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Evaluating Effective Teaching in the 21st Century World Language Classroom

Christina Huhn

Indiana University of Pennsylvania

Abstract

Stronge, Ward, and Grant (2011) emphasize the fundamental need to evaluate the teaching that occurs in our classrooms. They add that in order to effect change in the quality of our education, we must continue to investigate what constitutes effective teaching as it has significant implications for both the education of and assessment of teachers and their students. In West Virginia, what occurs in world language (WL) classrooms has been the topic of ongoing discussions between members of the state foreign language teachers association, current teachers, and the state's WL coordinators. Despite notable positive momentum in WL education in the state, scant data existed that would provide knowledge of the practices of WL teachers. The present research revealed that while teachers incorporate a variety of appropriate activities into their classroom, and both believe in the value of the standards and use them in planning their lessons, their implementation of standards-based assessments lag behind. The findings also hint at the similarity to the findings from the recent ACTFL Standards Impact Survey (American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, ACTFL, 2011) with respect to how teachers nationwide interpret and incorporate the standards and standards-based assessment in their classrooms.

Background

Given the currently accepted pedagogical focus on communicative, student-centered approaches to instruction, a current world language (WL) classroom must be more than grammatical instruction and textbook-driven practice. In West Virginia, issues of teacher language proficiency, components of effective teaching, and whether or not effective teaching occurs in current classrooms have been the topic of ongoing discussions between members of the West Virginia Foreign Language Teachers Association (WVFLTA), current WL teachers, and the state's WL coordinators. These informal conversations provided the impetus to examine the actual practices of teachers in West Virginia's WL classrooms.

Although all states are experiencing educational and financial challenges, the ongoing development of a 21st Century educational system in West Virginia is further complicated by the state's demographics, which have been found to be a contributive factor in the shortage of language teachers (Swanson & Huff, 2010). In addition to limited financial means, the average annual household income is $38,380

as compared to the U.S. average of $51,194. Additionally, West Virginia is rather homogenous given that 2.3% of the state's residents speak a language other than English in the home compared to the US average, 20.1% (U.S. Census, 2012). Additionally, there are many rural counties in West Virginia with small school districts, and salaries are lower than the average salaries found throughout the region. Teacher salaries in West Virginia average $44,701 as compared to surrounding states such as Ohio ($54,656), Kentucky ($47,875), Pennsylvania ($57,237) and Maryland ($62,849) (National Education Association, 2012).

Coupled with these demographics, the educational stakeholders in West Virginia are concerned with the quality of WL teaching in the state. Schulz (2000) highlights the need to research and to define teacher behaviors and skills for initial certification and professional licensing. In addition to economic and geographical hurdles, West Virginia is examining issues relating to the language proficiency of its WL teachers. Currently, only 21 states use official ACTFL proficiency testing (Oral Proficiency Interview or OPI and the Writing Proficiency Test) as part of their certification process (Chambless, 2012), which serves as a means to ensure that their WL teachers have proficiency in the target language. West Virginia had not implemented a language proficiency requirement for pre-service or in-service WL teachers at the time of this research. Such proficiency requirements are important because language teachers with limited proficiency may abandon more communicative teaching methods and instead rely on grammar or textbook-based instruction (Wilbur, 2007). Furthermore, none of the state's teacher education programs had achieved National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) program recognition at the time of this research. The rigor of teacher education programs developed around the NCATE standards, in particular the requirement of Advanced-Low language proficiency (Chambless, 2012; Huhn, 2012), may support the implementation of a proficiency requirement for state WL teacher certification.

Although the aforementioned challenges affect the state's rate of progress in expanding and improving WL education, significant advancement has been made in recent years. WVFLTA is actively promoting and improving WL education through conferences, advocacy, and support of novice and veteran language teachers in the state. Through collaboration with the West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission and the Cemanahuac Institute in Cuernavaca, Mexico, the association has offered scholarships to both pre-service and practicing teachers in order to pursue opportunities to build their language proficiency through study abroad programs. Additionally, two state-level coordinators support WL programs through initiatives such as Global21[1], and Foreign Language Assistance Program grants[1] (West Virginia Department of Education, 2012). In the fall of 2011 with the appointment of a new state superintendent, these efforts continued to grow. Through public speeches and newspaper articles, the superintendent has become an advocate for WLs at the state level (Marple, 2012).

Despite the advocacy from various educational stakeholders, there is a dearth of information related to the current practices of WL teachers in the state. Such data would provide direction for professional development, and support teacher education programs in the state as they work towards meeting the rigor of NCATE program recognition. Given the shortage of information about WL teachers' practice in

the state, the researcher conducted survey-based research in order to gain prelimi-nary insight into the current classroom activities of WL teachers.

In spring of 2010, an initial survey[2] was administered to provide preliminary information about the WL classroom in West Virginia. Findings from this research resulted in several notable conclusions about the use of the target language in the WL classrooms of West Virginia (Huhn, 2011). First, ACTFL recommends that in order to provide significant levels of communication, WL teachers should use the target language in the classroom 90% or more (ACTFL, 2010). Findings from the initial research showed that WL teachers in West Virginia report feeling confident in their language abilities (65%), but indicate notably lower levels of target language use. Only 35% of respondents indicated that they use the target language 75% or more of their instructional time (Huhn, 2011). The low percentage of WL teachers indicating that they use the target language may be of interest to the state's teacher education programs, in future professional development and ongoing discussions of WL education in the state.

Wilbur's (2007) research found that teachers with more limited linguistic abili-ties may abandon more communicative teaching methods and instead rely on gram-mar- or textbook-based instruction. A second finding from the original research indicates that the most frequently used strategies included book work (88%) and worksheets (88%). Additionally, 70% of respondents identified a textbook as one of their main sources and 30% listed the textbook as their only or primary source of in-structional materials. An executive summary of the initial survey is available online (Huhn, 2010). The findings provided a foundation on which to base future research. Thus, a second survey was developed and administered in spring of 2011.

While both surveys were limited in scope, with small sample sizes, the data gathered will be used to provide a foundation on which to inform stakeholders in teacher education programs, build continued discussions, expand professional de-velopment, and effect continued change in WL education in West Virginia.

Review of the Literature

A review of the literature revealed the complexity of effective WL teaching, and it is important to clarify the meaning of effective teaching, its components and the challenges in operationalizing that definition. Second, the contributions of class-room activities, the national standards, textbook use and assessment to that defini-tion are discussed.

What is Effective Teaching?

Significant research exists that defines the good language learner, but cur-rent research does not provide a clear consensus on how to define good teaching (Chambless, 2012). Research on teacher self-efficacy and teacher training have come to the forefront (Cooper, 2004; Stronge, et al., 2011; Swanson, 2008, 2012), but schol-arship regarding what effective WL language teachers do in the classroom to support student learning is scarce.

It remains difficult to operationalize the definition of effective teaching. Ef-fectiveness is an elusive concept to define given the complex tasks of teaching and potential variety of teaching contexts, and there is considerable debate on how teach-

er effectiveness should be judged (Stronge, et al., 2011). States are now working to define and measure teacher effectiveness. Furthermore, researchers in the field of Second Language Acquisition (SLA) have not yet developed a universal definition of what constitutes effective language instruction (Bell, 2005; Ellis, 2008, Schulz, 2000), and little research has revealed discipline-specific criteria of what comprises effective language instruction (Bell 2005; Schulz, 2000). While the ACTFL/NCATE standards are rigorous and provide opportunities for strong teacher development, the literature base lacks documentation about what WL teachers actually do in the classroom to bring students to higher levels of learning. Additionally, there are not any performance-based assessments beyond the initial certification requirement that would support those criteria (Schulz, 2000; Huhn, 2012).

Among the sparse research on WL classroom practices, Bell (2005) and Ellis (2008) suggest some criteria for defining effective teaching that can be used when evaluating the practices of experienced teachers in West Virginia. Bell (2005) defined effective foreign language teaching as "clear and enthusiastic teaching that provides learners with the grammatical (syntactical and morphological), lexical, phonological, pragmatic, and socio-cultural knowledge and interactive practice they need to communicate successfully in the target language" (p. 260). She adds that there should be less focus on error correction or focus on grammatical form.

On the other hand, Ellis (2008) cautions against formulating a definition of effective language instruction that is too prescriptive, especially with a lack of consensus from the field. Nevertheless, he offers several principles that contribute to a definition of a good language teacher. Specifically, students need a variety of experiences, opportunities to focus on both form and function, opportunities for both input and output, and activities that promote interaction with both teachers and other students in both controlled and free production. Ellis also identifies the importance of maximizing natural acts of communication to the extent possible in the classroom and recommends a *zero grammar* approach, which he defines as not attempting to predetermine linguistic content of a lesson.

Noting this sparse research base, it can be argued that an effective language teacher should provide their students with a balance between a focus on form and a focus on meaning, engage in a variety of classroom activities that present students with a variety of experiences, and provide an environment that allows for the as much natural communication possible. Additionally, effective WL teaching should include the concepts of backwards design (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005), the *Standards for Foreign Language Learning in the 21st Century* (National Standards, 2006) and performance assessments, which provide feedback and improve instruction (Shrum & Glisan, 2010).

Classroom Activities

In order to engage learners and provide opportunities to develop essential communicative competencies in a WL, teachers must create an appropriate classroom environment that incorporates the foundations defined above. A review of the literature provides a plethora of possible resources, ideas and activities that could be used to support such a classroom. One specific method that has been shown to be effective in the language classroom is Project Based Instruction (PBI) (Mikulec &

Miller, 2011), also known as Project Based Learning. Designed to engage students in collaboration, PBI allows learners to incorporate attention to both form and to function, provide opportunities for free language response and to develop and demonstrate their abilities in the language. Group activities, technology-based activities, standards based instruction, and performance based assessment are also potential components of PBI instruction.

Standards

The *Standards for Foreign Language Learning in the 21st Century* (National Standards, 2006) describe the goals of foreign language learning. The standards were not intended as a curriculum guide, but rather suggest

> the types of curricular experiences needed to enable students to achieve the standards, and support the ideal of extended sequences of study that begin in the elementary grades and continue through high school and beyond, they do not describe specific course content, nor recommended sequence of study (p. 28).

However, familiarity with the standards does not necessarily lead to classroom implementation. Glisan (1996) underscores the role of teachers' beliefs by noting that the only way for standards to alter instruction is to alter the way teachers think about their teaching. Allen (2002) conducted survey research on teachers in three Midwestern states, connecting the beliefs of classroom teachers with the standards. She found that while teachers' pedagogical beliefs may be aligned with the standards, the teachers indicated only moderate familiarity with the standards themselves. Her findings support previous research that found that familiarity with the standards alone is insufficient in motivating change in instructional practices.

Most recently, the *ACTFL Standards Impact Survey: A Decade of Foreign Language Standards: Influence, Impact, and Future Directions*, examined the impact of the national student standards on foreign language education (ACTFL, 2011). Among the many findings, 89% of the respondents indicated that they were familiar with the standards, 80% reported following a curriculum related to the national standards, and 78% of respondents indicated that their state standards mirror the national standards. The researchers went on to evaluate the impact of the respondents' knowledge on their lessons. Seventy-two percent believed that their knowledge of the national standards has influenced the way they plan their lessons.

Textbook Use

Historically, WLs have frequently been taught by what has been labeled the *coverage model* (Chaffee, 1992), where the curriculum is determined by the textbook, and teaching and learning are viewed as a passive transfer of information (Allen, 2002). Bragger and Rice (2000) found that textbooks were still central to the WL classroom, and research on textbook use in the last decade has not substantiated a change in this trend. However, a standards-based curriculum is not necessarily tied to the use of a textbook, and effective teachers' use a variety of sources and instructional methods to support student learning (Allen, 2002).

The WL profession is dynamic, driven by a myriad of factors of teaching and learning a new language. Consequently, the call for change in textbooks is constantly in flux, as standards are developed and revised, and the current teaching paradigm

evolves. However, textbooks have not always kept up with current research. Textbooks tend to drive curriculum, but all too often teachers do not take an active role in textbook selection, or do so only superficially (Bragger & Rice, 2000), and there is a disparity between SLA theory and practice (Aski, 2003).

Research indicates that textbooks still tend to follow traditional approaches (Fernández, 2011; Rubio, Passey, & Campbell, 2004) although some evidence suggests that SLA research has begun to influence textbook development at the postsecondary level. Fernández (2011) found that the majority of textbooks remain focused on grammar-based instruction where rules are presented and then practiced. Traditional language production tasks that progress from very prescriptive activities, often lacking in context, to less-restrictive drills or other manipulation of a specific form are not fully supported by SLA research. Additionally, she finds that many textbooks still overlook the central role of input in language instruction.

Wong and VanPatten (2003) engaged in a detailed discussion of the drills such as those commonly found in textbooks. They concluded that not only do mechanical drills not support language acquisition, but that they may actually impede student progress in developing language proficiency. One consequence of an extensive reliance on the use of a textbook, or on the *coverage model*, is that it may limit essential opportunities for students to produce both controlled and free language production that Ellis (2008) advocates. What these authors have found at the post-secondary level is equally true of many K-12 textbooks. Textbooks may help with formulaic, structured focus on form, but textbook exchanges are often scripted and specific to a topic. Real world, authentic communication is unpredictable, and avoiding an over-reliance on the textbook will support the *zero grammar* (not attempting to control linguistic outcomes) concept that Ellis promotes.

Assessment

Achievement in a standards-based curriculum is measured by authentic assessments that model real-world language use (Allen, 2002). Measuring student progress primarily by discrete point, grammar-based examinations or quizzes alone relegates the language to focus on form (Sandrock, 2010). Shrum and Glisan (2010) advocate that assessments should be contextualized and based on what learners should be able to do by the end of a period of instruction. Additionally, assessments should engage students in meaningful communication, address at least one mode of communication, be performance-based, encourage divergent responses and creativity, and can be either formative or summative. Moreover, a backwards design model should be used so that assessments are planned "as part of a thematic unit, *before* instruction begins" (p. 396). That is, WL teachers need to focus first on the objectives and assessments then move toward instruction (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005).

One specific type of assessment that may help strengthen the connection between standards-based instruction and assessment is the Integrated Performance Assessment, which incorporates the three modes of communication delineated in the national standards (Adair-Hauck, Glisan, Koda, Swender, & Sandrock, 2006). The three tasks in an integrated performance assessment are aligned thematically, and reflect real world language use. The tasks are interrelated and the completion of each task provides the foundation for completion of the next task. Other assess-

ments used in a standards-driven classroom are authentic assessments, which are assessments connected to real language production, and the use of rubrics as an assessment tool (Sandrock, 2010; Shrum & Glisan, 2010)

Recently, the *ACTFL Standards Impact Survey* (ACTFL, 2011) provided evidence that a lag remains between the development of standards-driven curriculum and performance-based assessments. Respondents indicated that their assessment measures were either in the beginning stages or in progress, and curricular implementations of standards were evident through classroom observations (84%), follow-up discussions with teachers (83%), professional development activities (75%), and lesson plans (73%). Assessment practices (78%) provided additional evidence, although alignment of district assessments was more limited (43%) (ACTFL, 2011).

In summation, effective teaching can be characterized by the creation of a classroom environment that supports a variety of classroom activities, not necessarily driven by the curriculum in a textbook. An effective teacher also uses the standards as a goal to work towards, and incorporates authentic, performance-based assessments beyond discrete point grammar exams or quizzes.

Keeping this working definition in mind, the present study was guided by six research questions that formed the basis for survey based research to investigate classroom practices by WL teachers in West Virginia.

1. What kinds of activities are teachers familiar with and do they use in the classroom?
2. What role does the textbook play in the WL classroom?
3. How do teachers perceive the Standards?
4. How do teachers determine their students' learning goals?
5. How do teachers determine what kinds of activities to use in their classrooms to achieve those learning goals?
6. How do teachers assess their students' performance?

Methods

In spring of 2010, an initial survey was administered online to WL teachers in West Virginia (*N* = 302). Seventy-three responses were received for an overall response rate of 24%. A follow up survey[3] was sent to WL teachers in the spring of 2011. Both surveys administered in this research were made available to prospective study participants using an e-mail listserv of WL educators in the state. The state WL coordinators and university departments of modern languages also encouraged participation in the survey. Participants were given the option to register to be entered into a drawing for an *Amazon.com* gift card as an incentive to complete the survey.

In spring of 2011, a second, more open-ended survey was administered, which expanded on areas of interest in the initial survey. The second survey was coded to allow trends and issues to surface that would delve further into how WL teachers chose their classroom goals and activities. The second survey was also presented electronically to the same population, to 310 individuals. Fifty-two WL educators responded, for a response rate of 17%. Although these response rates for both surveys could be considered low, the findings represent the perceptions of these individuals and provide valuable information to stakeholders and direction for future research. Copies of both surveys are available[4].

Demographics

Demographics for respondents to both surveys were nearly identical in terms of teacher's backgrounds, credentials, education levels, current positions, and language(s) taught (See Appendix A). For the preliminary survey, 77% of respondents were grades 7-12 teachers, 25% were university faculty, and fewer than 1% were teachers or facilitators for the West Virginia Virtual School. Many teachers in West Virginia hold multi-level appointments, and respondents were allowed to select more than one level. The second survey provided a deeper analysis of the demographic data showing that 50% taught high school, 31% taught middle school and 4% taught elementary level. Twenty-one percent were university faculty, and 6% were teachers or facilitators for the virtual school.

Findings

Classroom Activities

The purpose of the first research question was to discover what kinds of activities the participants were familiar with and what types of activities they used in their classrooms. Responses to the initial list of potential classroom activities (Table 1) shows that WL educators at all levels in West Virginia were well-versed in a variety of teaching methods.

Table 1

Familiarity With Communicative Classroom Activities

Activity type	Percentage
Open Ended Question/Answer	93%
Student Group work	91%
Worksheets	88%
Bookwork	88%
Read aloud	88%
Individual Presentations	85%
Computer-based activities	84%
Skits/play acting	83%
Oral True False Questions	81%
Group presentations	81%
Bell-ringers/warm-ups	79%
Project Based Learning	79%
TPRS/Storytelling	77%

However, when asked about teaching methods and activities they actually used, responses varied greatly. Among the strategies they had never used or did not like, respondents identified some methods that would provide key opportunities for input, and natural communication, including TPRS/Storytelling, cloze activities, skits and play acting, and simulations.

When asked for more details as to how frequently they utilized these various methods and activities listed, some interesting trends were noted. The most frequently used methods and activities were student group work (51%), open-ended question/answer activities (47%), bookwork (43%), and worksheets (33%). The method

used least frequently was TPRS (60%), despite indications that teachers were familiar with it. This well-established method uses storytelling and play-acting to provide students opportunities for language production. However, TPRS does require some training and experience in order to effectively apply it in the classroom, especially for teachers with limited language proficiency.

Textbook Use

When asked to identify what instructional materials they use on a consistent basis in the classroom (in the original survey), 70% of respondents identified a text-book as one of their sources. Additionally, 30% identified the textbook as their only or primary response. Given the limitations of textbooks, and the need to provide classroom opportunities for language production, the initial responses to the question of what strategies are being used in the classroom piqued the curiosity of the researcher. The percentages of teachers citing the use of textbook based teaching materials led the researcher to further investigate the role the textbook plays in the 21st Century classroom in West Virginia. A textbook or written worksheet can provide support for language learners, but over-reliance any one input method can be detrimental to a communicative classroom. To better understand the responses to the first survey, the second survey relied on more qualitative methods in order to reveal what methods were actually being used.

As noted above, in a standards-driven, 21st century classroom, one would not expect to see students spending large amounts of time engaging in textbook-based activities. Ninety percent of respondents indicated that they used a textbook in their classrooms. They reported using the textbook three to five times per week (33%) or daily (31%). Responses indicated that a textbook was used once or twice a week (21%), intermittently (6%) or less than once per week (4%) were less frequent. The few who did not use a textbook offered only that the program was part of an online program, or that the students were too young for it (elementary level). One participant also commented, "I find myself more motivated to make my own plans and create more engaging projects when I do not use a textbook- it sometimes becomes a crutch and cannot be extended the way I would like."

Only 38% of respondents identified the textbook as a reference source, tool or supplement (particularly noting the CD or DVD ancillary materials). Respondents indicated that they use the textbook as a resource for vocabulary (34%), grammar review or practice (32%), general practice (28%), reading activities (15%), culture or cultural readings (10%), and listening activities (8%). As previously mentioned, research indicates that an overuse of drills can be detrimental to language learning (Wong & VanPatten, 2003), as is overabundant focus on form, which can limit the amount of time that can be used for communicate practice and other creative uses of the language. Nonetheless, 12% of respondents identified a restrictive use of the textbook such as using it to organize the classroom, for drills, or structuring their teaching primarily around the textbook.

Teacher Perceptions of the State CSOs and Standards-driven Curriculum

To expand the description of what is occurring in the 21st century world language classroom in West Virginia, it is useful to understand how teachers perceive the Standards and how they use the CSOs into their learning goals. To that end,

participants were asked to rate the West Virginia CSOs on a scale of 1 (Not at All Relevant to what I want to teach or the language proficiency of my students) to 5 (Very Relevant to what I want to teach and the language proficiency of my students). Only 17% of respondents indicated the CSOs were very relevant; most respondents gave ratings between 3 and 4 (23% and 40%, respectively). Only 10% of respondents indicated that they do not use the CSOs, which suggests that the majority of respondents found the West Virginia CSOs to be at least somewhat relevant to their teaching. Only 4% of respondents indicated no familiarity with the West Virginia CSO's.

When asked to describe how they use the CSOs, 43% of respondents stated that they review the CSOs first, and then design lessons from them. For example, one respondent described how he/she designed instruction by using "the national and state standards and their intersection with the ACTFL proficiency guidelines. I keep them in mind when determining competencies I shoot for and backward design my instruction." A smaller percentage (33%) of the respondents planned their lessons, and then looked for CSOs that fit the lessons. These results hint at the incorporation of the Standards into instruction beyond believing they have value.

Additionally, teachers were asked to respond to an open-ended question regarding how they determine their learning goals for the classroom. Of those responding, 65% indicated that the Standards determined their learning goals, either primarily or in combination with the textbook or other factors. By contrast, 14% of respondents indicated *student needs* as the determinant of their learning goals. While only 6% of respondents directly included the concept of *backwards design,* the respondents' use of the Standards to determine their learning goals suggests an awareness of the concept of designing instruction with the end goals in mind. One participant explained the process, demonstrating the complexities that influence effective teaching.

> Depending on the level I examine the CSOs and establish my goals around them and materials I have used in the past to reach these goals. I re-examine these throughout the course and add additional activities to help reach and reinforce these goals. I also try to tie in my experiences in other countries and develop activities that weave these cultural and environmental experiences together with coursework.

Ten percent of respondents indicated that someone else determined their learning goals for them. This response may be a result of either a coordinated language curriculum or that some of the respondents were classroom mediators in the state's virtual school, which uses classroom mentors, the phone, and the internet to reach students in rural counties where there are no classroom WL teachers. Nevertheless, it does lead to the question of ownership of the material one teaches. As one respondent noted "Our goals are determined by our phone teachers for the Virtual Spanish." Post-secondary respondents also touched on this issue. One post-secondary respondent commented that

> The learning goals are determined more by the university based syllabus. We have a certain amount of material to cover per semester. Based on that goal, we are able to instill various teaching methods to assure that the students have acquired the necessary skills to be successful in the course and proceed to the next level.

When asked how they chose activities to achieve their learning goals, 44% of respondents indicated that student engagement or motivation was the primary factor that determined the planned activities. The responses to this survey hint at the fact that issues of learner perception, beliefs and motivation played an ongoing role in the current WL classroom in the state. As one respondent commented, "I am always looking for activities that motivate the students to use the language in a fun way. I try to provide a variety of activities that give the students firsthand, real-life experiences in the language."

Assessment

The final research question addressed how educators assess their students' performance. As previously noted, assessment in a standards based curriculum mirrors real-world language use (Allen, 2002) which may not occur by using traditional examinations and quizzes alone. On this topic, when asked how they assessed their students' performance, 63% of respondents indicated they used assessments such as exams and quizzes either alone or in conjunction with other types of assessments. In addition, 17% of respondents reported using some form of specific skill-based assessment: 46% cited oral assessment, 23% writing assessments, 17% listening comprehension and 6% reading comprehension. Twenty-nine percent of respondents reported project-based assessments, possibly as a result of the previously mentioned summer professional development institute on project-based learning. Interestingly, only one participant mentioned the three modes of communication in their comments on how they assess their students. References to performance-based assessments, including integrated performance assessments (14%), Formative or summative assessments 11% and authentic assessments (4%) were also limited. Only passing mentions of goal based or standards driven assessments or the use of rubrics were noted.

While some of the assessments may mirror real-world language use, it was apparent that the teachers reached by this project have not yet fully incorporated standards-based assessment into their classrooms. When asked what does drive their choice in assessment, answers varied widely, from ease of use and time to create the assessment to creation by a third party (someone else, or a textbook assessment). Student factors such as age, ability, and comfort level also surfaced (13%). The largest set of responses (19%) indicated that the decision was driven by *what was taught*. This wide variation suggests that teachers in West Virginia are still developing their standards based assessment measures.

Discussion

These surveys were conducted in order to reveal more detail about what occurs in the WL classrooms in West Virginia. The results suggest that while teachers engaged in a number of effective practices, there remains room for improvement and further professional development.

To revisit the components of the working definition of effective teaching delineated earlier, an effective teacher creates a classroom environment that provides a balance between a focus on form and a focus on meaning, engages in a variety of classroom activities, and provides an environment that allows for the maximum

natural communication possible. Effective language teaching is also achievement driven, focusing on what students are able to accomplish in the classroom, incorporating the standards, the concept of backwards design, and appropriate assessments beyond discrete point grammar assessments.

In terms of what kind of activities teachers use in their classrooms, and how they use the textbook, results of the present study suggest that respondents used a variety of activities in their classrooms. Many of the possible activities have the potential to provide opportunities for natural communication. This variety of activities may also provide students with opportunities to focus on both form and function, opportunities for both input and output, and activities that promote interaction with both teachers and other students in both free and controlled production.

Nonetheless, there remain opportunities to incorporate expanded activities such as TPRS, and to reconsider some of the uses of the textbook, treating it as a tool or resource, rather than the primary source of curriculum. Ninety percent of respondents indicated they do use the textbook which may help provide that necessary focus on form, and some respondents already use the textbook as a resource rather than the primary source for their pedagogical choices.

Also of note, in light of Wilbur's (2007) research involving teachers with lower levels of language proficiency, and the lack of data available on the proficiency levels of the state's WL teachers, it is difficult to determine if the respondent's language proficiency limitations are affecting their classroom strategies. Additional professional development may be beneficial in helping teachers develop the skills to incorporate additional target language use in the classroom. The state's teacher education programs should also urge their pre-service teachers to develop high levels of language proficiency, in order to assure continued change and growth. Continued participation in immersion activities, such as language immersion weekends, and travel abroad should be encouraged.

The respondents to the survey indicate that they believe that the state CSOs have pedagogical value and have begun to incorporate them into their curriculum. The data indicating that 80% of respondents found the CSOs at least somewhat relevant to their instruction, and that 43% indicate that they use them in designing their curriculum suggest that those teachers responding to the survey have begun to incorporate the state standards into their instruction. This lends support to Allen's (2002) assertion that it is the teacher's belief in the value of the standards is more crucial than detailed knowledge of the standards. However, in a communicative language classroom, assessment should be performance driven, and responses to this survey indicate that this may still be emerging in the classroom. Again here, teacher education programs and professional development opportunities can be used to support this implementation.

When compared to the recent data from the ACTFL *Standards Impact Survey* (ACTFL, 2011), it appears that West Virginia's progress towards a standards based curriculum is similar to the impact of the national standards. While the state standards (CSOs) have influenced the WL curriculum in West Virginia, a lag in the development of strong standards-based assessment remains. In the case of West Virginia, the survey data suggest that it is the specifics of standards-based assessment that may not have reached wide implementation. The summer institute on PBI that

occurred three years prior to the survey may have contributed to the incorporation of project-based assessment (29% of respondents), which aligns more appropriately with standards-based instruction. It is also possible that this is the result of the fact that the previous summer professional development opportunity included follow up activities that the participants completed in their own classrooms. Continuing professional opportunities of this type should be encouraged by all stakeholders.

Limitations and Potential for Future Research

Limitations are universal to research, and the current study is no exception. To begin, these are small-scale surveys, and it may be difficult to generalize them beyond the immediate population. While the data will likely prove invaluable to the stakeholders in the state, including the WL coordinators, state language teachers association, and teacher education programs, caution must be used in generalizing these results to all populations. However, there are likely other states facing similar challenges, and this research may prove valuable in supporting those efforts. A particular ongoing challenge in the state has been difficulty in reaching all WL educators in the state. The states WL teachers association makes ongoing efforts to maintain and increase contact with WL teachers in the state, and future research will need to continue those efforts.

There remains ample room for additional research in this area. In particular, it may be beneficial to do classroom observations, focus groups, and other qualitative measures to clarify and expand on these results. It is also important to note that survey data is self-reported, and case studies and classroom observations may help triangulate data from teacher's responses. As part of the incentive for the survey, participants were given a separate opportunity to enter their names into an online form for a gift card drawing. This same form also provided an opportunity to volunteer to be part of follow-up measures such as focus groups, interviews, or other discussions or research regarding WLs in West Virginia. Nineteen participants responded positively, providing a potential working contingent on which to base classroom observations or other qualitative research as the next logical step in this project. Future research should include classroom observations of these same respondents, as well as comparative surveys of other states or specific sub-groups (such as language specific groups) of the population.

It is important to reiterate the purpose of this research. Despite the limited response rate and small sample sizes, these results provide insight into the WL classrooms in West Virginia. Findings from the current study will support WL education and governing bodies in determining the needs of both teachers and learners. Currently in West Virginia, a task force is examining the policies, initiatives, programs and areas of concentration to evaluate the effectiveness in achieving intended outcomes related to K-12 WL education. The results of these surveys will provide valuable information for that task force. The responses also provide useful and pertinent information for teacher education programs and practicing teachers, help guide the development of future state-wide professional development and support initiatives by the state's WL association.

Stronge et al. (2011) emphasize the fundamental need to improve the teaching that occurs in our classrooms. They add that in order to effect change in the quality

of our education, we must continue to probe the question of what constitutes effective teaching. Although this study has a number of limitations, and is constrained in generalizability, it is hoped that the data and insight gathered from this research will serve that purpose.

Acknowledgement

Endnotes

1 Further information is available from, http://www2.ed.gov/programs/flap/index.html

2 https://spreadsheets.google.com/viewform?hl=en&formkey=dF9lcUhZbTVuUFpMdUktS053Y1h1VWc6MA#gid=0

3 https://spreadsheets.google.com/spreadsheet/viewform?formkey=dGdLdG5ha2hvOTZLUlNmRE1fYWM5WkE6MA#gid=0

4 Detailed information is available from, http://wvde.state.wv.us/global21/

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Appendix A: Full demographic information

Table 3:
Teaching Credentials

	Original Survey		Follow-up Survey	
Fully licensed and certified in the area I teach	48	64%	36	61%
Masters Degree in the area I teach	17	23%	9	15%
Certified, but teaching on an endorsement	2	3%	5	8%
Long term sub position	0	0%	0	0%
Non-tenure track faculty position	3	4%	4	7%
Part-time adjunct or instructor in higher education	2	3%	3	5%
Tenured position in higher education, not yet tenured	5	7%	4	7%
Tenured position in higher education	7	9%	3	5%
Other	2	3%	4	7%

Table 4:
Current Position

	Original Survey		Follow-up Survey	
Teacher K-12	56	75%	50	85%
Teacher Virtual School	3	4%	2	3%
University Faculty	18	24%	11	19%
Other	1	1%	3	5%

*Respondents were able to select multiple levels

Table 5
Educational level

Education Level:	Original Survey	Follow-up Survey
Bachelors Degree	20%	15%
Master's degree	60%	54%
Doctoral Degree	21%	20%
Alternate Certification	4%	2%
National Board Certification	5%	7%
Other	4%	12%

Table 6
Language Taught

	Original Survey	Follow-up Survey
Chinese	5%	2%
French	24%	19%
German	7%	14%
Italian	1%	0%
Japanese	3%	3%
Latin	4%	3%
Russian	0%	0%
Spanish	63%	64%
Other	1%	2%