an important part of language learning (Jean & Simard, 2011; Kissau, Algozzine, & Yon, 2012; Polat, 2009; Schulz, 1996). Jean and Simard (2011) conducted a large scale study with 2,366 students and/or instructors of either English as a second language or French as a second language in Canada. They found that language teachers and students believe that learning grammar rules is necessary for language learning; however, they also found that both instructors and students alike perceived grammar instruction as being boring. Therefore, the researchers suggested that grammar should be taught explicitly only when it is necessary (e.g., for teaching complex structures) in order to avoid dampening students' motivation for language learning. They also recommended using more implicit instruction for structures that can be learned inductively.

Similarly, Polat (2009) also found that both teachers and learners perceive grammar instruction to be essential for language learning. He compared teacher and learner beliefs in Georgia (the former Soviet Republic) between teachers and students of English as a foreign language. Not only did he find a strong belief among teachers for the importance of teaching grammar, he also found that both teachers and learners believed that knowledge of grammar in the first language is a prerequisite for learning the grammar of the target language. Moreover, Polat (2009) found that the majority of the language students in his study believed that "grammar learning is equal to language learning" (p. 235).

While grammar instruction appears to be perceived as important by both instructors and learners, Schulz' (1996) large-scale study of 916 U.S. instructors and learners of commonly- and less-commonly-taught foreign languages found that students, regardless of the foreign language studied, are in favor of focus-on-form instruction. Conversely, she found that more language instructors than learners believe that role-play activities that simulate real-life contexts are more important than mechanical grammar drills. This view is reiterated by Toth (2004), who stated that second language instruction can be undermined when students focus only on structures rather than on broader discourse goals.

Particularly in recent studies, such as the one performed by Kissau, Algozzine, and Yon (2012), findings suggest that U.S. language instructors believe that grammar instruction should play a secondary and supportive role to communicative-based approaches. While the present body of literature indicates that language educators perceive grammar instruction to be an important part of language learning, some studies point to a changing trend in foreign language instruction from a structural (focus-on-form) approach to a more communicative approach both in the U.S. and internationally (Jean & Simard, 2011; Kissau, Algozzine, & Yon, 2012; Schulz, 1996).

Amount of Instruction Delivered in the Target Language

The final focus of the present study was to examine beliefs and practices regarding the amount of instruction that should be delivered in the target language.

Within the U.S., Wilbur (2007) found that novice teachers tended to shy away from communicative techniques and focus more on grammar instruction because that is how they were taught, especially at the college level. Other reasons why U.S. language instructors avoid teaching in the target language found by Bateman (2008) include: (1) an inability to discipline students in the target language, (2) target language teaching is more time consuming, (3) the difficulty of building rapport with students when instructing in the target language, and (4) the belief that vocabulary acquisition requires code-switching.

While U.S. teacher preparation programs aspire to graduate novice teachers that have attained Advanced Low speaking proficiency, the fact remains that many do not reach this benchmark by graduation (Cooper, 2004; Glisan, Swender, & Surface, 2013; Liskin-Gasparro, 1999; Schulz, 2000; Vélez-Rendón, 2002). Glisan, Swender, and Surface (2013) examined the official ACTFL Oral Proficiency Interview scores of 1,957 teacher candidates from 2006 – 2012 and found that 45% of the examinees were unable to reach ACTFL's minimum proficiency recommendation for certification. Schulz (2000) claimed that the failure of teacher preparation programs to help candidates develop acceptable levels of proficiency is a significant problem because foreign language teachers' lack of proficiency causes them to rely on more traditional, but less effective, grammar-focused instruction.

For those teacher candidates who manage to reach the minimum required proficiency level by graduation, there is the matter of keeping up or improving upon their language skills once they graduate. Fraga-Cañadas (2010) stated that almost half of the U.S. Spanish teachers she surveyed felt that their language skills had declined or remained the same since graduation. Horwitz (1996) asserted that foreign language teachers who are nonnative or semi-native speakers of the language they teach are advanced language learners themselves, and thus may exhibit anxiety about speaking in the target language during class. Horwitz (1996) also suggested that high levels of teacher foreign language anxiety may have negative consequences on classroom practices; namely, instructors may subconsciously choose instructional strategies that require little language production, and they may only engage in linguistic interactions that are controlled and predictable.

Therefore, research suggests that U.S. foreign language teachers' lack of proficiency in the target language and/or their language anxiety may result in an inadequate amount of instruction delivered in the target language. According to ACTFL's Proficiency Guidelines for speaking (2012), foreign language teachers who cannot speak at the Advanced Low level (for Spanish and French) do not have the necessary tools to adequately address the three modes of communication in their classrooms, and they are unable to provide sufficient target language input to create an acquisition rich environment for learners to develop their communicative skills in the foreign language.

In an attempt to help improve practices in the U.S., Pufahl, Rhodes, and Christian (2001) surveyed foreign language teachers in 19 countries to determine what works abroad. Some of the innovative international teaching practices noted in their report include: (1) teaching content-area subjects through the vehicle of the foreign language, (2) using communicative language teaching methods, (3) emphasizing language learning strategies, (3) using only the target language in the classroom,

and (4) differentiating instruction based on students' proficiency level. With respect to Spain, the researchers found that focusing on communicative and intercultural learning has "resulted in increased oral and written proficiency for their students" (Pufahl, Rhodes, & Christian, 2001, p. 40). The researchers also found that the underlying rationale for using communicative methods is now reflected in textbooks and curricula in Spain.

The European Commission published a comprehensive study on language competencies in 2012 which included data from 14 countries (including Spain) and over 54,000 students, teachers, and administrators from across Europe. Major findings include the following: (1) early language learning results in higher levels of proficiency and a greater number of foreign languages studied, (2) there is a positive relationship between learners' proficiency and their exposure to the target language via media, (3) learners who believe that the target language is useful tend to achieve higher proficiency levels, (4) there is a positive relationship between learners' proficiency and teacher and student use of the target language during class, and (5) differences with respect to initial and continued teacher training among the various educational systems of Europe do not appear to have an impact on students' proficiency.

Pufahl, Rhodes, and Christian (2001) claimed that teacher training is more rigorous in many European countries than in the U.S. and that the teaching profession is held in higher esteem in Europe, which has made an impact on the quality of the candidates who enter the teaching profession. Furthermore, the researchers found that many European teacher preparation programs have study or work abroad components that have contributed to "the high level of language proficiency among foreign language teachers" (Pufahl, Rhodes, & Christian, 2001, p. 40). Therefore, teacher proficiency in the target language does not appear to be as significant of an issue in Europe as it is in the U.S.; however, more research is needed comparing foreign language teacher proficiency, the amount of instruction they received in the target language, and teacher preparation requirements between the U.S. and other countries and how these variables may impact student learning.

Research Questions

Given the paucity of research comparing teacher beliefs and practices between U.S. foreign and second language teachers and those in other countries, this study will help fill the gap in the present body of knowledge by addressing the following questions:

1. Do foreign and/or second language teachers in the U.S. and Spain differ in their beliefs about language learning in the following five areas as measured by the BALLI (Horwitz, 2008): (a) foreign language aptitude, (b) difficulty of language learning, (c) nature of language learning, (d) learning and communication strategies, and (e) motivation and expectation?
2. Do foreign and/or second language teachers in the U.S. and Spain differ in their beliefs and practices regarding knowledge and application of language learning standards?
3. Do foreign and/or second language teachers in the U.S. and Spain differ in their beliefs and practices regarding the importance of grammar instruction?

4. Do foreign and/or second language teachers in the U.S and Spain differ in their beliefs and practices regarding the appropriate amount of target language use in their instruction?

Method

Participants

The following demographic information was collected from participants on a survey: (1) the language taught, (2) the number of years of language teaching experience, and (3) the participant's gender. Participants included 33 secondary-level foreign or second language teachers, 18 from the U.S. and 15 from Spain. Although the majority of the survey participants taught Spanish as a foreign or second language, there were also two French teachers—one in the U.S. group and one in the group from Spain—as well as one English as a Foreign Language teacher in the group from Spain. The U.S. language teachers taught at four high schools that were close in proximity to the teacher candidates' home institution. Similarly, the language teachers from Spain taught at an international language school for secondary-level students that was close in proximity to the candidates' study abroad institution in Spain. Among the U.S. teachers, 39% had 1-5 years of language teaching experience, 17% had 6-10 years of experience, and 44% had 11 or more years of experience. The teachers from Spain were fairly well distributed, with 33% having 1-5 years of experience, 33% having 6-10 years of experience, and 34% having 11 or more years of experience. There were 29 females and 4 males in the sample.

Data Collection and Analysis

An anonymous questionnaire measuring teacher beliefs and practices was administered to 15 secondary-level foreign or second language teachers from Spain during the summer semester of 2014 and to 18 secondary-level foreign language teachers from the U.S. during the fall semester of 2014. The anonymous survey was created and delivered using the Qualtrics online survey software and platform. Likert scores were totaled for each construct that was measured by the survey and mean scores for each category were subjected to independent samples *t*-tests to determine if there were statistically significant differences between the two groups. All data were analyzed using SAS® 9.2 for Windows software. Data were screened for outliers and the assumptions of the test were checked prior to running the inferential procedures. In addition, the Bonferroni adjustment ($\alpha = 0.00625$) was applied to the set of tests to ensure that the Type I error rate was not inflated.

Instrument and Scoring

Horwitz' BALLI (1985, 1987, 1988, 2008) provided the foundation for the survey instrument. It contains 34 items that are rated on a 5-point Likert Scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The (2008) version of the BALLI was employed in the present study and it is presented in Appendix A. For this version of the BALLI, "English" was replaced with "the language I teach" and "I" was replaced with "my students," as was suggested by Horwitz (2008) for administering the survey to students and/or teachers of languages other than English. Items from each of the five categories measured by the BALLI were tallied to arrive at a mean score for each

construct by group. Five constructs were measured by the BALLI as follows: (1) nine items measured beliefs about foreign language aptitude (Questions 1, 2, 5, 10, 15, 22, 29, 32, 34); (2) six items measured difficulty of language learning (Questions 3, 4, 6, 14, 24, 28); (3) six items measured the nature of language learning (Questions 8, 11, 16, 20, 25, 26); (4) eight items measured learning and communication strategies (Questions 7, 9, 12, 13, 17, 18, 19, 21); and (5) five items measured motivation and expectation (Questions 23, 27, 30, 31, 33).

Three additional constructs were examined in the present study as follows: (1) three items measured beliefs and practices regarding knowledge and application of language learning standards (Questions 35-37); (2) three items measured beliefs and practices with respect to the importance of teaching grammar (Questions 38-40); and (3) three items measured beliefs and practices regarding the amount of instruction delivered in the target language (Questions 41-43). These additional items were also rated on a 5-point Likert Scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Items from each of the three additional categories measured by the survey were tallied to arrive at a mean score for each construct by group. Cronbach's alpha was computed for each of these constructs and the estimates of internal consistency reliability all exceeded 0.70, which is the minimum acceptable value recommended by Nunnally (1978).

In addition, the survey was translated into Spanish by two of the researchers, one of whom is a native speaker of Spanish. The translations were beta tested with three native speakers of Spanish who were tertiary-level Spanish instructors and problematic vocabulary items were reworded and retested prior to delivering the survey in Spain.

Finally, three additional items were added to the survey to elicit demographic information and one semi open-ended item was added to elicit any perceived obstacles to teaching in the target language. The additional survey items (Questions 35-47) are presented in Appendix B.

Results

Beliefs about Language Learning Inventory

Mean scores and standard deviations for the five areas that are measured by the BALLI are presented in Table 1.

Table 1
Mean Scores and Standard Deviations for BALLI Constructs by Group

BALLI Construct	Group	n	Mean	SD
Foreign Language Aptitude (Range 9 – 45)	U.S.	18	31.94	1.10
	Spain	15	28.87	1.22
Difficulty of Language Learning (Range 6 – 30)	U.S.	18	20.83	1.08
	Spain	15	19.00	1.23
Nature of Language Learning (Range 6 – 30)	U.S.	18	18.56	1.14
	Spain	15	18.67	1.28

Learning and Communication Strategies (Range 8 – 40)	U.S.	18	25.67	1.14
	Spain	15	25.07	1.25
Motivation and Expectation (Range 5 – 25)	U.S.	18	20.06	1.13
	Spain	15	21.80	1.30

A visual inspection of Table 1 reveals that the two groups of teachers had very similar mean scores for the five constructs that are measured by the BALLI. To determine if group differences were statistically significant, mean scores for the five constructs measured by the BALLI were subjected to five independent samples *t*-tests with alpha set at 0.00625 for the set of tests. Results were as follows: (1) foreign language aptitude, $t(31) = 2.66$, $p = 0.01$, (2) difficulty of language learning, $t(31) = 1.32$, $p = 0.20$, (3) nature of language learning, $t(31) = -0.07$, $p = 0.94$, (4) learning and communication strategies, $t(31) = 0.29$, $p = 0.77$, and (5) motivation and expectation, $t(31) = -2.24$, $p = 0.03$. The analyses did not reveal any statistically significant differences between language teachers from the U.S. and Spain as measured by the BALLI when the Bonferroni adjustment was applied.

Additional Survey Items

Mean scores and standard deviations for the additional three constructs measured by the survey are presented in Table 2: (1) knowledge and application of language learning standards, (2) importance of grammar instruction, and (3) amount of instruction delivered in the target language.

Table 2

Mean Scores and Standard Deviations for Additional Constructs by Group

Construct	Group	n	Mean	SD
Knowledge and Application of Language Learning Standards (Range 3 – 15)	U.S.	18	10.78	2.41
	Spain	15	13.00	1.77
Importance of Grammar Instruction (Range 3 – 15)	U.S.	18	7.56	1.76
	Spain	15	6.20	1.61
Amount of Instruction in TL (Range 3 – 15)	U.S.	18	8.94	2.01
	Spain	15	13.33	1.29

A visual inspection of Table 2 reveals that the two groups of teachers had the closest mean scores for the importance of grammar instruction and the two groups differed most on the amount of instruction delivered in the target language. In order to determine if the group differences were statistically significant, mean scores for each of the three additional constructs examined by the survey were subjected to independent samples *t*-tests with alpha set at 0.00625.

Knowledge and Application of Language Learning Standards. Whereas 93% of participants from Spain claimed they either strongly agreed or agreed with the statement that CEFR standards guide their curriculum and planning, only 67% of U.S. participants stated that they either strongly agreed or agreed that the ACTFL

standards guide their curriculum and planning. In order to determine if responses between the two groups differed with respect to knowledge and application of language learning standards, data were analyzed using an independent-samples *t*-test. This analysis revealed a significant difference between the two groups, $t(31) = -2.96$; $p = 0.0059$. Mean scores were significantly higher for the foreign and second language teachers from Spain ($M = 13.00$, $SD = 1.77$) than for the foreign language teachers from the U.S. ($M = 10.78$, $SD = 2.41$), indicating that the language educators from Spain reported greater familiarity with their language learning standards than the language educators from the U.S. The observed difference between the mean scores was -2.22 and the 95% confidence interval for the difference between means extended from -3.75 to -0.69 . The effect size was computed as $d = 1.03$. The Bonferroni adjustment was applied with alpha set at 0.00625.

The Importance of Grammar Instruction. Regarding the relative importance placed on the instruction of grammar, a low percentage of participants from both groups reported teaching grammar 70% or more of the time (17% from the U.S. and 7% from Spain). However, only 6% of the U.S. teachers stated that they taught grammar less than 30% of the time while 33% of the teachers from Spain reported instructing grammar less than 30% of class time. Data were analyzed using an independent-samples *t*-test. This analysis did not reveal a significant difference between the two groups, $t(31) = 2.29$; $p = 0.03$, indicating that there were no significant differences between the teachers from the U.S. and those from Spain for the emphasis that is placed on the instruction of grammar. The Bonferroni adjustment was applied with alpha set at 0.00625.

Amount of Instruction Delivered in the Target Language. The overwhelming majority of the respondents from Spain (93%) reported teaching 90% or more of the time in the target language while only 17% of the respondents from the U.S. reported doing so. Similarly, 100% of the teachers surveyed from Spain agreed or strongly agreed that “teachers should only speak in the target language during class” while only 39% of the teachers surveyed from the U.S. agreed or strongly agreed with the statement. Furthermore, 56% of the U.S. respondents agreed or strongly agreed that testing was an impediment to teaching in the target language while only 20% of the participants from Spain agreed or strongly agreed with this statement. In order to determine if responses between the two groups differed with respect to the amount of instruction delivered in the target language, data were analyzed using an independent-samples *t*-test. The analysis revealed a significant difference between the two groups, $t(31) = -7.28$; $p < 0.0001$. Mean scores were significantly higher for the foreign and second language teachers from Spain ($M = 13.33$, $SD = 1.29$) than for the foreign language teachers from the U.S. ($M = 8.94$, $SD = 2.01$), indicating that the language educators from Spain reported using the target language for instruction significantly more than their counterparts from the U.S. The observed difference between the mean scores was -4.39 and the 95% confidence interval for the difference between means extended from -5.62 to -3.16 . The effect size was computed as $d = 2.54$. The Bonferroni adjustment was applied with alpha set at 0.00625.

Reported Obstacles to Teaching in the Target Language

A comparison of the responses reported to the semi open-ended survey item about obstacles to teaching in the target language (Question 44, Appendix B) revealed differences between the U.S. and Spanish teachers' beliefs about target language instruction. Whereas 55% of U.S. respondents (10 of 18) selected "the students will not understand me," only 13% of the participants from Spain (2 of 15) selected this option. While no U.S. participants selected the options "my speaking ability in the foreign language" and "my foreign language anxiety," 13% (2 of 15) of the respondents from Spain selected these options. Conversely, while 17% (3 of 18) of the U.S. foreign language teachers selected "lack of support from administrators or parents," no foreign or second language teachers from Spain selected this option. Finally, participants were able to select "other" and list an obstacle to teaching in the target language: 28% (5 of 18) of the U.S. respondents selected this option and 60% (9 of 15) of the participants from Spain selected this option. Responses from the U.S. foreign language teachers included "time," "student motivation," "no parent support," "[Teacher Keys Effectiveness System] TKES," and "heavy grammar curriculum / SLO." Responses to this item were markedly different among the second and foreign language teachers from Spain, as the majority of them listed "*nada*" [nothing] or "*SOLO UTILIZO EL ESPAÑOL*" [I only use Spanish.].

Discussion

Similar Beliefs about Language Learning

The five BALLI constructs were subjected to inferential procedures because the main purpose of the study was to determine if there were any statistically significant differences between participants from the U.S. and Spain regarding their beliefs about language learning. The results indicated that the two groups of teachers appeared to have very similar beliefs about language learning as measured by the BALLI.

Differing Beliefs and Practices

Regarding beliefs and practices with respect to knowledge and application of language learning standards, the foreign and second language teachers from Spain reported adhering more closely to the CEFR standards for planning, instruction, assignments, and assessments than the foreign language teachers from the U.S. in this study. This finding resonates with Pufahl, Rhodes, and Christian (2001), as their research found that many European countries have a well articulated framework that provides common terminology for lesson planning, instructional materials, assessments, and teacher training. The researchers further claimed that having a well articulated common framework throughout most of Europe has led to greater learning outcomes for foreign language students (Pufahl, Rhodes, & Christian, 2001).

Within the U.S., each state has comprehensive, yet different, standards for foreign language learning. All of the respondents from the U.S. were from a rural part of the state of Georgia. The Georgia Performance Standards (GPS) for Modern Languages at the secondary level, which are based on the national ACTFL standards, are subdivided by level of language taught (Levels I – VIII) and are further broken down by the mode of communication addressed (interpersonal, interpretive, or

presentational). Therefore, these Georgia teachers may only focus on the GPS that apply to the specific language courses that they teach. In all four of the local Georgia high schools where the survey was administered, foreign language teachers are required to list GPS rather than national standards on lesson plans. Therefore, it is possible that the Georgia foreign language teachers who participated in the survey had greater knowledge and use of state rather than national standards. While the Georgia teachers were likely aware that the GPS standards are based on the ACTFL standards, they may not have been as familiar with the ACTFL standards because they are not required to work with them on a daily basis. Furthermore, it is also possible that these Georgia teachers were unaware of exactly how the GPS standards align with the national ACTFL standards.

Since there is much variation among state standards within the U.S., foreign language teachers may benefit from more professional development on how state standards align with the ACTFL national standards and proficiency guidelines. It may also be helpful for foreign language teachers to be required to list national standards, in addition to state standards, on their daily lesson plans. Following the European example, a stronger knowledge base and use of the common national ACTFL framework may strengthen foreign language teaching and learning within the U.S.

With respect to the importance of teaching grammar, no significant differences were found between the two groups. It appears that language teachers from Spain and from the U.S. share similar beliefs about the relative importance of grammar instruction within the foreign and second language curriculum. This finding also resonates with current research in the field which indicates that grammar instruction should have a secondary role in the classroom and that it should primarily be used to support communicative-based approaches to language instruction (Jean & Simard, 2011; Kissau, Algozzine, & Yon, 2012; Toth, 2004).

Regarding these teachers' beliefs and practices about the amount of instruction delivered in the target language, there was a highly significant difference found between the two groups of teachers, with the foreign and second language teachers from Spain reporting that they spent more time teaching in the target language compared to their U.S. counterparts. As noted in the findings, an overwhelming majority of respondents from Spain (93%) reported teaching 90% or more of the time in the target language while only 17% of the respondents from the U.S. reported doing so. When asked what prevented them from teaching in the target language, none of the respondents from Spain selected "lack of support from administrators or parents." Moreover, the majority of respondents from Spain (60%) selected "other" and stated that "nothing" impeded them from teaching in the target language. Conversely, the majority of respondents from the U.S. (55%) selected "my students will not understand me" as the biggest obstacle to teaching in the target language. Given this finding, it may be helpful to provide more professional development for U.S. teachers on strategies for facilitating students' comprehension of the target language. Furthermore, as reported in the findings, the U.S. respondents listed a number of obstacles that they perceived as preventing them from engaging in target language instruction; namely, "student motivation," "interest," and a lack of time. In addition, 17% of U.S. respondents selected "lack of support from administrators or parents" as an impediment to teaching in the target language. It appears that concerns over student mo-

tivation and interest as well as concerns over a lack of support from administrators and parents may impede instruction in the target language among these U.S. foreign language teachers. Moreover, the present findings may indicate that perceived negative attitudes about the target language by administrators, parents, and/or students may prevent these teachers from engaging in instruction in the target language. More research will be needed to uncover the motivations behind the responses for this item and whether fears regarding negative attitudes toward the target language play a role in these U.S. teachers' beliefs and practices with respect teaching in the target language.

Furthermore, concerns about teacher evaluation practices were listed as impediments to teaching in the target language among the U.S. participants. One respondent stated that, ". . . We are frequently observed now because of TKES and administrators cannot understand the higher level questions and activities because of the target language." The Teacher Keys Effectiveness System (TKES) consists of three components: (1) Teacher Assessment on Performance Standards (TAPS), (2) Student Surveys of Instructional Practice, and (3) Measures of Student Growth and Academic Achievement (i.e. Student Learning Outcome (SLO) tests for foreign languages). The respondent was referring to TAPS, or the four walk through and two formative observations that credentialed administrators are required to perform for each teacher annually in Georgia. It is likely that this participant is concerned that speaking in the target language would adversely affect his or her administrative evaluation.

Another Georgia respondent listed, "heavy grammar curriculum / SLO" as an impediment to teaching in the target language. The SLO tests are also a component of the TKES evaluation system and they are designed to measure student learning at the classroom level as well as a teacher's impact on student learning. It is noteworthy that two of the comments referred specifically to the TKES evaluation system as an impediment to teaching in the target language. As reported in the results, over half of the Georgia respondents indicated that testing prevents them from teaching in the target language. While the survey did not specify whether the tests were chapter exams or SLO tests, it is clear that testing was viewed as an obstacle to teaching in the target language among these respondents. While ACTFL recommends that 90% or more of instruction is delivered in the target language, it appears that compliance with TKES may inhibit teaching in the target language among these Georgia language educators. However, more research is needed to corroborate the findings of the present study before any definitive claims can be made.

Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

The present study only included 33 participants; therefore, the findings are likely not generalizable across all secondary foreign and second language teachers from the U.S. and Spain. Furthermore, the two groups varied in that the U.S. group had only foreign language teachers, and the Spanish group contained some second language teachers who likely have less resistance to target language instruction among students, parents, and administrators compared to foreign language instructors. Moreover, as noted in the literature review, Quinn Allen (2002) found that teachers' location, membership in professional organizations, gender, and the type

of school in which they teach can impact teachers' knowledge and use of the ACTFL national standards. Therefore, the lack of familiarity with the U.S. national standards for language learning may be unique to this group of U.S. teachers. Future studies that include more second and foreign language teacher participants from diverse areas across the two countries and across a variety of instructional contexts and languages are needed to be able to substantiate the findings of this study.

In addition, future studies could elicit qualitative data and use mixed methods. The present study only employed quantitative methods and qualitative analyses could potentially explain why 83% of the Georgia teachers who participated in this study reported that they did not adhere to the ACTFL guideline of using the target language at least 90% of the time. Similarly, follow-up studies that employ qualitative methods may be able to uncover why the Georgia teachers reported having less knowledge and application of ACTFL standards compared to their Spanish counterparts' knowledge and application of CEFR standards. Moreover, follow-up interviews or focus groups could elicit more detailed information regarding teachers' beliefs, in particular to elucidate the results of the semi open-ended responses concerning SLO tests and TKES evaluations as being obstacles to teaching in the target language.

Furthermore, the present study did not ascertain the teachers' level of proficiency in the target language. While the U.S. teachers reported that their proficiency level was not an obstacle to teaching in the target language, an individual's perceived level of proficiency may not be accurate. Therefore, level of proficiency may have exerted an influence on the amount of instruction that teachers reported delivering in the target language. Similarly, the survey did not query whether the teachers were native or heritage speakers of the languages that they teach. Future studies could address this limitation by determining if there is a correlation between teacher beliefs about target language instruction and teacher proficiency level.

Other limitations of the study include the methodological problems that are inherent to all questionnaires that examine beliefs and attitudes such as sampling, objectivity, and validity (Christison & Krahnke, 1986). Moreover, participants may not have been truthful in their self reports on the questionnaire.

Conclusion

In summary, this study found that language educators in the U.S. and Spain share many similar beliefs about language learning. However, the two groups diverged in their beliefs and practices with respect to knowledge and application of language learning standards and amount of instruction delivered in the target language. The present findings indicate that the respondents from Spain had stronger knowledge and use of the CEFR standards than the U.S. respondents did of the ACTFL standards. Moreover, an overwhelming majority of the language teachers surveyed from Spain reported delivering 90% or more of their instruction in the target language while less than one-fifth of the teachers surveyed from the U.S. reported doing so even though it is a recommendation by ACTFL (2010).

In addition to the findings listed above, the research project described in this chapter enabled U.S. undergraduate foreign language teacher candidates to meet four global competency learning goals that were set forth by the DOE's Internation-

al Strategy (2012-2016). These four learning goals were met through designing the present study, implementing it at home and abroad, analyzing the results, and disseminating the research findings to relevant stakeholders in the field of foreign and second language education. For example, the first global competency learning goal is for learners to investigate the world beyond their immediate environment, which the candidates accomplished by conducting a research study with participants in both the U.S. and Spain. The second global competency learning goal is for learners to recognize their own and others' perspectives. This goal was accomplished two ways; first, candidates were able to uncover both U.S. and international perspectives on language teaching through an extensive review of the relevant literature on the topics under investigation. Second, by designing, delivering, and analyzing the results of the questionnaire, the candidates compared and contrasted teacher beliefs and practices between foreign and second language teachers in Spain, with whom they were not familiar, and local foreign language teachers in Georgia, with whom they were familiar due to the numerous hours the candidates spent in local schools conducting observations and participating in field experiences as part of their teacher preparation program. Finally, the last two global competency learning goals of communicating ideas effectively with diverse audiences and translating ideas into appropriate actions to improve conditions were accomplished through the dissemination of the research findings at state, regional, and national conferences and through formally writing the results in the form of an article to be shared with language teaching professionals in the region and beyond, which could help improve teaching practices at home.

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Appendix A

Horwitz' (2008) Beliefs about Language Learning Inventory

Directions: For each item, indicate whether you (1) strongly disagree, (2) disagree, (3) neither agree nor disagree, (4) agree, or (5) strongly agree. For questions 4 and 14, select the number that most closely corresponds to your opinion.

1. It is easier for children than for adults to learn a foreign language.
2. Some people have a special ability for learning foreign languages.
3. Some languages are easier to learn than others.

4. English is:

1. a very difficult language
2. a difficult language
3. a language of medium difficulty
4. an easy language
5. a very easy language

5. People from my country are good at learning foreign languages.

6. I believe that I will learn to speak English very well.

7. It is important to speak English with an excellent pronunciation.

8. It is necessary to know about English-speaking cultures in order to speak English.

9. You shouldn't say anything in English until you can say it correctly.

10. It is easier for someone who already speaks a foreign language to learn another one.

11. It is best to learn English in an English-speaking country.

12. I enjoy practicing English with the Americans that I meet.

13. It's o.k. to guess if you don't know a word in English.

14. If someone spent one hour a day learning a language, how long would it take for them to learn that language very well?

1. less than a year
2. 1–2 years
3. 3–5 years
4. 5–10 years
5. You can't learn a language in one hour a day.

15. I have a special ability for learning foreign languages.

16. The most important part of learning a foreign language is learning the vocabulary words.

17. It is important to repeat and practice a lot.

18. I feel timid speaking English with other people.

19. If beginning students are permitted to make errors in English, it will be difficult for them to speak correctly later on.

20. The most important part of learning a foreign language is learning the grammar.

21. It is important to practice with cassette tapes.

22. Women are better than men at learning foreign languages.

23. I want to speak English well.

24. It is easier to speak than to understand a foreign language.

25. Learning a foreign language is different from learning other academic subjects.

26. The most important part of learning English is learning how to translate from my native language.

27. If I learn to speak English very well, I will have better opportunities for a good job.

28. It is easier to read and write English than to speak and understand it.

29. People who are good at mathematics or science are not good at learning foreign languages.

30. People in my country feel that it is important to speak English.

31. I would like to have American friends.

32. People who speak more than one language are very intelligent.

33. I would like to learn English so that I can get to know Americans.

34. Everyone can learn to speak a foreign language.

The version of the BALLI implemented in this study was published in the following text:

Horwitz, E.K. (2008). *Becoming a language teacher: A practical guide to second language learning and teaching*. Boston: Pearson Education.

Special thanks are owed to Dr. Elaine Horwitz for granting permission for the BALLI to be used for this study.

Appendix B

Additional Survey Items

Knowledge and Application of Language Learning Standards

35. The national ACTFL standards guide my curriculum and planning.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neither Agree nor Disagree Agree Strongly Agree

36. Foreign language learners benefit from a curriculum that strictly adheres to the national ACTFL standards.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neither Agree nor Disagree Agree Strongly Agree

37. I closely consider the national ACTFL standards when creating and grading assignments and assessments.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neither Agree nor Disagree Agree Strongly Agree

Importance of Grammar Instruction

38. It is important to teach grammar so that students can translate from the native language.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neither Agree nor Disagree Agree Strongly Agree

39. The most important part of my instruction is teaching grammar.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neither Agree nor Disagree Agree Strongly Agree

40. On average, approximately what percentage of your class time is dedicated to teaching grammar?

Less than 30% 30 – 49% 50 – 69% 70 – 89% 90% or More

Amount of instruction delivered in target language

41. Teachers should only speak in the target language during class.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neither Agree nor Disagree Agree Strongly Agree

42. My students have to spend so much time preparing for big tests that I don't have time to teach in the target language. (Mirrored)

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neither Agree nor Disagree Agree Strongly Agree

43. On average, approximately what percentage of your class time is dedicated to teaching in the target language?

Less than 30% 30 – 49% 50 – 69% 70 – 89% 90% or More

Semi Open-Ended Item

44. What is the biggest obstacle to teaching in the target language?
1. The students will not understand me.
 2. My speaking ability in the foreign language.
 3. My foreign language anxiety.
 4. Lack of support from administrators or parents.
 5. Other (please list)

Demographic Information

45. What language do you teach?
1. Spanish
 2. French
 3. German
 4. Latin
 5. Other (please list)
46. How many years have you taught a foreign language?
1. One year or less
 2. 2 – 5 years
 3. 6 – 10 years
 4. 11 – 15 years
 5. 16 years or more
47. What is your gender?
1. Male
 2. Female

NB: When the survey was delivered to teachers from Spain, CEFR standards were listed in items 35 – 37.