

The Beliefs Of International And Domestic Foreign Language Teachers

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Abstract

In response to the shortage of foreign language (L2) teachers in the United States, many school districts employ individuals from other countries. Despite the benefits offered by such teachers, there is growing concern that they may not be adequately prepared for teaching in American schools. In this mixed method study involving 222 L2 teachers and their supervisors, the teaching-related beliefs of domestic and international L2 teachers in the United States were compared. Survey results indicated that international L2 teachers hold many of the same core beliefs related to L2 teaching as do their American-born peers. Interview data, however, suggested the existence of differing beliefs among sub-groups of international L2 teachers that often lead to problems with classroom management. These problems seem to be aggravated by the extent of the cultural differences between the L2 teacher's native land and the country where the instruction is taking place. Recommendations for improvement of practice include having international L2 teachers observe American-born L2 teachers, offering more professional development, and providing greater administrative support.

In this era of internationalization and multiculturalism, an increasing number of students in the United States have shown interest in foreign language (L2) learning (American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, 2011; Furman, Goldberg & Lusin, 2007; Rhodes & Pufahl, 2009). While increasing L2 enrollment bodes well for the ability of American students to compete in a global economy and a multicultural society, there is concern among L2 stakeholders

that the growth of L2 enrollment in this country will outpace the number of qualified L2 teachers (Long, 2000; Modern Language Association of America, 2007; Rhodes & Pufahl, 2009).

In response to the shortage of L2 teachers, many school districts in the United States hire teachers from other countries. A report commissioned by the National Education Association (Barber, 2003) indicated that approximately 10,000 foreign teachers were working in K-12 public schools in the United States on non-immigrant work or cultural exchange visas (Barber, 2003). A more recent report has indicated that this number has almost tripled since the time of the NEA findings (Wolfe, September, 2007). While no records are kept specific to the number of teachers from other countries who are teaching an L2 in the United States, multiple reports indicate that they are being hired in growing numbers to address critical teacher shortages in a select few disciplines, including L2 education (Barber, 2003; Cook, 2000; Millman, May 24, 2010; Wolfe, September, 2007). As evidence of the high percentage of foreign teachers hired to fill vacancies in L2 classrooms, the largest single sponsor of non-immigrant teachers, Visiting International Faculty (VIF), has approximately 1500 teachers working in U.S. public schools, of which 30% are teaching foreign languages and an additional 17% are teaching English as a second language (Associated Press, September, 2008).

The presence of foreign-born teachers is particularly dramatic in the growing number of immersion schools in the United States. Due to the limited supply of American-born teachers who possess the necessary language skills to teach in immersion schools, human resource departments are often required to look outside of the United States to fill immersion teaching vacancies. In a recent article documenting the development of French immersion programs in Louisiana to revive its Cajun culture it was reported that dozens of French-speaking teachers from West Africa, have joined teachers

from Canada, Haiti, Belgium, and France to form “a veritable French Foreign Legion of imported educators” (Millman, May, 24, 2010).

The number of international teachers teaching in L2 classrooms in the United States becomes even more significant when considering the growing number of teachers who are American citizens, but who were born and raised in a foreign country. It is now quite common for American students studying an L2 to be taught by a fellow American citizen who was born in a foreign country.

Cause for Concern

Although this increase in the number of foreign teachers may serve to both alleviate the shortage of L2 teachers in the United States and to contribute to the internationalization of American classrooms, there is growing concern that many of these teachers may not be adequately prepared to teach in American schools. Amengual-Pizarro (2007) and Hutchinson and Jazzar (2007) reported that international teachers face a variety of unique challenges ranging from culture shock and communication gaps to differing understandings of assessment and student-teacher relations. More specific to L2 teaching, Chambers (2007) demonstrated how foreign-born L2 teachers with little exposure to schools in the host country can struggle to adjust to the behavior of their students and the teaching expectations. Similar concerns have been raised with respect to foreign teachers at the post-secondary level. McCalman (2007) questioned whether international faculty are equipped to work with university students and argued that it is essential to the success of foreign instructors to develop teaching beliefs that are compatible with those of the host country.

International L2 teachers have a great deal to offer L2 programs. They help fill vacant positions, bring with them native fluency in the language of instruction, have access to authentic cultural resources, and offer unique insights into the L2 culture. In light of all of the strengths that they bring to the classroom, more

needs to be done to support them in their transition to American classrooms. In order to provide such support L2 methodology instructors and individuals who oversee L2 programs need to have a better understanding of how the teaching beliefs of international L2 teachers differ in comparison with their American-born peers. Understanding the beliefs of international L2 teachers is important given that the beliefs of teachers have been found to relate to their classroom practices (Richardson, Anders, Tidwell & Lloyd, 1991). Teacher beliefs about L2 teaching and learning are also believed to be dynamic and malleable (Barcelos & Kalaja, 2003). It could thus, be hypothesized that professional development (PD) opportunities may modify teaching beliefs that are incompatible with effective L2 instruction in the United States. While researchers have investigated the challenges faced by international teachers (Amengual-Pizarro, 2007; Chalupa & Lair, 2000; Hutchinson & Jazzar, 2007), little research has focused on the teaching beliefs of international L2 teachers working in the United States. Hoping to fill this void in the related research, a study was conducted that compared the beliefs of both international and domestic L2 teachers. The purpose of this study was to investigate differences that may be contributing to the struggles of international¹ L2 teachers and to better understand how these valuable resources can be further supported in their transition to American L2 classrooms.

Method

Participants

A diverse group of 222 L2 teachers employed by six different school districts in the southeastern United States completed a survey. While the majority of these teachers taught Spanish (63%), teachers of French, German, Chinese, Japanese, Latin, and Portuguese also participated. Of the 222 teachers, 47 were immersion teachers, and the remaining 175 were traditional L2 teachers². High school teachers accounted for 117 of the teacher-participants and 105 teachers taught

at the elementary or middle school level. The teachers represented 7 distinct regions of origin and had varying degrees of experience. One hundred and thirty-six were born and raised in the United States, and the remaining teachers came from Latin America (47), Europe (14), the Caribbean (13), Asia (7), Africa (4), and Canada (1). One hundred teachers had less than five years of teaching experience, 43 had between five and ten years of experience, and 79 had more than ten years of experience. Approximately 85% of the teachers were female, 15% were male, and slightly more than one quarter of the teachers (27%) had not yet completed an L2 teacher education program.

From the 222 teachers who completed the survey, a volunteer sample of 14 L2 teachers participated in follow-up interviews. To ensure that the interests and perspectives of all groups of L2 teachers represented in the quantitative phase of the study were also represented in the qualitative phase, teachers with varying degrees of experience, teachers from diverse origins, teachers of different languages, and teachers from both immersion and traditional L2 programs were selected (see Table 1).

Table 1: Participating Teacher Demographics

Teacher	Language Taught	L2 Program	Level of Instruction	Origin	Years in USA	L2 Training	Years Exp.	Sex
1	Spanish	Traditional	K-5	Honduras	6	No	4	Male
2	French	Traditional	Secondary	Cameroon	10	Yes	10	Female
3	German	Traditional	Secondary	USA	NA	Yes	15	Female
4	Spanish	Traditional	Secondary	USA	NA	No	3	Female
5	Chinese	Immersion	Elementary	Taiwan	2	No	18	Female
6	French	Immersion	Elementary	Ivory Coast	15	Yes	6	Female
7	Chinese	Immersion	Elementary	China	15	Yes	2	Female
8	Japanese	Immersion	Elementary	Japan	8	Yes	5	Female
9	Spanish	Traditional	Secondary	USA	NA	Yes	12	Female
10	Spanish	Traditional	Secondary	USA	NA	Yes	2	Male
11	Spanish	Traditional	Secondary	USA	NA	Yes	17	Female
12	French	Traditional	Secondary	USA	NA	Yes	17	Female
13	French	Traditional	Middle	USA	NA	Yes	38	Female
14	French	Traditional	Secondary	France	13	No	1	Female

In addition to the L2 teacher-participants, seven L2 supervisors were invited to participate in the interviews (see Table 2). Supervisors included five L2 specialists who oversee L2 education in the participating school districts and two principals of immersion schools.

Table 2: Participating Supervisor Demographics

Supervisor	Title	Number of Teachers Supervised	Former L2 Teacher	Years Experience	Home Origin
1	World Language Coordinator (K-12)	86	Yes	5	USA
2	World Language Specialist (9-12)	220	Yes	4	USA
3	Director of World Languages	75	Yes	15	USA
4	Foreign Language Program Specialist	130	Yes	6	USA
5	Principal	14	No	13	USA
6	World Language Specialist (K-5)	55	Yes	3	USA
7	Principal	70	No	25	USA

Procedure

The questionnaire was administered electronically in the fall of 2009. To facilitate comprehension the survey was first piloted on a group of L2 teachers whose first language is not English. The teachers were asked to provide feedback with respect to the items that they found challenging to understand. Subsequent revisions were made to the wording of some survey items. A copy of the complete survey is provided in Appendix A. In the spring of 2010, following the analysis of the survey data, qualitative data were gathered from L2 teachers and L2 supervisors by means of semi-structured interviews.

Measures

Quantitative data were collected using an adaptation of the questionnaire used by Bell (2005) to explore the beliefs of approximately 500 experienced L2 teachers about attitudes and behaviors associated with effective L2 teaching. The interview protocol included open-ended items focusing on key aspects of L2 teaching.

Survey

The first section of the survey sought background information about the teacher-participants (See Appendix A). In the second section teachers were asked to indicate the extent to which they believe a variety of behaviors and beliefs contribute to effective L2 teaching. Of the 80 items listed in Bell's questionnaire, only the 44 items agreed upon by approximately 500 experienced L2 teachers as being associated with effective L2 teaching were used in the survey. The items were organized under five subscales. Internal consistency estimates (i.e., coefficient *alpha*) reflecting reliability for the total scale, $r_{xx} = .84$, and each scale (see below) were high.

The first subscale (Language and Culture: $r_{xx} = .83$) contained nine items that relate to the use of the L2 in the L2 classroom and the integration of the L2 culture into instruction. In other words, the researchers wanted to know how important the teachers believe it is to speak consistently in the L2 during instruction and to expose the students to aspects of the L2 culture. The second subscale (Teaching Strategies: $r_{xx} = .80$) consisted of eight items and targeted teacher beliefs about the use of a variety of teaching strategies, such as small group work, the use of technology, and physical movement. The third subscale (Individual Differences: $r_{xx} = .85$) contained five items and addressed individual differences, such as interests and learning strategies. The fourth subscale (Assessment and Grammar: $r_{xx} = .82$) contained six items and investigated teachers' assessment practices

and the extent to which they emphasized accuracy and the instruction of grammar. The fifth and final subscale (Second Language Acquisition Theory: $r_{xx} = .61$) contained 10 items and explored teachers' beliefs related to L2 acquisition theory. This subscale measured teacher beliefs related to the correction of student errors and the importance of reducing anxiety in the classroom and making language learning meaningful.

Interviews

Each of the 21 participants was interviewed individually by the same researcher. During the interviews teacher-participants were asked to describe their experiences as L2 teachers. They were also asked what challenges they faced in their classrooms, if they noticed any differences in the challenges faced by different groups of L2 teachers, and in what areas they feel that they personally could use additional support. In the case of L2 supervisors, they were asked what challenges they believe are faced by L2 teachers, what unexpected difficulties these teachers encounter in their classrooms, if they noticed any differences in the challenges experienced by different groups of L2 teachers, and in what areas they feel many L2 teachers could use additional support. These questions were based on the seminal work of Borg that emphasized the influence of context and classroom realities on teacher beliefs (see Borg, 2003) and were intended to identify possible differences in teacher beliefs that were not detected in the survey.

Data Analysis

A series of *t*-tests was conducted to evaluate differences in beliefs between domestic and international L2 teachers with respect to each of the subscales in the survey. In all cases, the conventional level of .05 was used to evaluate statistical significance of observed differences and Cohen's *d* effect sizes (Cohen, 1988) as indicators of the practical significance of the observed differences.

In the summer of 2010 the data provided by the interviews were analyzed. The researchers followed qualitative data analysis procedures outlined by Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw (1995) that included close reading, open and focused coding of interviews, and initial and integrative memo writing. In coding the data, the researchers read interview transcripts one line at a time using the comment function in Microsoft Word to take notes.

Results

Surveys

Means and standard deviations reflecting perceptions of critical areas of effective L2 teaching for international and domestic teachers are presented in Table 3. Differences were not statistically significant for Language and Culture, Teaching Strategies, Individual Differences, and Assessment and Grammar (see Table 3). Perceptions regarding Second Language Acquisition Theory were statistically higher ($p < .05$) for teachers born in the United States. Effect sizes for all comparisons reflected no practical differences for teachers born inside or outside of the United States.

Table 3: Comparison of Beliefs of Foreign Language Teachers with Different Birth Origin

Area of Belief	International Birth		Domestic Birth		Observed t	Effect Size
	M	SD	M	SD		
Language and Culture	4.5	0.5	4.4	0.3	0.62	.05
Teaching Strategies	4.3	0.5	4.3	0.4	0.12	.02
Individual Differences	4.5	0.5	4.5	0.4	0.20	.02
Assessment and Grammar	3.7	0.3	3.6	0.3	1.27	.17
Second Language Acquisition Theory	3.7	0.3	3.8	0.3	-2.46*	.38

Note. 1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree. Effect Size = $|M_1 - M_2| / SD_1$

* $p < 0.05$

Pertaining to the first subscale (Language and Culture), the international and domestic L2 teachers expressed the belief that it is important for both L2 teachers and their students to speak in the target language. They also indicated agreement that L2 teachers should integrate L2 culture into instruction. Both groups also expressed very similar beliefs with respect to the second (Teaching Strategies) and third (Individual Differences) subscales. The teachers were in agreement that it is necessary to expose L2 learners to a variety of teaching strategies that are related to core content material and that involve the use of group work and technology. They also indicated the importance of aligning teaching strategies with the individual needs and interests of their students and the need to expose L2 learners to a variety of different learning strategies. The international and domestic L2 teachers also had very similar beliefs with respect to the fourth subscale (Assessment and Grammar)³. They agreed that L2 teachers should not focus on accuracy and grammar at the expense of student oral proficiency and participation.

Only in regard to the fifth subscale (Second Language Acquisition Theory)⁴ was a significant difference reported between the two groups. The international teachers believed less strongly than did their domestic counterparts in some of the theoretical aspects of L2 teaching, such as the need to reduce anxiety in the L2 classroom, the need to have students both listen to and speak the L2, and the importance of not overly correcting student errors.

Interviews

During the analysis of the qualitative data gathered from the L2 teachers and their supervisors, five main themes emerged. The 14 teachers and seven supervisors frequently mentioned differing beliefs between international and domestic L2 teachers with respect to expectations for student behavior, classroom management, instructional methods, parental involvement, and student promotion and assessment.

Behavioral expectations

The data collected in the interviews suggest that international L2 teachers tend to have higher behavioral expectations of their students than do their domestic counterparts. The data also suggest that these higher expectations are often not being met by students. Six of the seven international teachers interviewed mentioned that poor student behavior was an issue in their L2 classrooms. Behavioral issues were reported to involve students speaking out of turn, not completing homework, neglecting to pay attention, and failing to stay on task. Even the lone foreign-born teacher who did not report behavioral problems mentioned that she had to initially adjust her beliefs with respect to how students should behave in her American L2 classroom. In comparison, only two of the seven American-born teachers commented on their students' poor behavior.

Cultural differences were thought to be at the root of this mismatch between international L2 teacher expectations and American student behavior. The general message conveyed by several participants is that both teachers and education, in general, are more valued and respected in other countries than they are in the United States. As a result, when teachers from these countries come to teach in the United States they are initially bewildered by the lack of respect they receive and the poor behavior of their students. Their beliefs about how students should behave in school do not align with the beliefs and expectations of their American students. According to Teacher#5, a Chinese immersion teacher from Taiwan, these cultural differences render student behavior problems particularly difficult for teachers from China:

It would be easier for you to teach in China because the social status of teacher is different than the status here. We feel we are high level blue collar workers here. But in China, teachers represent knowledge, and in the Oriental culture we respect knowledge. Whatever the teacher says, you follow, you listen (Teacher#5).

Comments from the principal of an immersion school with both Japanese and Chinese L2 programs (Supervisor#7) add credence to the notion that cultural differences experienced by teachers from Asia make behavior management in U.S. schools extremely challenging. "I would say the difference is most profound for teachers coming from Asia where the expectation and the reality is that students respect the teachers and essentially do what they are asked to do and also have a very strong work ethic."

Similar cultural differences impacting upon student behavior were mentioned by teachers from Africa. Teacher#2, an international high school French teacher, who also taught English in Cameroon, stated that she never experienced the behavioral problems in her

homeland that she has encountered in the United States. She explained that education is costly in Cameroon and not all students have the opportunity to attend school. She went on to say that those who do attend are, as a result, more willing and ready to pay attention.

Having not encountered such behavioral problems in their native lands, international L2 teachers can be ill-prepared to deal with them when they arrive in the United States. This certainly seemed to be the case with the French-teacher from Cameroon. “Discipline was not an issue and it was not something that needed to be discussed in teacher preparation programs in my country. You just walked in and the students stood up and said ‘bonjour Madame’, and sat themselves down” (Teacher#2).

Classroom management

Given the attention paid to student behavior during the interviews, it is of little surprise that teacher beliefs related to classroom management represent another theme that emerged during analysis of the qualitative data. While acknowledging that accounts from teachers of their own effective teaching are highly subjective, it is still interesting to note that the L2 teachers who reported to have strong classroom management skills all emphasized the importance of establishing and enforcing classroom rules at the beginning of the semester. Once the rules were in place they could gradually relax them and have more fun with their students. According to Teacher#12, a high school teacher from the United States with 17 years experience, creating a relaxed and enjoyable class for both herself and her students is only possible by getting to know the students and developing a mutual relationship of respect.

On the other hand, several of the international L2 teachers, like Teacher#6 and Teacher#7, had stricter and more rigid beliefs with respect to classroom management. When asked to describe her classroom management Teacher#7 responded, “I want students to

follow my direction. I want you to do something, you do it. I want my classroom to be quiet.” It is also interesting to note that this authoritarian classroom management style, by her own admission, did not seem to be working well in her classroom. When asked in what area she felt she needed PD, Teacher#7 quickly and emphatically responded, “Oh yeah, yeah, classroom management. It is the most important part and also the hardest part for me”.

Based on conversations with L2 supervisors, Teacher#7 is not the only Chinese teacher to struggle with classroom management in her American L2 classroom. According to Supervisor#3, it appears as though cultural differences make classroom management an especially daunting task for L2 teachers from China. She commented, “It is definitely a bigger deal with Chinese teachers because they are used to just standing there lecturing and nobody moves a muscle and obviously we don’t work that way. So, they have struggled big time with classroom management” (Supervisor#3). Her comments were further supported by Supervisor#1 when describing a new Chinese language program established within her school district. “Some of our foreign-born teachers, that have almost no awareness of U.S. schools, as compared to some of the Chinese schools, were pretty disastrous with classroom management” (Supervisor#1).

While Teacher#12 believed that teachers must get to know their students in order to establish a positive classroom environment, the international L2 teachers’ beliefs about classroom management seemed to prevent them from establishing a relationship with their students. Having grown accustomed to teaching French to American students over the past 10 years, Teacher#2 reflected on her experience teaching English in Africa, “The room was nice and quiet, but ...I really didn’t get to know my students in Cameroon. They were just people sitting in my classroom.”

Comments from L2 supervisors confirmed that many international L2 teachers struggle to adopt a more relaxed classroom atmosphere that allows them to get to know their students. Supervi-

sor#1, who had developed a new Chinese language program, provided the following insight shortly after observing a new L2 teacher from China:

She can't be goofy with them. She can't relax with them. She can't ask them about their private lives. But that really is a part of U.S. education that we get to know the kids. And I think she's expecting respect at a distance, rather than anything that approaches knowing the students (Supervisor#1).

While also emphasizing the need to build relationships with her students, another American-born L2 teacher, who was the 2009 state Teacher of the Year, asserted that the key to her positive classroom management is keeping students actively involved in the lesson. "I don't have a lot of behavior problems because my kids are so engaged in what's going on. I mean they have to be so involved that they don't have a chance to get bored and to act out" (Teacher#9).

Instructional methods

The student-centered approach described by Teacher#9 in which students were "so engaged" lies in sharp contrast to the description two paragraphs earlier of Teacher#2's "nice and quiet" classroom in Cameroon. The traditional, teacher-centered beliefs prevalent in many other countries were found to influence the teaching methodology of teachers in the United States who originate from such countries. Consider the following statement from Teacher#6, a French immersion teacher from the Ivory Coast:

When I was in school there wasn't any game involved in the instruction. There wasn't a lot of moving involved in instruction. We would sit down from the beginning until the end and then when instruction was over, you closed your notebook and go to recess. I think I apply a little bit of that here

(Teacher#6).

All but one L2 supervisor mentioned that foreign-born and educated L2 teachers tend to have more teacher-centered beliefs that involve relying heavily on the textbook, lecturing for long periods of time, and focusing on grammar and accuracy, all of which according to Supervisor#6 “is less American-friendly”. Supervisor#2, who oversees L2 instruction in one of the country’s largest school districts, reported that cultural differences with respect to the status of teachers and the value placed on education were at the root of these teacher-centered beliefs held by many international L2 teachers:

Some teachers who came from countries where education was valued highly and it was a privilege to be able to be formally educated are used to educational environments where the teacher lectures for the entire class period, and American students do not respond to this type of setting so...We’ve found that some of these teachers are not willing to bend on their expectations (Supervisor#2).

The notion of international teachers “not willing to bend” was mentioned on more than one occasion by different L2 teachers and L2 supervisors. The principal of an immersion school who supervises 14 teachers from Greece offered an interesting perspective on why some international L2 teachers seem resistant to change. She explained that her Greek teachers are very autonomous and accustomed to receiving great respect. She felt they would be insulted by the suggestion to observe other teachers in order to improve their instruction.

As made evident in the following quote from Supervisor#3, an unwillingness to accept feedback and to modify one’s teaching approach can have harmful effects on L2 programs: “I have one French teacher from the Ivory Coast...He’s not open to suggestions,

and he's killing the French program at two different schools... He thinks he is doing just fine and is not willing to do anything to change" (Supervisor#3).

Parental involvement

In the interviews, international and domestic L2 teachers also reported differing beliefs with respect to parental involvement. The differences were once again most stark between Asian and American-born teachers. The teachers from Asia stressed the pressure Asian parents place on their children to excel in school. "The family only has one kid ... and greatest population in China in the world. So not everyone has good future, if you don't have good education. So daddy and mama push kids" (Teacher#7). In the United States, however, the two Chinese teachers (Teacher#5 and Teacher#7) and one Japanese teacher (Teacher#8) all believed the onus for student success is not placed on the student, but rather on the teacher. Teacher#5, a Chinese immersion teacher with experience teaching English in China, felt that U.S. parents place blame on the teacher and fail to hold their children responsible for their academic success. She commented:

And this is the challenge I can't understand, when a child fail one little quiz, the reaction from the families is coming to the teaching [sic] to say I didn't receive my vocabulary list. I have not seen this kind of reaction in China (Teacher#5).

This sentiment was shared by the principal of an immersion school with a Chinese language program. Having over 25 years of experience as an immersion principal, Supervisor#7 acknowledged that her international teachers are often unprepared to deal with American parents. She added, "There's a sharp difference between, at

least how our international teachers view it, between the way parents behave towards teachers in other countries and the way they behave towards teachers here in the United States”.

The teachers from China also reported to have differing beliefs from their American colleagues when it comes to communication with parents. Supervisor#1, who spent time studying Chinese language programs in China, explained that teachers in China would “never” call the parent of a student because, “It looks like you can’t handle the students”. She acknowledged that this cultural difference raised a dilemma when teaching in U.S. schools. “But in the U.S. we’re saying, call the parents, call the parents. You’re the teacher, you call the parents, and they don’t want to do that” (Supervisor#1).

It is interesting to note that the domestic L2 teachers who professed to have strong classroom management skills all emphasized the importance of keeping in frequent contact with parents. An American-born Department Head with 17 years experience teaching Spanish stated in a matter-of-fact manner, “Well, I can tell you right now, they don't act up in my class. I've got 1-800 your mama” (Teacher#11).

Student promotion and assessment

A final interesting difference between the beliefs of international L2 teachers and their domestic peers that surfaced during interviews pertained to educational practices in American schools with respect to how students are promoted to the next grade level and how they are assessed by teachers. When asked what unexpected challenges they faced as L2 teachers, being unfamiliar with the student promotion system was a common topic discussed by international L2 teachers. When they initially started teaching in the United States both French teachers from Africa (Teacher#2 and Teacher#6) along with a teacher from China (Teacher#7) believed all of their students were working at the appropriate grade level. Being accustomed to students in their homelands moving to the next grade level

when they had reached the appropriate level of academic achievement, they did not initially realize that there were students in their American L2 classrooms who were not all reading or writing at the same grade level. A conversation with her Department Head about a struggling student in her French class exemplifies how the initial beliefs of Teacher#2 with respect to student promotion did not align with current practices in American schools. “What do you mean reading level? This is 7th grade”. She explained to me that not everyone in the 7th grade reads at the 7th grade level, and my question to her was, ‘Why are they in the 7th grade?’” Having had little prior experience with students who were not performing at the appropriate grade level, these same teachers struggled to differentiate their instruction. When asked in what area she would like to receive additional training, Teacher#2 responded, “The concept of differentiation is pretty new to me. Where I’m from you had a program and that is what you taught. Your students just cope or they sink” (Teacher#2).

Both teachers from Africa also reported to struggle with what they believe to be inflated grading practices in the U.S. Being used to a more demanding assessment policy in Africa, these teachers met with resistance from students, parents, and administrators when they continued to grade with very high expectations in the United States. Teacher#2 explained, “Where I’m from 18 out of 20 was as far as you get... Even the world’s greatest genius didn’t get 20 out of 20.” The argument that international L2 teachers have more demanding and rigorous beliefs in regard to assessment was further bolstered by the following comment from Supervisor#2: “They [international L2 teachers] tend to be very enthusiastic about their language ... so they really want the student to nail the spelling and the grammar perfectly” (Supervisor#2).

Discussion

Although the survey results indicated that participating teachers reported similar opinions pertaining to Language and Culture, Teaching Strategies, Individual Differences, and Assessment and Grammar, interviews revealed differing beliefs between international and domestic L2 teachers. During the interview process, both L2 teachers and L2 supervisors reported international L2 teachers have more traditional and teacher-centered beliefs pertaining to teaching strategies they use in their classrooms. Furthermore, two of the six foreign-born L2 teachers freely acknowledged in the interviews that their beliefs regarding individual differences and differentiation did not initially align with expectations in American classrooms. The previously mentioned accounts of international L2 teachers being accustomed to more demanding grading practices in their native lands also suggest that their beliefs pertaining to assessment and grammar may be different from those of their American-born counterparts.

The interviews allowed for a more detailed analysis of subgroups of international teachers than was possible in the quantitative analysis. As documented above, there is little mention in the interviews of international L2 teachers from Europe, Latin America, or North America when discussing differing beliefs between international and domestic L2 teachers. The fact that these teachers represent 75 of the 86 international teachers involved in the study may explain why few differences were found between international and domestic L2 teachers in the quantitative analysis. Comments made by L2 teachers and L2 supervisors during the interview process suggest that differing beliefs between international and domestic teachers with respect to teaching strategies, individual differences, and assessment and grammar are more evident when comparing domestic L2 teachers with international L2 teachers from China and Africa. Being accustomed to great respect afforded to teachers, high value attached to education, more student accountability, and tradi-

tional approaches to teaching, the L2 teachers from China, in particular, appear to struggle more than their international peers from other regions in their transition to American L2 classrooms.

In addition to allowing for a more detailed and focused analysis of sub-groups of international L2 teachers, the interviews shed light on interesting differences that were not targeted in the survey between international and domestic L2 teachers related to classroom management beliefs. Cultural differences in regard to the value of education and the respect afforded to teachers, once again, appeared to be at the root of these differing beliefs. Experienced, American-born teachers who claimed to have established a positive classroom management system in their L2 classrooms believe teachers need to get to know their students and to develop a relationship of mutual respect and understanding. They stressed the importance of adopting a student-centered approach to teaching that got all students actively involved in the instruction, and they underscored the behavioral benefits of keeping in frequent contact with parents. It is noteworthy that these three critical elements of effective classroom management were the same three areas where many international L2 teachers were reported to struggle.

Classroom management issues in L2 classrooms seem to be particularly problematic among international teachers from China. This finding was supported by all six of the seven supervisors who have experience overseeing a Chinese L2 program. Take for example the comments of Supervisor#3, "...certainly the management piece has been a bigger deal with the Chinese teachers we have had than with the Latin American teachers." Dramatic cultural differences between eastern and western cultures with respect to parental involvement, teaching methodology, and student-teacher relations made the transition to U.S. schools extremely challenging for many teachers from China.

Implications for Research and Practice

While the results of the study have illustrated some of the consequences of extreme cultural differences for international L2 teachers, L2 students may also be affected. Studies have demonstrated that when teacher expectations do not align with those of their students the consequence can be unmotivated students who decide to drop L2 studies from their schedules (Kern, 1995; Schulz, 1996). Teacher#7 exemplifies such a mismatch between student and teacher expectations. While this teacher from China held an authoritarian approach to classroom management, she freely admitted that her students did not respond well to her approach and that she needed help with classroom management.

During the interviews a number of recommendations were proposed by L2 teachers and their supervisors to ease the transition of international L2 teachers to American classrooms. The two international teachers who were not experiencing classroom management problems all emphasized the importance of time in adapting their teaching behaviors to better align with the needs of their American students. While school districts may have little control over the amount of time international L2 teachers have spent living in the United States prior to entering the classroom, they can attempt to increase the exposure these teachers have to other American L2 classrooms. Greater exposure to U.S. schools via the observation of other L2 teachers was mentioned by six of the seven supervisors and by two of the international L2 teachers as a means to familiarize foreign-born teachers with teaching strategies that meet the needs of students in American L2 classrooms. Supervisor#1, however, believed that in addition to observing another L2 teacher teach, international L2 teachers need to have someone sit down with them and explain exactly why a specific strategy was used or a certain decision was made. Due to the time such individualized attention would require of administrators and mentoring teachers, this same

supervisor recommended the creation of instructional videos as a more realistic means of supporting international L2 teachers.

Building on the suggestion of observing other L2 teachers, L2 supervisors also stressed that international L2 teachers would benefit from greater collaboration and networking with American L2 teachers in order to broaden their perspective of what constitutes effective L2 teaching beyond what they experienced in their native land. Supervisor#2 made the following remark:

I have found that some of the international teachers who do attend [PD] stay with each other and are not comfortable networking with some of the other more experienced teachers who are American-born or who have been teaching long enough in the US and are adaptable and flexible with students (Supervisor#2).

This comment from Supervisor#2 leads to another frequent suggestion that came from international L2 teachers themselves. Several felt that they are, or were in need, of further PD when they started teaching. Teacher#2, who came to the United States ten years ago from Cameroon, felt that she could have benefitted from further training with respect to differentiation and assessment. She also wished that she had been better prepared for what to expect when she first started teaching. The need for greater PD for international L2 teachers was supported by Supervisor#1. She stressed that while there is PD available to international L2 teachers, it is often not specific to their challenges, and as a result is not effective. “You need personalized professional development that’s just for your specific problem, because if someone is going to teach you how to use technology, and you can’t even get kids to listen, it doesn’t matter if you use technology” (Supervisor#1).

Supervisors acknowledged that they too played a role in helping international L2 teachers adjust to teaching in the United States. Supervisor#7 mentioned that she would like to do more informal

observations of her international L2 teachers. She stated that while all her teachers must be formally observed three times per year, these pre-arranged observations were less informative than unannounced and informal “walk-thrus”. Supervisor#1 and Supervisor#7 also emphasized the need for administrative support in preparing international L2 teachers to work with American parents.

As made apparent in this study, PD and teacher training must do more than inform international L2 teachers about effective pedagogy. The survey results demonstrated that the participating international teachers are familiar with current beliefs in regard to best practices in L2 classrooms. What they need is to be shown how to put their knowledge and their beliefs into practice. To better meet the needs of their international L2 teachers and L2 teacher-candidates, teacher workshops and training programs should adopt a more hands-on and practical approach. In addition to informing international L2 teachers of current theories and methods of L2 teaching, PD should provide opportunities to experience first-hand the implementation of these theories and methods. Workshops and teacher training also need to incorporate further clinical experiences in which international L2 teachers get the chance to apply and practice what they have learned.

Limitations

There are limitations to consider when interpreting the results of the study. The study considers the international teacher-participants as one homogenous group, when in fact there are a number of differences among the international teachers that could potentially influence their beliefs. International L2 teachers at immersion schools, for example, may have different teaching-related beliefs than their international counterparts working in traditional L2 programs. Similarly, international L2 teachers working in elementary schools may have different beliefs from their international peers

teaching in high schools. In the future, researchers should build upon the findings of this research by examining for differing beliefs among specific groups of international L2 teachers. For example, based on the results of this study, an investigation comparing the beliefs of international L2 teachers from Asia or Africa with the beliefs of colleagues from Europe or Latin America may reveal interesting results.

Treating the international L2 teachers as one homogenous group also prevented the researchers from making more meaningful comparisons between the quantitative and qualitative data. While the interview data suggested differences in beliefs between Asian L2 teachers and their American-born L2 colleagues, the quantitative analysis was unable to make such a comparison. The small number of Asian teachers who completed the survey did not allow for meaningful comparisons to be made between the Asian and American-born L2 teachers. As Chinese L2 programs continue to grow in the United States (see Rhodes & Pufahl, 2009), future related research should have greater opportunity to include more international L2 teachers from China and therefore make greater comparisons between Chinese and American-born L2 teachers.

Conclusion

Despite the above-mentioned limitations, the findings of this study are important and provide direction for future research. While it would be unfair and inaccurate to state that all international L2 teachers experience greater difficulties in their L2 classrooms than do their American-born peers, the results of this study help to confirm what many in the L2 education community instinctively already know. Many foreign-born L2 teachers face unique challenges in American L2 classrooms that can have a negative impact on instruction. Helping to fill a void in related research, the results of this unique study suggest that, when viewed as a homogenous group,

international L2 teachers appear to espouse many of the same fundamental beliefs related to L2 teaching as do their American-born peers. That being said, extreme cultural differences related to teaching methodology, parental involvement, and student-teacher relations may result in differing beliefs among some international L2 teachers that lead to problems with classroom management. Qualitative data suggest that these problems are most evident among L2 teachers originating from China, where expectations related to education and parenting are quite different from those commonly held in the United States. In light of a recent report by the Center for Applied Linguistics (Rhodes & Pufahl, 2009) demonstrating significant growth in student enrollment in Chinese L2 programs in the United States, L2 supervisors and L2 stakeholders need to take notice of the study's findings. As Chinese language programs continue to grow, so too will the need to draw teachers from China to teach in the United States. Given the extent of the cultural differences between China and the United States, these teachers may experience many of the challenges described by the Chinese L2 teachers in this study.

International L2 teachers, including those from China, offer a wealth of benefits to American L2 classrooms. If we hope to take advantage of all that they have to offer, we must provide them with additional support in their transition to American L2 classrooms. Second language supervisors and L2 methodology instructors need to maximize the amount of exposure international L2 teachers have to L2 classrooms taught by American-born teachers and offer more practical, hands-on PD opportunities tailored to the challenges of the growing number of international L2 teachers in the United States. Furthermore, principals of schools with international L2 teachers need to offer greater administrative support and assistance to facilitate their transition to U.S. schools.

Notes.

¹ For the purposes of this study teachers were considered international if they were born and educated in a foreign country.

² Traditional L2 teachers teach L2 skills to K-12 students during 60-90 minute periods three to five times per week.

³ Responses on three of the six items were reversed to reflect similar qualitative perspectives across all items in the subscale.

⁴ Responses on ten of the sixteen items were reversed to reflect similar qualitative perspectives across all items in the subscale.

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Appendix A
Foreign Language Teacher Belief Survey

Instructions: Please take your time to complete all sections to the best of your ability.

Section A: Background Information

Please provide the following information:

1. What is your gender?
 Male Female

2. What foreign language do you teach now or plan to teach in the future? (Check all that apply.)
 Spanish French German Chinese Japanese Latin Other

3. In what type of school setting do you teach?
 K-8 high school

4. In what type of foreign language program do you currently teach?
 Traditional (K-12) Dual Language/Immersion

5. For how many years have you been teaching a foreign language in the United States?
 less than 5 years 5-10 years more than 10 years

6. Have you ever completed a foreign language teacher training program?
 Yes No

7. In what country/area were you born?
 USA
 Canada
 Europe
 the Caribbean
 Asia
 Africa
 Latin America (Mexico, Central or South America)
 Other

8. If you were born outside of the United States, at what age did you come to this country?
 0-5 years old
 6-10 years old
 11-20 years old
 21-30 years old

_____ over 30 years old

Section B: Teacher Behaviors

Directions: Using the scale below, indicate your perceptions of the extent to which the following behaviors contribute to effective foreign language teaching. Click the response that best represents your answer.

SD=Strongly Disagree D=Disagree N=Neutral A=Agree SA=Strongly Agree

LANGUAGE & CULTURE

TL = Target Language / Foreign Language

The effective foreign language teacher

- | | |
|--|--------------------|
| 1. Is involved in and enthusiastic about the TL and the TL culture. | <i>SD D N A SA</i> |
| 2. Has good oral and written skills in the TL. | <i>SD D N A SA</i> |
| 3. Teaches familiar expressions (e.g., It's raining cats and dogs) to help learners communicate successfully in the TL. | <i>SD D N A SA</i> |
| 4. Often uses authentic materials (e.g., maps, pictures, clothing, food) to teach about the TL and culture. | <i>SD D N A SA</i> |
| 5. Uses the TL as the main language of communication in the classroom. | <i>SD D N A SA</i> |
| 6. Provides opportunities for students to use the TL in and outside of school. | <i>SD D N A SA</i> |
| 7. Encourages foreign language learners to speak in the TL from the first day of instruction. | <i>SD D N A SA</i> |
| 8. Gives examples of cultural differences between the student's first language and the target language. | <i>SD D N A SA</i> |
| 9. Selects materials that present viewpoints that are unique to the foreign language and its cultures (e.g., a text that shows how people greet each other differently in the target culture). | <i>SD D N A SA</i> |
-

TEACHING STRATEGIES

TL = Target Language / Foreign Language

The effective foreign language teacher

- | | |
|---|--------------------|
| 1. Uses small groups so that more students are actively involved | <i>SD D N A SA</i> |
| 2. Gives learners a time limit to complete small group activities | <i>SD D N A SA</i> |
| 3. Gives learners tasks to complete (e.g., labeling a picture, filling in blanks) while reading or listening in the TL. | <i>SD D N A SA</i> |
| 4. Provides opportunities for students to learn more about other | <i>SD D N A SA</i> |

subjects (e.g., math, science, social studies) in the foreign language classroom.	
5. Has students take part in role-plays from the beginning of TL instruction.	SD D N A SA
6. Asks students to find out unknown information from a classmate or another source.	SD D N A SA
7. Has students act out commands or do other physical activities to practice listening comprehension in the TL.	SD D N A SA
8. Uses computers (e.g., computer-based exercises, e-mail, Internet resources).	SD D N A SA

INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES

TL = Target Language / Foreign Language

The effective foreign language teacher

1. Plans activities to meet the needs of foreign language students with a variety of interests.	SD D N A SA
2. Plans different teaching strategies and activities depending on the learners' age.	SD D N A SA
3. Encourages students to explain why they are learning the TL and how they learn best.	SD D N A SA
4. Teaches foreign language students to use various strategies to improve their vocabulary learning (e.g., creating a mental picture of the word, memory aides).	SD D N A SA
5. Teaches foreign language students to use various learning strategies (e.g., self-evaluation, repetition, draw a picture)	SD D N A SA

ASSESSMENT AND GRAMMAR

TL = Target Language / Foreign Language

The effective foreign language teacher

1. Understands the basics of linguistic analysis (phonology, syntax) as they apply to the TL.	SD D N A SA
2. Uses activities and assignments that draw learners' attention to grammatical points.	SD D N A SA
3. Bases at least part of students' grades on completion of homework.	SD D N A SA
4. Grades written assignments mainly on the amount of errors in grammar.	SD D N A SA

- | | | | | | |
|---|-----------|----------|----------|----------|-----------|
| 5. Grades spoken language mainly on the amount of errors in grammar. | <i>SD</i> | <i>D</i> | <i>N</i> | <i>A</i> | <i>SA</i> |
| 6. Bases at least some part of students' grades on how well and how often they speak in the TL. | <i>SD</i> | <i>D</i> | <i>N</i> | <i>A</i> | <i>SA</i> |

Section C: Second Language Theory

Directions: Using the scale below, indicate your level of agreement with each of the following statements. Click the response that best represents your answer.

SD=Strongly Disagree D=Disagree N=Neutral A=Agree SA=Strongly Agree

- | | | | | | |
|--|-----------|----------|----------|----------|-----------|
| 1. Foreign language learners should speak with native speakers of the TL as often as possible. | <i>SD</i> | <i>D</i> | <i>N</i> | <i>A</i> | <i>SA</i> |
| 2. An understanding of theories of second language acquisition helps foreign language teachers teach better. | <i>SD</i> | <i>D</i> | <i>N</i> | <i>A</i> | <i>SA</i> |
| 3. Foreign language learners do not always learn grammatical points by means of formal instruction. | <i>SD</i> | <i>D</i> | <i>N</i> | <i>A</i> | <i>SA</i> |
| 4. Using small group activities helps to make students less nervous in the classroom. | <i>SD</i> | <i>D</i> | <i>N</i> | <i>A</i> | <i>SA</i> |
| 5. Activities that focus on the exchange of meaningful information between two speakers are more important than activities that focus on the use of grammar. | <i>SD</i> | <i>D</i> | <i>N</i> | <i>A</i> | <i>SA</i> |
| 6. The more intelligent a person is, the more likely he or she is to learn the TL well. | <i>SD</i> | <i>D</i> | <i>N</i> | <i>A</i> | <i>SA</i> |
| 7. Foreign language teachers must correct most student errors. | <i>SD</i> | <i>D</i> | <i>N</i> | <i>A</i> | <i>SA</i> |

8. Having students work in small groups is likely to result in them learning errors in the TL from each other.	<i>SD</i>	<i>D</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>A</i>	<i>SA</i>
9. It is not good to have beginning foreign language learners speak too much with native speakers because native speakers usually do all of the talking.	<i>SD</i>	<i>D</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>A</i>	<i>SA</i>
10. Foreign language learners can learn to use a foreign language well simply by exposing them to it (i.e., reading in or listening to the language).	<i>SD</i>	<i>D</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>A</i>	<i>SA</i>
11. Exposing learners to written and spoken language that is a little bit above their current level of understanding is necessary for TL learning.	<i>SD</i>	<i>D</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>A</i>	<i>SA</i>
12. Making students speak quickly in the TL improves TL use.	<i>SD</i>	<i>D</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>A</i>	<i>SA</i>
13. Adults learn a foreign language in a way similar to the way they learned their first language.	<i>SD</i>	<i>D</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>A</i>	<i>SA</i>
14. Teaching about the TL culture is not as important as teaching grammar and vocabulary.	<i>SD</i>	<i>D</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>A</i>	<i>SA</i>
15. Native or near-native language skills of the teacher are more important than his or her teaching skills.	<i>SD</i>	<i>D</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>A</i>	<i>SA</i>
16. Learners must understand every word of a spoken message to understand what is being said in the TL.	<i>SD</i>	<i>D</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>A</i>	<i>SA</i>

□