FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHERS’ COGNITIONS AND PRACTICES RELATED TO STUDENT ASSESSMENT

Carolyn Shemwell Kaplan
Dissertation Study (in progress)
Foreign and Second Language Education

Copyright 2014 – Carolyn Shemwell Kaplan. All Rights Reserved
DEFINITION OF TEACHERS’ COGNITION

“The unobservable cognitive dimension of teaching – what teachers know, believe, and think” (Borg, 2003, p. 81).
• Very little of the research on “teacher thinking” has discussed “the assessment dimension of teachers’ work” (Yin, 2010, p. 175).

• “A growing concern in teacher-based assessment…is our inadequate understanding of the means by which teachers make assessment decisions” (Davison, 2004, p. 305).

• “…not enough is known as to what underlies teachers’ decisions to employ certain forms of assessment over others and the perceptions which motivate their ongoing classroom assessment practices” (Inbar-Lourie & Schmidt, 2009, pp. 185-186).
In recent years, researchers have addressed the topic of classroom-based assessment. Many studies focused on English as a Second or Foreign Language outside of U.S. (Inbar-Lourie & Schmidt, 2009; Tang, Leung, Chow, & Wong, 2010; Yin, 2010). Exploring these topics from within the context of a U.S. foreign language classroom could further expand the knowledge base in this area.
• 2013-2014 is an appropriate time to study foreign language teachers’ assessment practices in Ohio, as many teachers are implementing state-mandated SLOs (Student Learning Objectives) for the first time.

• An SLO “is a measurable, long-term academic growth target that a teacher sets at the beginning of the year for all students or for subgroups of students. Student learning objectives demonstrate a teacher’s impact on student learning” (ODE)

**SLO Process**

- Pre-Assessments - Data submitted
- Midpoint Assessments
- Post-Assessments - Data submitted
This study investigates:

• how foreign language teachers’ cognitions affect their planning and classroom practices related to student assessment;

• how foreign language teachers’ cognitions related to student assessment are influenced by their teacher preparation coursework, their previous experiences, and other educational professionals; and

• how foreign language teachers’ cognitions related to student assessment are influenced by the context where they teach.
How do high school French and Spanish teachers in a Midwestern state of the United States approach the assessment of student learning?
Examining Cognition

- What is the assessment literacy (i.e., knowledge) of high school French and Spanish teachers in a Midwestern state of the United States?

- How did high school French and Spanish teachers in a Midwestern state of the United States initially acquire their knowledge and beliefs about student assessment?

- To what extent do these practicing teachers seek to increase their knowledge of assessment once established in their careers?
Examining Practices

• What are French and Spanish teachers in a Midwestern state of the United States intended procedures to assess their students?

• How and how often do high school French and Spanish teachers in a Midwestern state of the United States assess their students in the classroom?

Examining Cognitions AND Practices

• What are the experiential and contextual factors that influence Midwestern high school French and Spanish teachers’ cognitions and practices related to student assessment?
METHODS USED

• Classroom Assessment Literacy Inventory (Mertler, 2005)

• Document Review:
  • School policies related to curriculum/assessment
  • Participants’ unit plans
  • Copies of blank student assessments

• Semi-structured interviews
  • Initial, Mid-year, Final

• Observation of participants’ teaching
  • One class per participant, three cycles throughout school year
  • Field notes collected as part of observations

• Three Stimulated Recall Interviews
  • Once following each cycle of observation
<p>| Practices &amp; Cognitions | What is the assessment literacy (i.e., knowledge) ...? | X | | | | | | | | | | Knowledge | How did French and Spanish teachers initially acquire their knowledge and beliefs about student assessment? | X | X | X | X | X | | | | | To what extent do these teachers seek to increase their knowledge of assessment once established in their careers? | X | X | X | | Practices | What are French and Spanish teachers... intended procedures to assess their students? | | X | X | X | X | | | | | How and how often do high school French and Spanish teachers... assess their students in the classroom? | X | X | X | | X | X | X | | | Practices &amp; Cognitions | What are the experiential and contextual factors that influence...French and Spanish teachers’ cognitions and practices related to student assessment? | | | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Stacy</th>
<th>Phil</th>
<th>Ellen</th>
<th>Becky</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Class/Level Observed</strong></td>
<td>French 3</td>
<td>French 2</td>
<td>Spanish 3</td>
<td>Spanish 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teaching Experience</strong></td>
<td>3 years</td>
<td>13 years</td>
<td>16 years</td>
<td>21 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2013 ODE District Typology</strong></td>
<td>Suburban – Very Low Student Poverty &amp; Large Student Population</td>
<td>Suburban – Very Low Student Poverty &amp; Large Student Population</td>
<td>Urban – High Student Poverty &amp; Average Student Population</td>
<td>Suburban – Very Low Student Poverty &amp; Large Student Population</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ODE School Performance Index Score</strong></td>
<td>B (88.1%)</td>
<td>A (91.8%)</td>
<td>B (82.7%)</td>
<td>A (92.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Status of SLO Process</strong></td>
<td>Practice SLO Required</td>
<td>Required SLO Engaging in “data meetings” (evolved into practice SLO)</td>
<td>No formal SLO/data collection required</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Preliminary Findings

• Participants note they learned how to assess students from:
  • working with veteran K-12 teachers;
  • from their own experience in the field;
  • from professional development in their school district;
  • and from independent research and reading.

• Participants’ practices for assessing students are varied (e.g., the frequency with which they assess students, and the types of tasks they use as assessments).
PRELIMINARY FINDINGS

• Those teachers who were required by their school district to write year-long Student Learning Objective (SLO) documents:
  • are developing and implementing more proficiency-based student assessments; and
  • frequently describe their assessment practices using metrics outlined by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL).
QUESTIONS & FEEDBACK
KAPLAN.169@OSU.EDU
REFERENCES


