

# An Examination of World Language Teacher Practices Regarding Target Language Instruction

**Edris Brannen**

*Valdosta State University*

**Victoria Russell**

*Valdosta State University*

**Krista Chambless**

*University of Alabama at Birmingham*

## **Abstract**

*In this study, 96 world language teachers in the state of Georgia completed a survey regarding their delivery of instruction in the target language. While ACTFL (2010, 2021) recommends using the target language 90% or more of the time to deliver instruction, only 20% of the world language instructors who were surveyed reported doing so. According to ACTFL (2010, 2021), delivering instruction in the target language is necessary to create an acquisition-rich environment where learners are exposed to significant amounts of comprehensible input—a key factor for second language acquisition to occur (Krashen, 1982). This study examined three factors that may play a part in world language instructors' practices regarding target language use; namely, teacher proficiency level, level of experience, and teacher foreign language anxiety. The results indicated that teachers' self-reported levels of proficiency were not correlated with delivery of instruction in the target language; however, language anxiety and level of experience appeared to play a part in world language teachers' target language use in the classroom. The findings of this study have implications for pre- and in-service world language teachers and administrators as well as for teacher education programs in Georgia and beyond.*

**Keywords:** *target language instruction, teacher proficiency, teacher experience, language anxiety*

## **Introduction**

### **The Classroom as an Acquisition-Rich Environment**

According to the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL, 2010, 2021), world language (WL) students must receive significant

amounts of comprehensible input in the target language as well as opportunities to engage in meaningful interaction in order to develop proficiency in a target language and its cultures. ACTFL clearly states that WL educators and students should use the target language 90% or more of the time during class unless they are teaching in a dual language school, where instructional delivery in the target language should be 100% of the time (ACTFL, 2010, 2021). These recommendations are based on long-standing research in the fields of applied linguistics and second language acquisition (Krashen, 1982, 1985; Swain, 1985, 1995, 1998, Long, 1983, 1985, 1996), and according to these scholars, language learners must be exposed to target language input that has been made comprehensible by their instructors, they must be pushed to produce output, and they must have opportunities to interact in the target language, where they engage in the negotiation of meaning and receive feedback and correction. Therefore, these three ingredients—input, output, and interaction—are paramount for second-language learning to take place (Krashen, 1982, 1985; Swain, 1985, 1995, 1998, Long, 1983, 1985, 1996).

ACTFL has set forth instructional strategies that maximize target language use in the classroom in a position statement as follows:

1. provide comprehensible input that is directed toward communicative goals;
2. make meaning clear through body language, gestures, and visual support;
3. conduct comprehension checks to ensure understanding;
4. negotiate meaning with students and encourage negotiation among students;
5. elicit talk that increases in fluency, accuracy, and complexity over time;
6. encourage self-expression and spontaneous use of language;
7. teach students strategies for requesting clarification and assistance when faced with comprehension difficulties; and
8. offer feedback to assist and improve students' ability to interact orally in the target language. (ACTFL, 2010, p. 0)

While the strategies above have been clearly detailed and available for WL educators for over a decade, it is presently unclear to what extent they are being followed in WL classrooms across the country, and in particular, in Georgia. The goal of the present study was to reveal Georgia high school WL teachers' practices with respect to delivering instruction in the target language. Moreover, this study also explored possible impediments to teaching in the target language; namely, teacher proficiency level, level of experience, and teacher foreign language anxiety. By exploring these factors and uncovering classroom practices with respect to instructional delivery in the target language, recommendations can be made for teacher education programs and for pre- and in-service WL teacher professional development.

## **Review of the Literature**

### **Teacher Proficiency in the Target Language**

The ACTFL/CAEP standards for teacher preparation programs state that WL teachers should have a minimum of Advanced Low proficiency based on the ACTFL

Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI). Thus, in order to be nationally recognized in world language teacher education, a program must require an OPI of Advanced Low for all teacher candidates of commonly taught languages (e.g., Spanish, French, German). For less commonly taught languages such as Chinese, Japanese, and Arabic, the minimum proficiency level required is Intermediate High (ACTFL, 2012). These levels were chosen based on recommendations from the various national language-specific associations (e.g., American Association of Teachers of Japanese) in accordance with the ACTFL proficiency guidelines. While a teacher education program may require the Advanced Low level, the state in which the program is housed may have a lower requirement for teacher certification (Chambless 2012, Garcia et al, 2019). Currently, only 26 states require the OPI for teacher certification, and the proficiency level varies from Intermediate High to Advanced Low depending on the state (Huhn et al., 2020). The variation in state requirements could possibly be attributed to the fact that most WL majors only reach an Intermediate High level of proficiency after completing a 4-year undergraduate program (Swender, 2003). Kissau's 2014 study found that only 30% of non-native teacher candidates reached Advanced Low proficiency by graduation.

A possible reason for such a low percentage of candidates reaching Advanced Low could be that Kissau differentiated native and non-native speakers of the target language while other studies do not make that distinction. However, Kissau did note that the majority of teacher candidates did reach Intermediate High-level proficiency. Glisan et al. (2013) examined teacher candidates' OPI scores over a period of 6 years and found that 54.8% of teacher candidates reached Advanced Low proficiency, which is slightly higher than previous studies. Aoki (2013) suggests that more teacher candidates may actually achieve Advanced Low proficiency but do not score well on the OPI due to test anxiety.

The role of teacher target language proficiency has become a critical issue in the field of WL education. While there is an extensive amount of research to support the call for using the target language at least 90% of class time, there is little empirical evidence to support the connection between teacher effectiveness and target language proficiency (Chambless 2012; Huhn et al., 2020). However, second language acquisition research does indicate that the quantity, variety, and comprehensibility of target language input does affect student learning (Krashen, 1982, 1985; Long, 1983, 1985, 1996; Swain, 1985, 1998, 1998).

Additionally, ACTFL's rationale for requiring Advanced Low proficiency is that "[t]he heart of language instruction is the ability to teach students to communicate, which can only be possible if teachers themselves exemplify effective communicative skills" (ACTFL, 2002, p. 4). Therefore, Chambless's (2012) statement that there is an "intuitive assumption of a causal connection between a teacher's oral proficiency in the target language and the quality of teaching and learning that takes place in the classroom" (p. 142) seemingly rings true as does Sullivan's observation that "the French teacher who cannot speak French will not be a successful teacher of French" (2011, p. 241). Regardless, it cannot be ignored that the few empirical studies that have been conducted on teacher proficiency in the target language as it relates to classroom effectiveness have provided conflicting results (Chambless 2012, Huhn et al 2020).

With the lack of empirical data and the desperate need for WL teachers, some in the field have called for a lowering of the standard to Intermediate High for commonly taught languages, stating that the field may miss out on effective future teachers because they cannot reach Advanced Low proficiency (Burke 2013; Kissau & Algozzine, 2017). However, Advanced Low proficiency is necessary in order to provide the type of input-rich classroom that facilitates language acquisition (ACTFL 2023, Phillips 1998). The ACTFL Proficiency guidelines (2012) state that “Advanced Low speakers demonstrate the ability to narrate and describe in the major time frames of past, present and future in paragraph-length discourse with some aspect of control” (p. 6). If teachers do not have these skills in the target language, they will not be able to model comprehensible language usage skills for their students. While the rationale for Advanced Low proficiency is logical, it should be noted that reaching an Advanced Low proficiency level does not automatically translate to a candidate becoming an effective classroom teacher, as there are many other variables at play. Rather, as Tedick (2013) said, Advanced Low proficiency is a prerequisite to effective teaching.

### **Teacher Foreign Language Anxiety**

Throughout this article, the term WL is used except in relation to the construct of teacher *foreign language anxiety*. With respect to teachers’ perceptions of language anxiety, TFLAS used “foreign”, as originally coined by Horwitz in her seminal work on language anxiety. Moreover, the instrument that she created to measure teachers’ perceived levels of language anxiety is known as the Teacher Foreign Language Anxiety Scale or TFLAS (Horwitz, 1996, 2008; Horwitz et al. 1986). The TFLAS was employed in the present study and is discussed at length in the methodology section.

It should be noted that WL teachers who are not native speakers of the languages that they teach are advanced language learners themselves (Horwitz, 1985, 1988, 2008), and they may experience language anxiety, which is defined as “a distinct complex construct of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviors related to classroom language learning arising from the uniqueness of the language learning process” (Horwitz et al., 1996, p. 128). Horwitz asserted that teachers with high levels of language anxiety may opt for instructional strategies and techniques that do not require them to speak in the target language—such as grammar drills—rather than the open-ended communicative activities that are beneficial for language acquisition. Moreover, Horwitz (1996) claimed that teachers with high levels of language anxiety may subconsciously select strategies that favor more controlled and predictable interactions with their students; thus, limiting spontaneous speech in the target language in the interpersonal mode of communication. According to ACTFL’s World Readiness Standards (2017), language learners must engage in three modes of communication: interpretive, interpersonal, and presentational. The interpretive mode of communication refers to all of the input that students hear, read, or view. With the presentational mode of communication, learners have time to plan and rehearse their written or spoken interactions. Conversely, with the interpersonal mode, students engage in person-to-person communication in real time; and by its nature, this mode of communication cannot be planned for or controlled by the teacher. Therefore, it is likely that teachers with language anxiety may avoid the

interpersonal mode of communication (i.e., speaking in the target language during class) (Horwitz, 1996).

Gregersen and Horwitz (2002) found that WL teachers who had low levels of language anxiety spoke spontaneously in the target language and did not worry about making mistakes in front of their students, while their counterparts with high levels of language anxiety were concerned about and attempted to avoid making mistakes when teaching, which impeded their delivery of instruction in the target language. In addition, WL instructors who have not yet reached the minimum proficiency levels recommended by ACTFL (2013) (Advanced Low for the commonly taught languages, such as Spanish and French, and Intermediate High for the less commonly taught languages, such as Arabic and Mandarin) may experience higher levels of language anxiety when speaking in the target language in front of their students (Fraga-Cañadas, 2010; Horwitz, 1985, 1988, 1989, 1990; Russell, 2013). Horwitz (1996) asserted that when teacher foreign language anxiety levels are high, “a teacher’s ability to effectively present the target language, interact with students, and serve as a positive role model as a language learner” (p. 366) are inhibited. Moreover, Horwitz (1996) expressed concerns that students in WL classrooms with teachers who have high levels of language anxiety may receive negative messages regarding WL learning.

At present, the vast majority of studies on language anxiety have focused on classroom language learners and not on WL teachers. Among the few studies that examined teacher foreign language anxiety were Russell (2013), Tum (2015), and Kim and Kim (2004). Russell (2013) investigated whether participating in a short-term study abroad program could alleviate pre-service teachers’ perceived levels of language anxiety the semester prior to their final clinical practice (formerly known as student teaching). The participants were seven teacher candidates enrolled in an undergraduate initial certification program in Foreign Language Education (Spanish). All of the participants were non-native speakers of Spanish. The candidates took the TFLAS as a pretest just prior to departure for Spain, where they took coursework on WL methodology alongside native Spaniards training to teach Spanish as a foreign language in Spain. At the end of their five-week program of studies, on the day of departure from Spain, the candidates took the TFLAS again as a post-test. Russell (2013) found that candidates’ perceived levels of language anxiety were statistically significantly lower at posttest than at pretest, indicating that a short-term study abroad experience had a positive effect on teacher foreign language anxiety.

Tum (2015) examined teacher foreign language anxiety among 12 pre-service teachers of English who were enrolled in a teacher education program in Turkey. All of the participants were nonnative speakers of English. Tum used the FLCAS rather than the TFLAS to measure the participants’ perceived levels of language anxiety quantitatively. In addition, participant interviews were conducted, transcribed, and examined qualitatively. Tum (2015) found that the preservice teachers in his study experienced significant levels of language anxiety, such that they avoided the use of English during their practice teaching. He concluded that preservice teachers’ levels of language anxiety can be similar to those of the inexperienced language learners that they teach.

Kim and Kim (2004) investigated teacher foreign language anxiety among 147 in-service teachers of English as a foreign language in Korea. All of the participants were nonnative speakers of English. They modified Horwitz's TFLAS for their own instructional context and administered it to their participants. They also administered an open-ended questionnaire, which they analyzed qualitatively, in order to determine the specific situations that provoke teacher foreign language anxiety in classrooms as well as to uncover the coping strategies that teachers use to alleviate their own language anxiety. The researchers (Kim & Kim, 2004) found that the following situations provoked the most anxiety among their participants: low levels of proficiency in English, a lack of confidence in the classroom, and a lack of experience in the field of education. Therefore, Kim and Kim's findings suggest that teachers with less experience may have higher levels of language anxiety and may avoid delivering instruction in the target language. They also found that secondary level teachers had higher levels of language anxiety than elementary level teachers, which they attributed to the more complex linguistic and cultural content that must be taught at the secondary level (Kim & Kim, 2004).

With respect to actions that in-service teachers took to help alleviate their own anxiety, Kim and Kim (2004) found that the teachers in their study reported engaging in extensive preparation for class, using instructional technologies to infuse more activities in English, and they made a conscious effort to abandon their perfectionist tendencies (Kim & Kim, 2004). However, more research is needed to determine if more experienced high school WL teachers have lower levels of language anxiety than their counterparts who are less experienced. Moreover, it is presently unclear whether teacher foreign language anxiety, level of experience, or proficiency level has an effect on high school WL teachers' delivery of instruction in the target language in Georgia. The lack of determinative research in these areas has left a gap in the present body of knowledge on how a WL teacher's level of experience correlates to delivery of instruction in the target language. The present study aims to fill this gap in the literature.

### **The Covid-19 Pandemic**

This research study was conducted in 2020 and in 2021; thus, it is important to address the possible effects of the Covid-19 pandemic on its results. As educational institutions worldwide grappled with lockdowns and social distancing, traditional teaching methods and paradigms were significantly disrupted (LeLoup & Swanson, 2022). Educators were forced to quickly transition to online and remote instruction often with no preparation for this type of instruction (Moser et al., 2021). Post-pandemic, much research has been conducted to ascertain the effects the pandemic had on learning and instruction. Troyan et al. (2022) conducted a study in which they surveyed teachers about their ability to enact certain core practices such as TL use. They found that teacher TL use was limited during the shift to remote instruction. Teachers cited various reasons for the limiting of TL use, including the need to connect with students in English to assure their safety and well-being. Having been designed and begun pre-pandemic, this study took no measures to assess pandemic effects on its results.

Given the gaps in our present body of knowledge outlined previously, the following research questions were investigated in this study:

**Research Question 1:** What is the relationship between teacher self-reported proficiency levels in the target language and the amount of instruction delivered in the target language?

**Research Question 2:** What is the relationship between level of experience and amount of instruction delivered in the target language?

**Research Question 3:** What is the relationship between perceived teacher foreign language anxiety levels and the amount of instruction delivered in the target language?:

## Methods

### Population and Sample

As of the summer of 2019, 2,693 WL teachers were active in the Georgia public school system (Georgia Department of Education, 2019). For this study, the population consisted of all public high school WL teachers in Georgia who were teaching a WL during the spring of 2021. All Georgia high school WL teachers were invited to participate, and the sample included 96 teachers who voluntarily answered the survey, which was delivered via Qualtrics. Although the percentage of respondents among the total population of world language teachers in Georgia was low, there was still a large enough number of participants to conduct the statistical analyses that were used in this study.

While teachers from both urban and rural schools were included, teachers from the Georgia Virtual Schools or any virtual learning environments were excluded because teaching language communicatively online requires specific training in online language pedagogy, which most teacher education programs fail to include in the curriculum (Russell & Murphy-Judy, 2021). Therefore, the present study only focused on high school WL teachers in traditional, brick-and-mortar classrooms. Moreover, the teachers in the sample were either certified in the WL that they teach or teaching under a provisional certificate as they worked to complete state certification requirements. The sample included non-native speakers, native speakers, and heritage speakers of the languages that they teach; teachers of both commonly taught languages (e.g., Spanish, French) and less commonly taught languages (e.g., Mandarin, Portuguese) were also included in the sample.

There were 68 women, 26 men, and two respondents who preferred not to provide their sex in the sample. Their teaching experience varied from 0 to over 30 years, with 20.84% having 5 or fewer years of experience, 45.83% having 6 to 19 years of experience, 31.25% with 20 to 29 years of experience, and 2.08% with 30 or more years of experience. The languages taught included French, German, Japanese, Mandarin, Portuguese, and Spanish. The vast majority taught Spanish (43.62%) or French (43.62), with the other languages only comprising 12.77% of respondents. With respect to native versus non-native participants, 61.36% of participants did not consider themselves to be L1 speakers of the languages that they teach, 25% considered themselves to be L1 speakers, and 13.64% considered themselves to be heritage speakers of the languages that they teach.

## Context

The study took place in Georgia where the lead researcher was completing her dissertation study. She was interested in the high school population of teachers because she had many years of teaching experience at this level in the state. Moreover, the Georgia WL supervisor assisted this study by supplying e-mail addresses and encouraging Georgia WL teachers to participate in the survey.

In Georgia, all high school graduates must have at least two consecutive years of WL credits to pursue a bachelor's degree at a four-year state college. A total of 288,054 high school students studied a WL in Georgia in 2019, with the following breakdown of students: 183,634 (63.75%) Spanish, 35,961 (30.41%) French, 8,774 (3.05%) Latin, 6,171 (2.14%) German, 2,059 (0.72%) Chinese, 915 (0.32%) Japanese, 189 (0.07%) Portuguese, 167 (0.06%) Russian, 137 (0.05%) Arabic, 20 (< 0.001%) Korean, 15 (< 0.001%) Italian, and 12 (< 0.001%) Greek (Surin, 2019). According to Surin (2019), the less commonly taught languages were mainly accessible in the Atlanta metropolitan area of the state and included the following counties and districts: Atlanta Public Schools, Cherokee County, Cobb County, Hall County, and Gwinnett County. The majority of the survey respondents taught Spanish or French, which was reflective of the student body of WL students in the state.

## Instruments and Measures

### Survey

The three-part survey found in the Appendix included 46 items. Part I (Appendix A) was a teacher background questionnaire (TBQ), Part II (Appendix B) was Horwitz' (2008) Teacher Foreign Language Anxiety Scale (TFLAS), and Part III was a Professional Development Survey (PDS). All participants completed Part I and Part III; however, only teachers who considered themselves to be nonnative speakers of the languages that they teach completed Part II of the survey. Therefore, those that considered themselves to be heritage or first language (L1) speakers of the languages that they teach were asked not to complete the TFLAS because it was designed to measure "foreign" language anxiety. It should be noted that the word "foreign" has fallen out of favor because it may be offensive to L1 speakers of languages other than English in the US; therefore, most stakeholders prefer to use the term world language (WL). However, given the creator of the TFLAS used the term "foreign," this term is used in relation to the TFLAS instrument while the term WL is used in all other contexts. All three surveys were delivered at the same time, with TBQ appearing first, then the TFLAS, and finally the PDS.

**TBQ.** This instrument was comprised of 14 items, and it elicited demographic information, self-reported ACTFL Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI) scores, participants' perceptions of their current proficiency level on the ACTFL scale, highest educational level obtained, and current or former language teaching experience. Furthermore, the TBQ queried the number of years a Georgia teaching certificate was held, the type of certificate (free and clear v. provisional), the languages and levels taught, and the total number of years of experience teaching a WL, whether in Georgia or elsewhere. The TBQ is presented in Appendix A.



**TFLAS.** Horwitz's (2008) version of the TFLAS was employed in the present study. This instrument is based on the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS), which has been widely used in the field of WL education since it was developed in the mid-1980s (Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope, 1986). The FLCAS measures three types of related anxieties: communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation, and test anxiety. To adapt this instrument for language teachers, items pertaining to test anxiety were removed and items measuring self-efficacy were added, as Horwitz claimed that self-efficacy and anxiety are inversely related (Horwitz, 1996, 2008).

The TFLAS contains 18 items rated on a 5-point Likert Scale, with total scores ranging from 18 to 90. Lower scores indicate lower perceived levels of language anxiety and higher scores indicate higher perceived language anxiety levels; therefore, according to the scale, the more anxious the teacher is, the higher the score. Horwitz (2008) advises dividing the total score by 18 to compute a raw score, claiming that raw scores of three or higher demonstrate that the teacher experiences at least some level of foreign language anxiety. The FLCAS, which is the foundation instrument for the TFLAS, has been shown to be valid and reliable by Horwitz (1986), Price (1991), and Aida (1994). Horwitz (1993, 1996) also found the TFLAS to be valid and reliable. The TFLAS is presented in Appendix B.

**The PDS.** The PDS contained 29 items and was adapted from Fraga-Cañadas' (2008) teacher professional development survey, which she delivered in Ohio. The PDS was comprised of eight Likert or Rating Scale Items, fourteen multiple-choice items, and seven open-ended questions. This part of the survey queried teacher practices, including the amount of instruction that teachers deliver in the target language to teach grammatical concepts, cultural concepts, and vocabulary, as well as teachers' professional development activities to maintain or build proficiency in the languages they teach. The full results of the PDS were reported in another manuscript that focused on teachers' professional development activities; however, this article focuses specifically on Item 8 (level of teaching experience), Item 13 (perceived proficiency), and Items 15 to 18 of the PDS, which measured the amount of instruction delivered in the target language. More specifically, participants were asked to rate the amount of time that they deliver instruction in the target language for instructing grammar (Item 15), vocabulary (Item 16), culture (Item 17), and overall (Item 18). The responses from which they selected for Items 14 to 17 were on a sliding scale as follows: (1) 10% or less; (2) 11% to 24%; (3) 25% to 49%; (4) 50% to 89%; and (5) 90% to 100%.

According to Fraga-Cañadas (2008), two forms of validity strategies were completed; a preliminary field test, in which face validity was evaluated, and content validity. By testing the face validity of the survey, the degree to which the instrument appears valid to untrained readers was evaluated. In terms of content validity, Fraga-Cañadas (2008) engaged three experts in the field of WL education who examined each survey item to determine if it matched the construct that it was purported to measure. Any problematic items were either rephrased or deleted based on suggestions from the experts. Fraga-Cañadas also checked the internal consistency validity of the PDS and found the instrument to be valid and reliable.

## Data Analysis

In order to measure and interpret the data for this study quantitatively, the following statistical tests were employed: (1) the Spearman's Rank Correlation Coefficient (also known as Spearman's Rho) Analysis, and (2) the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis. Moreover, the researchers analyzed the descriptive data by examining central tendencies such as the mean, median, mode, and standard deviation for each survey item.

A Spearman Rho (correlation) analysis was conducted to answer Research Question 1: *What is the relationship between teacher proficiency level in the target language and the amount of instruction delivered in the target language?* This analysis determined the strength of the relationship between teacher proficiency level, as measured by Item 13 of the TBQ, which queried teachers' perceived proficiency levels according to the ACTFL scale (2012), and the amount of instruction delivered in the target language, which was derived from four Likert-scale items from the PDS that queried the amount of instruction delivered in the target language (Items 15 - 18). Teachers' perceived proficiency level is a categorical variable, with scores ranging from a low of Intermediate Mid or lower to a high of Advanced High or higher (1—Intermediate Mid or Lower, 2—Intermediate High, 3—Advanced Low, 4—Advanced Mid, and 5—Advanced High or Higher). The mean score for the four Likert-scale items that measured the amount of instruction delivered in the target language is interval-level data, but because perceived proficiency level represents categorical data, a Spearman Rho correlation analysis was the most appropriate statistical test given that this data was nonparametric.

Regarding Research Question 2 (examining the relationship between level of experience and amount of instruction in the target language), a Spearman Rho (correlation) analysis was conducted to determine the strength of the relationship between level of experience, as measured by Item 8 of the TBQ (which measured level of experience), and Items 15 through 18 on the PDS, which measured delivery of instruction in the target language. Item 8 categorized instructors' experience into six levels as follows: 1—zero to three years, 2—four to five years, 3—six to nine years, 4—ten to nineteen, 5—twenty to twenty-nine, and 6—30 or more years of experience. Because level of experience was a categorical variable and nonparametric, a Spearman Rho correlation analysis was the most appropriate test to employ.

A Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis was conducted to answer Research Question 3: *What is the relationship between perceived teacher foreign language anxiety levels and the amount of instruction delivered in the target language?* This test measured the strength of the linear association between the mean scores for Target Language Instruction Delivery (Items 15 - 18 of the PDS) and mean TFLAS scores. Because both of these variables are interval-level data, the Pearson Product Moment analysis was the most appropriate statistical test to employ.

## Results

### Findings for Research Question 1

To answer Research Question 1, five survey items were analyzed using a Spearman Rho test. Of the 96 survey respondents, 88 answered all of the relevant survey items needed for this analysis (Items 13, 15, 16, 17, and 18), while eight participants did not respond to these items and could not be included in the analysis. For Item 13 (perceived proficiency level), participants reported high levels of proficiency in the target language:  $M = 4.07$ ,  $SD = 1.13$ . Most participants reported their proficiency to be Advanced Low or higher (see Table 1 for a breakdown of scores for Item 13), while only four respondents estimated that their target language proficiency was Intermediate High and five participants judged their own proficiency to be Advanced Mid or lower.

Table 1  
*Perceived Proficiency Level Scores – Item #13*

	<b>Response</b>	<b><i>n</i></b>	<b>%</b>
1	Intermediate Mid or Lower	5	5.68
2	Intermediate High	4	4.54
3	Advanced Low	11	12.50
4	Advanced Mid	28	31.82
5	Advanced High or Higher	40	45.45
	<b>Total</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>100.00</b>

*Note.*  $N = 88$ . Responses for 8 participants in the total sample of 96 were not submitted.

Regarding delivery of instruction in the target language, the mean scores and standard deviations for Items 15 – 18 are reported in Table 2. It should be noted that these scores are low, as the expectation is that WL teachers deliver 90% or more of their instruction in the target language. Therefore, a score of five on these items means that teachers are meeting the expectation with respect to delivering instruction in the target language and scores below five signify that they are not.

Table 2

*Means and Standard Deviations of “Target Language Delivery of Instruction” Scores – Items 15–18*

<b>Item</b>	<b><i>M</i></b>	<b><i>SD</i></b>
15 Grammar instruction	2.84	1.28
16 Vocabulary instruction	3.69	1.14
17 Culture instruction	3.19	1.30
18 Overall instruction	3.60	1.13

*Note.*  $N = 88$ . Responses for 8 participants in the total sample of 96 were not submitted.

An examination of Table 2 reveals that the mean score for instructing grammar was the lowest and the mean score for instructing vocabulary was the highest. Item 18 queried teachers’ overall use of the target language to deliver instruction and the results are presented in Table 3. A visual examination of Table 3 reveals that slightly over 20% of the teachers surveyed reported teaching in the target language 90% or more of the time, while the majority of the respondents (42.05%) reported using the target language to deliver instruction only 50% to 89% of the time. Surprisingly, over 15% of the participants reported using the target language less than 25% of the time to deliver their instruction.

Table 3

*Breakdown of “Overall Delivery of Instruction in Target Language” Scores – Item 18*

<b>Response</b>	<b><i>n</i></b>	<b>%</b>
1 10% or less	7	7.95
2 11% to 24%	7	7.95
3 25% to 49%	19	21.59
4 50% to 89%	37	42.05
5 90% to 100%	18	20.45
Total	88	100.00

*Note.*  $N = 88$ . Responses for 8 participants in the total sample of 96 were not submitted.

When the four items that measured the construct instructional delivery in the target language were combined (Items 15, 16, 17, and 18), the results indicated that the overall mean score was low:  $M = 3.31$ ,  $SD = 0.97$ .

In order to determine if there was a relationship between the two variables, data were subjected to a Spearman Rho analysis. The results revealed no correlation between perceived proficiency level and delivery of instruction in the target language,  $r = 0.03$ ,  $p > 0.05$ .

## Findings for Research Question 2

Five survey items were analyzed using a Spearman Rho test to answer Research Question 2. Eighty-eight of the 96 survey respondents answered all of the relevant survey items needed for this analysis (Items 8, 15, 16, 17, and 18). Item 8 queried participants' level of teaching experience, with scores categorized into the following levels: 1—zero to three years, 2—four to five years, 3—six to nine years, 4—ten to nineteen, 5—twenty to twenty-nine, and 6—30 or more years of experience. Items 15 – 18 measured the amount of instruction delivered in the target language. A breakdown of scores for Item 8 is presented in Table 4. It should be noted that 96 survey respondents answered Item 8, but only 88 of them answered Items 15 – 17 (target language delivery); therefore, eight of the respondents below were excluded from the analysis.

Table 4  
Breakdown of “Level of Experience” Scores – Item 8

Years of Experience	<i>n</i>	%
1 0 to 3	17	17.71
2 4 to 5	3	3.13
3 6 to 9	7	7.29
4 10 to 19	37	38.54
5 20 to 29	30	31.25
6 30 or more	2	2.08
Total	96	100.00

Note. *N* = 96.

An examination of Table 4 reveals that well over half of the respondents (69.78%) had between ten and twenty-nine years of experience while only 28.13% of participants had zero to nine years of experience. Only a very small percentage of participants had over thirty years of experience (2.08%). Mean scores for Level of Experience ( $M = 3.72$ ,  $SD = 1.40$ ) and Target Language Delivery ( $M = 3.31$ ,  $SD = 0.97$ ) were subjected to a Spearman Rho analysis. The results revealed no correlation between level of experience and target language delivery of instruction:  $r = .16$ ,  $p > .05$ .

Level of experience was then examined for nonnative speakers only, with fifty participants whose L1 was English included in the analysis. While 54 survey respondents identified themselves as nonnative speakers, only fifty of them completed Item 8. For Item 8 (level of experience), participants' responses ranged from low of 1 (zero years of experience) to high of 6 (over thirty years of experience):  $M = 3.54$ ,  $SD = 1.50$ . The mean target language delivery score for these fifty respondents was somewhat low:  $M = 3.44$ ,  $SD = 0.73$ .

When native and nonnatives were combined, experience did not correlate with instructional delivery in the target language. However, when only nonnative speakers were taken into account, there was a positive correlation between delivery

of instruction in the target language and years of experience that was statistically significant ( $r = .29, p < .05$ ), meaning that the more years of experience, the more likely a nonnative teacher will deliver instruction in the target language.

### Findings for Research Question 3

Research Question 3 examined the relationship between the amount of instruction delivered in the target language and perceived teacher foreign language anxiety levels, as measured by the TFLAS. For this analysis, only data from respondents who considered themselves to be nonnative speakers were examined. Participants who identified as L1 or heritage speakers of Spanish with near native proficiency were not asked to complete the TFLAS. While 54 respondents self-identified as nonnative speakers, only 51 of them completed Items 15 – 17, which measured the amount of instruction that they deliver in the target language, and Item 20, the TFLAS; therefore, scores from 51 participants were included in this analysis. Table 5 presents the responses for Item 19, which queried participants' native speaker status.

Table 5

*Breakdown of "Native Speaker Status" Scores – Item 19*

	<b>Response</b>	<b><i>n</i></b>	<b>%</b>
1	No, I do not consider myself to be a native speaker of the WL that I teach.	54	61.36
2	Yes, I consider myself to be a native speaker of the WL that I teach.	22	25.00
3	No, I do not consider myself to be a native speaker, but I am a heritage speaker with near native proficiency.	12	13.64
	<b>Total</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>100.00</b>

*Note.*  $N = 88$ . Eight participants did not respond to this item.

The TFLAS contains 18 items rated on a five-point Likert scale and scores ranged from 18 – 90, with lower scores indicating lower perceived levels of language anxiety and higher scores indicating higher perceived language anxiety levels. In the interest of space, a breakdown of select TFLAS responses is presented in Table 6.

For this analysis, 51 participants' target language instructional delivery scores ( $M = 3.42, SD = 0.74$ ) and TFLAS scores ( $M = 45.88, SD = 11.47$ ) were subjected to a Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis. The statistical test revealed a weak negative relationship between TFLAS scores and delivery of instruction in the target language:  $r = -0.21, p > .05$ . Although the  $p$  value was not significant, this finding indicates that when anxiety scores are higher, scores for instructional delivery in the target language tend to be lower.

Table 6  
Breakdown of Select TFLAS Item Scores – Items 3, 5, 9, 12, and 15

	TFLAS item text	Strongly disagree		Disagree		Neutral		Agree		Strongly Agree	
		<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%
3	I am afraid that native speakers will notice every mistake I make.	7	13.21	13	24.53	6	11.32	21	39.62	6	11.32
5	I feel self-conscious speaking my foreign language in front of teachers of my foreign language.	9	16.98	13	24.53	6	11.32	18	33.96	7	13.21
9	I never feel quite sure of myself when I am speaking my foreign language in front of native speakers.	6	11.32	14	26.42	15	28.30	13	24.53	5	9.43
12	I speak my language well enough to be a good foreign language teacher.	0	0.00	1	1.89	2	3.77	19	35.85	31	58.49
15	I always feel that other teachers speak the language better than I do.	7	13.21	17	32.08	10	18.87	14	26.42	5	9.43

Note. *N* = 53. Only participants identifying as non-native speakers completed the TFLAS.  
TFLAS = Teacher Foreign Language Anxiety Scale.

## Summary of Findings

**Perceived proficiency.** The results of the present study indicate that there is no relationship between teachers' perceived proficiency level and delivery of instruction in the target language. The participants in this study rated their proficiency in the languages that they teach quite high (with a mean score of 4.07, corresponding to Advanced Mid on the ACTFL Proficiency Scale); however, only about half of graduates of teacher education programs who are nonnative speakers of the languages that they teach reach the minimum proficiency levels by graduation—Advanced Low for most languages taught in Georgia or Intermediate High for the less commonly taught languages such as Arabic and Mandarin—(Glisan et al., 2013). While 32 respondents identified as native or heritage speakers, 54 participants identified themselves as nonnative speakers, and eight participants did not reply to the item that queried native or heritage speaker status.

Moreover, despite participants rating themselves very high in target language proficiency, the mean score for delivering instruction in the target language was relatively low (with only 20.45% of participants reporting that they deliver 90% or more of their instruction in the target language). If participants' proficiency levels were indeed at the Advanced Mid-level, then it is unclear why the mean score for target language delivery is significantly lower than the 90% that is recommended by ACTFL (2010, 2021). Therefore, it is possible that participants overestimated

their target language proficiency, which could explain why there was no correlation between perceived proficiency level and delivery of instruction in the target language. Similarly, Moser et al (2013) found while teachers generally self-assessed their proficiency level as Advanced or Superior, they lacked confidence in using the TL in classroom instruction.

**Level of experience.** When level of teaching experience was examined among all respondents, there was no correlation found between instructional delivery in the target language and experience. However, when only nonnative speaker participants were examined, a weak positive correlation was found between these two constructs. The statistically significant positive correlation indicated that with more years of teaching experience, nonnative speaker high school WL teachers in Georgia delivered more of their instruction in the target language. Therefore, nonnative speakers delivered more instruction in the target language over time, but when native speakers and nonnative speakers were combined, then there was no correlation with level of experience and target language instruction. More research is needed to determine why there is a difference between native and nonnative speakers with respect to this finding; however, it is possible that with more years of classroom experience, teachers may have increased their proficiency levels and the amount of instruction that they delivered in the target language.

**Language anxiety.** With respect to teacher foreign language anxiety, only participants who self-identified as nonnative or nonheritage speakers of Spanish were included in this analysis. The mean TFLAS score was 45.88, indicating that most respondents perceived at least some level of teacher foreign language anxiety. The results of the Pearson analysis revealed a non-statistically significant weak negative correlation between the mean TFLAS score and the mean score for instructional delivery in the target language. In other words, higher anxiety scores tended to be correlated with lower scores for teaching in the target language.

### **Implications for Pedagogy**

It appears that less experienced teachers who are nonnative speakers of the languages that they teach would benefit from professional development that focuses on delivering instruction in the target language. It is possible that these teachers are not as well versed on the strategies that are recommended by ACTFL (2010) for maximizing target language use in the classroom. Professional development workshops that focus on these strategies would be especially beneficial for less experienced teachers and for those who are nonnative speakers of the languages that they teach, this includes those teaching on temporary or provisional certificates, which is quite common in the state in which this survey took place.

With respect to teacher foreign language anxiety, the results of this study show that all respondents who identified as nonnative speakers of the languages that they teach experience at least some level of teacher foreign language anxiety, and the findings suggest that when teachers' anxiety levels are higher, their delivery of instruction in the target language is lower. Because nonnative speaker WL teachers are advanced language learners themselves, it is not unusual for them to experience significant levels of language anxiety (Horwitz, 1996). It should be noted, however, that regardless of native, heritage, or nonnative speaker status, all WL teachers bring



unique gifts and talents into the classroom and students benefit from all qualified WL teachers who engage in standards-based instruction while providing learners with rich, comprehensible input as well as opportunities to produce output and to engage in interaction with feedback and corrections (Krashen, 1982, 1985; Long, 1983, 1985, 1996; Swain, 1985, 1998).

However, for those WL instructors who do experience teacher foreign language anxiety, professional development workshops that provide strategies for reducing language anxiety could be helpful. Kim and Kim (2004) detailed a number of strategies that the teachers in their study found helpful; namely, spending more time preparing for class, using instructional technologies to provide activities that immerse students in the target language, and accepting that it is impossible to be a perfect speaker of any language. With respect to the use of instructional technologies, conversation platforms and virtual language exchanges are powerful ways to engage learners in target language communication with native speakers beyond the classroom walls (Russell & Murphy-Judy, 2021). Kim and Kim also found that a lack of proficiency was the most significant factor that contributed to teachers' perceptions of language anxiety. The researchers suggested that professional development activities that focused on increasing proficiency could also be beneficial for alleviating teachers' perceptions of language anxiety.

### **Implications for WL Teacher Education Programs**

WL teacher education programs need to recognize that teacher candidates may experience significant levels of language anxiety. Moreover, nonnative speaker teacher candidates may feel additional pressure to meet the minimum proficiency level required to teach their language by graduation. WL teacher educators could provide opportunities for candidates to practice their language outside of class, they could encourage candidates to study abroad or to spend time immersed in a country where the target language is spoken, which was beneficial for the teacher candidates in Russell's 2013 study, as their level of language anxiety was significantly lower after completing a short-term study abroad program in Spain. WL teacher educators could also discuss the results of research on teacher foreign language anxiety in class, noting that it is common for advanced language learners to experience significant levels of language anxiety. They could also discuss strategies for reducing language anxiety.

In addition, teacher education programs should emphasize the strategies outlined by ACTFL (2010) for maximizing target language use in the classroom as well as the ACTFL (2010, 2021) recommendations for using the target language 90% or more of the time to deliver instruction (or 100% of the time within the context of dual language schools). Given that newer teachers who were nonnative speakers appeared to struggle more with delivering instruction in the target language, emphasizing strategies for teaching in the target language using comprehensible input should be of paramount importance in WL teacher education programs.

### **Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research**

Like all studies, the present study was not free from limitations; namely, the survey elicited self-reported data from a voluntary sample, respondents completed

the survey after the onset of the pandemic, and data were only analyzed quantitatively. The research design employed a survey methodology with a sampling of individuals from a population followed by quantitative analyses of data collected from the survey. While random sampling from the entire population of WL high school teachers from across the country is beyond the scope of this study, all high school WL teachers in Georgia public schools were invited to participate in the survey. Those WL language teachers who elected to participate were included in the study; therefore, this was a voluntary sample. It was customary for the participants in a voluntary sample to have a strong interest in the main topic of the survey. In addition, all of the data collected from the survey were self-reported; therefore, participants may not have been truthful or they may have had difficulty assessing themselves accurately. While the voluntary sample and self-reported data were limitations of the present study, the survey provided valuable information about Georgia WL teachers' practices with respect to instructing in the target language and their perceived levels of teacher foreign language anxiety.

Another limitation is the unknown impact of the global pandemic. The COVID-19 epidemic forced almost all Georgia WL teachers into the online teaching environment in March of 2020. However, by March of 2021—when the survey was delivered—most instructors had moved back into their classrooms with the addition of safety protocols such as masking and social distancing. It is presently unclear what impact the pandemic had on the delivery of instruction in the target language among Georgia high school WL educators as a result of these protocols. In particular, wearing a mask while attempting to teach a WL is especially problematic, as learners must not only hear but also see the manner and place of articulation to approximate the correct target language pronunciation, which can be hindered by masking. Although some creative teachers used masks with clear panels so that students could visualize their pronunciation, these types of masks still muffle sound and they likely impeded learners' ability to engage in interpretive listening to the input provided by their teachers.

Moreover, many Georgia public schools provided students with a HyFlex option, where some students could opt to receive instruction online while others attended class in person. This model necessitated instructors to teach while standing in front of their computer screens, which is not optimal for interacting with students in the classroom. Moreover, this delivery model splits the teachers' attention between two very different learning environments—instructors had to plan for two types of instruction (both in person and online), which added to their workload during the spring of 2021. Therefore, the heavier demands on their time may have precluded them from using the communicative techniques that they know to be pedagogically sound (Russell & Curtis, 2013).

Finally, this study only employed quantitative methods. Future studies could examine data qualitatively, employing focus groups and/or participant interviews to further uncover WL teachers' practices and use of the target language to deliver instruction. Moreover, the survey relied on self-reported data to determine teacher proficiency level, which may not have been accurate. Replicating this study with assessment data on OPI scores would be beneficial. Also, this study found that

most Georgia WL high teachers are not using the target language 90% or more of the time and qualitative studies could reveal why this is so. Moreover, examining differences between teachers on provisional certificates and certified teachers could help elucidate the findings of this study.

### Conclusion

While the present study was conducted in Georgia, factors such as WL teacher proficiency level, level of experience, and teacher foreign language anxiety are relevant in all contexts where languages are taught and learned in classroom settings. The findings of this study indicate that all WL teachers would benefit from professional development that focuses specifically on instructional strategies for maximizing target language use in the classroom using comprehensible input, as the majority of the respondents in this study, regardless of native speaker status, did not follow ACTFL recommendations for delivering instruction in the target language 90% of the time. Moreover, newer teachers who are nonnative speakers of the languages that they teach should be equipped with strategies for alleviating their language anxiety, which should help them feel more comfortable engaging in communicative activities in the interpersonal mode of communication, which are essential for the language acquisition process to take place. Focused professional development in these areas for pre-and in-service teachers could have a beneficial impact on language teaching and learning in Georgia and beyond.

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## Appendix A

### Teacher Background Questionnaire (TBQ)

Please choose the best answer to the following questions:

1. Sex
  - a. Male
  - b. Female
  - c. Prefer not to answer
  
2. Age
  - a. 21–30
  - b. 31–40
  - c. 41–50
  - d. 51+
  
3. Race/Ethnicity
  - a. American Indian or Alaska Native
  - b. Asian
  - c. Black or African American
  - d. Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  - e. White
  - f. Prefer not to answer
  
4. Are you Hispanic or Latino or Spanish Origin?  
Yes/No
  
5. Are you a Native or Heritage Speaker in the language that you teach?  
Yes/No
  
6. What world language(s) do you currently teach?  
One language \_\_\_\_\_
  
7. Select one option that best describes your educational level.
  - a. Nondegreed
  - b. Associate
  - c. Bachelor's
  - d. Master's
  - e. Specialist
  - f. Doctorate
  
8. Do you hold a Georgia teaching certificate in foreign language, such as in Spanish or French?  
(Please circle all that apply)
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
  - c. I am currently in the process of obtaining my Georgia teaching certificate.
  - d. I am currently seeking to add another language to my certificate.
  
9. How many years of teaching foreign language experience do you have in the State of Georgia?
  - a. 0–3
  - b. 3–5
  - c. 5–10
  - d. 10–20
  - e. 20–30
  - f. 30+
  
10. How many years of overall teaching experience do you have overall?
  - a. 0–3
  - b. 3–5
  - c. 5–10
  - d. 10–20
  - e. 20–30
  - f. 30+

11. Did you ever take an official ACTFL Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI) in the target language that you teach?  
Yes, or No
12. If yes, what was your level of proficiency at that time?
- Intermediate Mid or Lower
  - Intermediate High
  - Advanced Low
  - Advanced Mid
  - Advanced High or Higher
13. When was the last time you took the OPI?
- 0–3
  - 3–5
  - 5–10
  - 10–20
  - 20–30
  - 30+
14. What is your estimated proficiency level in the target language that you teach according to the ACTFL Proficiency Scale? For the complete details on the levels click here:  
[https://www.actfl.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/public/ACTFLProficiencyGuidelines2012\\_FINAL.pdf](https://www.actfl.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/public/ACTFLProficiencyGuidelines2012_FINAL.pdf)
- Intermediate Mid or Lower
  - Intermediate High
  - Advanced Low
  - Advanced Mid
  - Advanced High or Higher

## Appendix B

### Teacher Foreign Language Anxiety Scale (TFLAS)

*TFLAS Directions: For each item, indicate whether you (1) strongly disagree, (2) disagree, (3) neither agree nor disagree, (4) agree, or (5) strongly agree.*

1. It frightens me when I don't understand what someone is saying in my foreign language.
2. I would not worry about taking a course conducted entirely in my foreign language.
3. I am afraid that native speakers will notice every mistake I make.
4. I am pleased with the level of foreign language proficiency I have achieved.
5. I feel self-conscious speaking my foreign language in front of teachers of my foreign language.
6. When speaking my foreign language, I can get so nervous I forget things I know.
7. I feel overwhelmed by the number of rules you have to learn in order to speak a foreign language.
8. I feel comfortable around native speakers of my foreign language.
9. I never feel quite sure of myself when I am speaking my foreign language in front of native speakers.
10. I am not nervous speaking my foreign language with students.
11. I don't worry about making mistakes in my foreign language.



12. I speak my language well enough to be a good foreign language teacher.
13. I get nervous when I don't understand every word a native speaker says.
14. I feel confident when I speak my foreign language.
15. I always feel that other teachers speak the language better than I do
16. I don't understand why some people think learning a foreign language is so hard.
17. I try to speak my foreign language with native speakers whenever I can.
18. I feel that my foreign language preparation was adequate to become a foreign language teacher.