

FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF OBSERVATIONAL FEEDBACK

by

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Abstract

Though the subject of recent national attention and various in-depth investigations, the most effective approach to teacher evaluation in the United States is still an issue of debate. The latest research focuses on evaluation of teachers of core content areas like math, science and reading, but evaluation of foreign language teachers and programs receives comparatively little attention in the literature. This study examines issues related to observational feedback particular to the foreign language teaching context using data collected from teachers and administrators in large public school districts in Kansas. Survey data reveals that while public school foreign language teachers are generally satisfied with observational feedback concerning classroom behaviors, such as teacher-student interaction and behavior management, they often report receiving no feedback in the areas of curriculum planning or instructional techniques particular to their content area. Administrators report focusing on preparedness and classroom management during observations. Gaps identified in observational feedback are discussed and changes to observation practices are suggested.

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Acknowledgements

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Dedication

This report is dedicated to my family for encouraging me to pursue my calling, to Dr. Jerry Smartt and the Friends University Spanish faculty for instilling in me a love of language and learning, and to the students, teachers and administrators of St. Francis for emboldening me to perfect my craft.

Introduction

Teacher evaluation procedures are changing rapidly in the United States, due mostly to legislative action that promises financial incentives to states who combine student test scores with observational data. Time limitations and budget cuts, among other obstacles, often hinder building administrators from providing quality and consistent feedback to teachers. Evaluation tools which focus on professionalism and easily observable teacher behaviors facilitate quick and efficient observations, but often do not lead observers to assess classroom elements specific to a teacher's content.

In most states, foreign languages are not tested subjects, therefore administrators likely rely more on observational data to make decisions regarding employment and salary. Additionally, much of classroom instruction is conducted in the target language, so non-target-language-speaking administrators may find providing feedback uniquely challenging, while foreign language teachers may find their feedback lacking.

This study asks foreign language teachers in nine large Kansas public school about their satisfaction with feedback they receive from administrators and identifies areas of foreign language instruction that may be chronically neglected by observers. With this report, I hope to incite conversations between foreign language teachers and building administrators, like principals and instructional coaches, in regards to the type and frequency of feedback that is desired and how current procedures might be altered to achieve the desired results.

Chapter 1 - The Current State of Classroom Observation

In the United States education system teacher evaluation is a work in progress. The U.S. Department of Education has no established system for evaluating teachers, and states are left to decide how to fairly and effectively evaluate educators. According to a report by the National Council on Teacher Quality (Doherty & Jacobs, 2013), as of 2013, the state of Kansas does not require all teachers to be evaluated annually. With no required observations, Kansas's teachers may be missing out on valuable feedback, which could help increase their effectiveness and boost student achievement.

Observational feedback serves two main purposes. Summative observational feedback focuses on the teachers' ability to guide students to success through their practice and could help administrators make employment decisions, while formative observational feedback stimulates teachers' professional development and helps them to grow in their pedagogical practices (Delvaux, et al., 2013). Interviews conducted recently suggest that more than half of national policymakers viewed professional development and improvement of instructional strategies as the intended purpose of classroom observations, that is, that they should be formative (Herlihy, et al., as cited in Hill and Grossman, 2013). However, at the same time, national policymakers have pressed for a more summative use of teacher observations. Teacher performance is largely appraised based on a combination of students' scores on standardized testing and observational data documented by the principal, making both the tests and observations high stakes.

Most states, including Kansas, do not require summative statewide testing on foreign languages. While this alleviates certain pressures on foreign language educators, it also limits the ways in which they may be held accountable for performance. Without a uniform statewide exam, principals and building administrators are then left to decide if their language students are

making appropriate gains, if their language educators are performing adequately, and if their language programs are serving their intended purpose. To make those decisions, principals rely largely on classroom observations, which in their current condition are largely inconsistent and ineffective (Marshall, 2005).

In 2009, the Obama administration launched a major initiative to change the outcomes of teacher evaluations. This initiative, called Race to the Top, launched teacher evaluations into the national spotlight. Through Race to the Top, the U.S. Department of Education offered \$4.35 billion in grants, which were conferred contingent upon a state's willingness to evaluate teachers and principals annually and provide constructive formative feedback to teachers (Gordon, 2011).

The same year, The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation announced a three-year research project called Measures of Effective Teaching (MET). Three thousand teachers took part in the study, which culminated in 2013. The MET project proposed a system of teacher evaluation that took into account student achievement growth with the goal of providing feedback to teachers supporting their growth and development.

Despite the recent national focus on teacher evaluation, multiple studies reveal that classroom observations seem to be a low priority for school districts. In a four-state study where districts rated teachers as either "satisfactory" or "unsatisfactory", 99% of teachers were rated as satisfactory (Weisberg, 2009). In 2007, 88% of Chicago Public Schools (CPS) did not issue a single unsatisfactory rating for any teachers, though according to aggregate data presented on the CPS website, every public high school was designated as being on Academic Early Warning status that year for failing to meet annual yearly progress expectations in math, reading or both (Chicago Public Schools, 2014) Unfortunately, it seems that this trend is common nation-wide.

Perhaps one of the biggest hurdles that principals must leap in conducting effective

observations is that of time. Most states require that building principals conduct formal summative evaluations, which makes regularly observing formatively a large faculty infeasible. A 2009 study conducted in four states revealed that most teachers are evaluated two to four times a year, and those observations averaged 76 minutes total (Weisberg et al, 2009). Given that a teacher teaches nearly 1,000 hours per school year, 76 minutes of formal observation hardly seem sufficient to glean real insight and provide feedback for professional development. Marshall, principal turned leadership coach, reached the same conclusion, saying that by observing such a tiny percentage of teaching, administrators offer only a “ridiculously thin supervision of the school’s most important employees” (2005). Additionally, principals that supervise a large faculty may not return to a teacher’s room for weeks or months, by which time they and the teacher may not remember details of the prior observation. Ideally, administrators and teachers meet after observations to discuss the lesson. Unsurprisingly, time-pressed administrators do not always schedule these meetings.

Though theoretically a priority, professional development and performance evaluation through classroom observation appear to be rarely pragmatically implemented. According to scholars from both the Harvard Graduate School of Education and the Stanford School of Education, the lack of specific evaluation instruments, content experts as observers, and systematic feedback are the three most glaring impediments to effective teacher evaluation systems (Hill and Grossman, 2013). The sweeping generalization that a majority of educators in the U.S. are “satisfactory” may stem from the instruments with which principals evaluate teachers. Though states have made efforts to define standards and benchmarks for all subjects, the same effort has not been invested into the evaluation tools used for teachers of different content areas. In most cases, principals utilize one generalized tool to evaluate all teachers,

regardless of subject taught or the age of their students. Certainly there are general practices common to teachers of all ages and subjects, but it is illogical to assume that the same evaluation criteria should be applied to, say, both an elementary music teacher and a high school French teacher. Hill and Grossman argue that in order to provide meaningful feedback to teachers of all disciplines, the first step is investing time and effort into the creation of subject-specific observation criteria (2013).

In many states, the only person allowed to perform formal classroom observations is the building principal. This is problematic, not only because of the time constraints on principals, but also because principals are typically not experts in multiple content areas. Principals, in their typical trajectory, specialize in and teach one subject, and then move into administration. A math teacher turned principal will likely excel at providing insight to teachers of math, yet may struggle to provide insightful and useful instructional feedback to music teachers. Additionally, a 2007 study found that across five districts, only 8% of raters were required to receive certification on how to conduct observations (Brandt et al, 2007). Without proper training on the implementation of an observational instrument, the accuracy and reliability of the observations can certainly be called into question. Formative observations focus on professional development and teacher improvement, and if conducted by untrained personnel, these observations would likely result in minimal feedback for teachers to use in altering and improving instruction. Untrained observers using over-generalized observation instruments are likely to focus more on teacher-student interactions and student behavior, and pay too little attention to instruction (Hill and Grossman, 2013). Similarly, administrators use data from summative observations to make employment decisions; it is possible to imagine then that an untrained observer might recommend termination based on an inaccurate observation, or conversely, renew a contract with

an underperforming teacher.

By focusing partially on the affective domain, Marshall seems to complement the process critiques that Hill and Grossman raised. The evaluation process, when focused on one or two summative evaluations per year, bear little weight for the teacher, he claims. “These elaborate write-ups don’t mean a lot to most teachers; they know how little the principals sees of their day-to-day struggles” (Marshall, 2005) Though teachers acknowledge that these summative observations are a mere snapshot of the reality of their classroom, they still become nervous when poor performance during an observation could result in their dismissal. Because they feel criticized by an observer’s negative comments during a feedback meeting or report, teachers may become defensive and reject comments that might improve their instruction or classroom management.

Hill and Grossman (2013) and Marshall (2005) are not alone in their critique of the current trends in classroom observation, particularly in foreign language classrooms. Among others, Brown and Crumpler (2013) also scrutinize the scarcity of these content-specific evaluations, stating that the current evaluative tools are too generalized to have much effect in the particular context of foreign language teaching. To this point, they say that “two formal observations in a school year by an administrator could not possibly capture and reflect such complexity and specificity in a summative teacher evaluation based on a standard checklist used for all the teachers in the school” (Brown and Crumpler, 2013) Brown and Crumpler (2013) situate their criticism further within a sociocultural theoretical perspective. Harkening back to Vygotsky (1978), which states that all learning is preceded by social interaction, they propose a reconfiguration of current evaluation procedures to include peer observations. The authors rely heavily on Vygotsky’s concept of “the more knowledgeable other,” saying that a teacher with a

higher mastery of content and methodological approaches could guide the more novice teacher into their Zone of Proximal Development, therefore accomplishing the formative, professional development intent of classroom observations.

Likewise, Brown and Crumpler (2013) support peer observations because of the importance of the institutional and situational context in which a teacher's practice is embedded. The students filling the desks, the leadership of school administrators, the culture of the school and town, and the practice and teaching philosophy of colleagues no doubt shape a teacher's practice. A peer who speaks the target language, teaches the same course and curriculum and operates within the same context has the potential to provide unique insights that administrators cannot, especially monolingual administrators. While the proposals of both Brown and Crumpler (2013) and Hill and Grossman (2013) seem to complicate the current observation system, their ideas validate the complicated, nuanced art and science of teaching:

Building administrators who may not be trained in either the pedagogy of a specific content area or the intricacies of an evaluation system are responsible for observing teachers in diverse fields and providing both summative and formative feedback. This is especially problematic for principals observing foreign language classrooms. Because second language acquisition is a relatively new area of study, it is likely that many administrators are unfamiliar with the most recent theoretical research and pedagogical approaches. This lack of knowledge and experience with a particular pedagogy is compounded in foreign language classrooms by the fact that many observers do not speak the language being taught.

Chapter 2 - Research Rationale

As a licensed foreign language teacher in Kansas, my experience with these same procedures and instruments serves as a personal source of rationale. After graduating with a Spanish Education degree, I accepted a job as a middle school foreign language teacher in Kansas. As the only foreign language teacher in the building, I was left to my own devices, while allowed liberty and flexibility in taking the program in a new, more goal-oriented direction. For the first time, the course was taught entirely in the target language, and, along with my principals, I coordinated with the neighborhood high school to align curriculum so that our middle school students might transition into a Spanish 2 course during their freshman year.

The vice-principal formally observed me only twice during my first year of teaching, while she and the principal conducted a number of brief walk-throughs, and a mentor teacher conducted two informal evaluations. My second year, the procedure was identical. Though I greatly trusted and valued my administrators, I knew that neither they nor my mentor teacher spoke a foreign language or were knowledgeable in foreign language pedagogy and methodology. I quickly gleaned that my neighboring language arts, social studies and math teachers were receiving useful, formative, content-specific feedback, while the comments on my observation and evaluation documentation were limited to perceptions of student behaviors and classroom management. My personal sense of dissatisfaction with observational procedures and specificity of feedback led me to wonder how other foreign language teachers might perceive their own observational feedback, if they receive the same generalized, behavior-specific feedback, and what kinds of content-specific feedback, if any, they are receiving.

I found that while the above relevant literature sufficiently highlights the shortcomings of the objectives, instruments and processes used to evaluate classroom teachers as well as

problems with the validity and reliability of those observations, there seems to be little research focused on how foreign language teachers themselves view these same topics. This research will focus primarily on how satisfied foreign language teachers are with current observational procedures and instruments.

2.1.1 Research Questions

This study aims to answer the following questions:

1. How frequently do teachers receive observational feedback regarding factors unique to the foreign language classroom?
2. How satisfied are Kansas Foreign Language Teachers with observational feedback given to them by school administrators?
3. What factors do both teachers and administrators view as a hindrance to providing the desired feedback to foreign language teachers?
4. In what ways can foreign language teachers cooperate with administrators to improve observation procedures and consequent feedback?

Chapter 3 - Methodology

In order to collect data concerning public school teachers' perception of observational feedback, nine large Kansas high schools were identified by using the Kansas Department of Education website. I chose large school districts because the size of foreign language departments tends to be larger in these schools, increasing the number of potential respondents. Care was taken to ensure that schools represented many geographic areas of the state and differing demographic compositions, and after several large schools were selected, teacher emails were harvested from the schools' websites and served as the delivery method for both survey links. Similarly, nine administrative teams from large Kansas schools were identified, including some that might supervise teachers who responded to the surveys and some who do not. Again, care was taken to select schools that varied by location and demographics. The administrative teams' emails were also harvested from the school's website.

Data was collected through three different instruments: the Observation Impressions Survey, the Extended Response Survey and administrator interviews.

3.1.1 Observation Impressions Survey

First, a Qualtrics survey was sent to various Kansas high school foreign language teachers (N=45) and 12 responded, resulting in a 26% response rate. Before teachers began the survey, they read a debriefing statement that informed them of the purpose of the study and the intended outcomes; this text is included in Appendix A. The next page contained the first 11 questions, which asked teachers to provide context regarding their years of experience, level of education and expertise, and their school's context (see Appendix B). These demographic criteria allowed analysis of any possible relationship between teachers' satisfaction with observational feedback and their years of foreign language teaching experience, degree of education achieved and

native-speaker status. On each page, participants were required to respond to all questions on each page before moving on.

Table 3.1 - Observation Impressions Survey Respondent Demographics

Variable	Categories
Type of course	Regular education (11), Advanced Placement (4), International Baccalaureate (1), Heritage Speaker (2)
Level of course	Level 1 (8), Level 2 (9), Level 3 (7), Level 4 (4), Level 5 (3), Level 6 (3)
Years of experience	1-2 years (1), 3-5 years (2), 6-10 years (2), 16+ years (7)
Native speaker of target language	Yes (3), No (9)
Level of education	Bachelor's (4), Master's (8)

Table 3.1 shows that of the 12 participants, a majority indicated that they teach levels one through three, while a smaller portion said they teach levels four through six. The participants teach primarily regular education courses, while a few indicated that they teach Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate courses, or heritage speaker courses. In the “Type of course” and “Level of course” categories of the table, the total number of responses exceeds the number of participants, as they were allowed to select all categories that applied to them.

The third page of the survey contained 18 questions using a 7-point Likert Scale to evaluate how satisfied the teachers were with observational feedback given to them by their building administrators on 18 specific facets of the practice of teaching (see Appendix B). The Likert Scale ranged from “Extremely Dissatisfied” to “Extremely Satisfied,” and teachers were given an eighth option for each of those questions, which allowed them to indicate if they have never received feedback on that particular facet of their teaching practice. Figure 1 is a screenshot of the first two Likert Scale questions.

Figure 3.1 – Sample Likert-scale question

Please indicate how satisfied you are with the feedback provided to you concerning the following:

Strategies used to engage students in lessons

I have never received feedback on this topic.	Extremely dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied	Somewhat dissatisfied	Neutral	Somewhat satisfied	Very Satisfied	Extremely satisfied
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Relevancy of curriculum and activities

I have never received feedback on this topic.	Extremely dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied	Somewhat dissatisfied	Neutral	Somewhat satisfied	Very Satisfied	Extremely satisfied
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The final four questions of the survey were open-ended, and asked teachers to freely offer their thoughts and opinions on topics relevant to their own teaching context (see Appendix B). Participants were asked to respond with at least two characters of text (“No,” for example) before they could complete the survey. The participant pool received the initial invitation to participate in the survey, and two follow-up emails over the span of 10 days reminding them of their opportunity to share their opinions and perceptions.

3.1.2 Extended Response Survey

After the first survey was closed and data was collected and analyzed, the same participant pool (N=45) received a follow-up survey, which presented portions of the aggregate data and asked teachers to comment. The first page of the survey contained a debriefing statement nearly identical to that of the first survey. The first two questions were demographic in nature, and the following four were open-ended response questions (see Appendix B). Teachers again received an initial invitation and two follow-up emails over the span of ten days, but there was no minimum or maximum response requirement for this survey. By presenting the same pool of teachers with select portions of the initial survey data, I hoped to acquire more qualitative data that could shed light on the patterns and perceptions reported by the original respondents.

3.1.3 Administrator Interviews

Finally, a pool of administrators (N=32) was invited to interview to provide another perspective, and three responded. Before the interview, participants were sent a PDF version of both an overview (Appendix A) statement and the informed consent form, which was completed and returned as a scanned copy. I began the interview by inquiring about experience and expertise and transitioned into questions regarding their school's standard procedure for both formal summative observations and informal formative observations and how that might differ while observing a foreign language classroom. Finally, administrators were presented with portions of the aggregate data and asked to comment. Interviews were conducted via Google's video conferencing technology, Google Hangouts, and recorded for transcription purposes.

Chapter 4 - Results

4.1.1 Observation Impressions and Extended Response Surveys

Exactly half of participants report that their assistant principal is their primary observer, while 42% are observed primarily by their principal and one teacher responded “other.” In similar fashion, 42% reported that they were observed once or twice annually, 50% said they are observed between three and five times, and one teacher said they were observed between seven and ten times annually. Finally, 100% of participants surveyed reported that the person primarily responsible for their formative and summative observation and feedback does not speak the language that they teach.

Based on responses from both the Observation Impressions Survey and the Extended Response Survey, findings are presented in three areas: curriculum feedback, observation feedback, and foreign-language-specific feedback.

4.1.1.1 Curriculum Feedback

Table 4.1 – Curriculum Feedback

Curriculum Feedback	Satisfied	Neutral	Dissatisfied	Never Receive
Scope and Pace of Course	50%	17%	0%	33%
Scope and Pace of Program	42%	17%	8%	33%
Pace and development of lessons and units	25%	17%	8%	50%

In the Observation Impressions Survey, participants were asked if they had ever received feedback on the scope and pace of the courses that they teach. Of the 12 respondents, 33% (N=4) indicated that they have never received such feedback, while 17% (N=2) indicated that they were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, and 50% (N=6) indicated that they were somewhat to extremely satisfied. Similarly, 33% (N=4) of respondents indicated that they have also never

received feedback on the scope and pace of their program. Similarly, when asked to indicate their satisfaction with feedback on the pace and development of daily lessons and unit plans, only 25% (N=3) indicated that they were satisfied, while 50% (N=6) stated that they have never received such feedback. It is interesting to note that the results of this survey tend to be polarized. It appears that, for the most part, teachers are either satisfied with feedback or are not receiving it at all.

In the Extended Response Survey, respondents were asked to describe how their department or supervisor defines “good” foreign language teaching, and 50% (N=3) mentioned that adherence to and regular review of curriculum and alignment between courses are fundamental to successful foreign language teaching. In this view of good foreign language teaching, it seems that feedback on the scope and pace of the program, course and unit plans would be essential for alignment between levels.

4.1.1.2 Teacher Behavior Feedback

Another set of questions from the Observation Impressions Survey asked teachers if they have received feedback on different teacher behaviors. Of the 12 respondents, 92% (N=11) indicated that they were somewhat to extremely satisfied with feedback concerning teacher-student interaction, while only 8% (N=1) stated they were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied. In similar distribution, 83% (N=10) reported that they were satisfied with feedback on student behavior management strategies, while 17% (N=2) reported that they have never received such feedback. Of all the questions from the Observation Impressions Survey, student behavior management and teacher-student interactions received the highest levels of satisfaction. In regards to feedback concerning teacher-questioning techniques, 25% (N=3) have never received such feedback, while 17% (N=2) indicated that they were dissatisfied, and 58% (N=7)

indicated that they were somewhat to extremely satisfied. Responses regarding feedback on strategies that promote student motivation were a bit more divided. Of the 12 respondents, 33% (N=4) reported that they have never received feedback on this topic, while 17% (N=2) said they were dissatisfied, 8% (N=1) were neutral, and 42% (5) were somewhat to extremely satisfied.

Table 4.2 - Teacher Behavior Feedback

Teacher Behavior Feedback	Satisfied	Neutral	Dissatisfied	Never Receive
Teacher-student interaction	92%	8%	0	0
Student behavior management	83%	0	0	17%
Teacher questioning techniques	58%	0	17%	25%
Strategies that promote student motivation	42%	8%	17%	33%

Teachers' comments from the Extended Response Survey may shed light on why levels of satisfaction with motivation strategies and teacher questioning techniques were lower.

Teachers were presented with the finding that 100% (N=12) of respondents of the Observation Impressions Survey reported that their primary observer does not speak their target language, and asked how that might impact observational feedback, both positively and negatively. As seen below in Figure 4.1, teachers mentioned that because an administrator does not speak the target language of the classroom, they may not understand the details of classroom interactions, nor might they notice the depth, range and progression of questions which are essential in scaffolding students and guiding them to coming to the correct conclusions.

Figure 4.1 – How non-target-language-speaking observer affects feedback: Extended Response Survey

Text Response	
View	It affects any feedback negatively, if the observer is not speaking the language. Am I speaking too fast? Am I using i+1 or i+10? Just by saying that "I didn't understand a word, so you must've done it right" is not usable feedback. Unfortunately, my supervisors do not observe me hardly at all, so it doesn't make any difference either way.
View	I have never in 48 years of teaching had an observer/evaluator who knew the languages I teach.
View	Our administrators do not speak any of the languages offered. Obviously, they may not understand all parts of a lesson, but that would be true in any lesson where they are not well-versed in the topic.
View	When classes are conducted in the language, there is the possibility that the observer may not understand the details of the interactions in the classroom. On the other hand, it should not detract from the observer's ability to evaluate student engagement or rigor of the lesson.
View	I guess you could do as you please and never accomplish a thing teach as it matters to you and the curriculum so that students master the language at the level they are being taught
View	Yes - this is the case for me. It helps in the sense that they are not focused on "exactly" what I am saying and gives them the opportunity to see it from the students' perspective where they may not understand exactly what we are saying, but can infer meaning from our actions/procedures and reactions from the students. It can negatively affect the quality feedback because I know that the observers do not understand exactly what I am saying and therefore don't really see the scaffolding of the concepts or what I am specifically asking of my students. Even sometimes the main goal of an activity or lesson is easily misinterpreted by an observer.

Teachers were asked a very similar question in the Observation Impressions Survey. The question read:

If the person who is primarily responsible for observing your classroom and providing feedback does not speak the language that you teach, how do you feel that affects the feedback provided?

Several mentioned that this language barrier forces observers to assess classroom dynamics and student behavior, and that feedback concerning content often suffers (Figure 4.2).

Figure 4.2 - How non-target-language-speaking observer affects feedback: Observation Impressions Survey

Text Response	
View	Observer focuses on classroom management rather than content.
View	I think it has a large impact because with the goal of 100% target language, it means that virtually all of the teacher communication is not actually understood. Instead it is analyzed based on how the students respond. Makes it hard to give suggestions of questioning tactics, transitions, efficiency of instructions and other communicative elements of the classroom.
View	He can only comment on my classroom environment and student behavior.
View	He/she is not able to provide much feedback.
View	No
View	This greatly affects the feedback because she cannot tell me if what or how I am speaking is on track for where I need to be.
View	During our post observation meeting, I'm asked questions to help her with the evaluation.
View	I think it affects your feedback. They get an idea of your classroom control, but I think your feedback would be better if they spoke your language.
View	It limits their understanding of the students and the teacher as well as the interactions in class.
View	My principal gives me great feedback on classroom management. He observes the dynamic of the classroom and provides positive feedback. In addition, he observes details that perhaps I am not aware of when I am teaching.
View	they look for other good qualities
View	I speak to my students in the target language - so when my principal comes to observe me - with level 1 students it is a good gauge for if I am being comprehensible. For my levels 2,3, and 4 I find we have to rehash a lot during our feedback times because she wonders if I'm doing things/announcing things and I have to explain that I do it all, just in the target language. She can't tell me about quality because she doesn't understand and any content feedback is assumed to be good.

4.1.1.3 Foreign-Language-Specific Feedback

Additionally, the Observation Impressions Survey revealed that while feedback on teacher behaviors received the highest satisfaction ratings, feedback on areas of teaching specific to the foreign language classroom received the lowest overall satisfaction ratings. 58% (N=7) of

respondents of the Observation Impressions survey are veteran teachers with over 15 years of experience teaching foreign languages. The participants were asked to indicate if they have ever received feedback on the incorporation of the four language skills (speaking, reading, listening and writing). Of the 12 respondents, 42% (N=5) reported that they have received no such feedback, while an additional 42% (N=5) were somewhat to extremely satisfied. Out of the five questions of this nature, this received the highest satisfaction rating. 42% (N=5) of participants indicated that they have never received observational feedback in regards to both grammar and vocabulary structure and practice, while 25% (N=3) and 33% (N=4), respectively, indicated they were satisfied. Additionally, 50% (N=6) reported that they have never received feedback on neither the accuracy of cultural lessons nor the comprehensibility of their target language speech.

Table 4.3 – Foreign-Language-Specific Feedback

Foreign-Language-Specific Feedback	Satisfied	Neutral	Dissatisfied	Never Receive
Incorporation of four language skills	42%	8%	8%	42%
Accuracy and relevancy of cultural lessons	25%	8%	17%	50%
Grammar instruction and practice	25%	17%	17%	42%
Vocabulary instruction and practice	33%	8%	17%	42%
Comprehensibility in target language	33%	8%	8%	50%

The comments seen above in Figure 4.1 could also explain why participants reportedly receive so little feedback in regards to foreign-language-specific areas of teaching. Because administrators do not know the language of instruction, giving meaningful feedback concerning vocabulary and grammar presentation and practice seems implausible. In the Extended Response Survey, participants were asked whether or not it is problematic that many respondents had never received feedback on grammar and vocabulary, two essential components of any language

classroom, and the responses varied, as represented in Figure 4.3. Some respondents found it problematic, while others acknowledged that administrators wear many hats, and observations are not their only responsibility.

Figure 4.3 – Issues with lack of grammar and vocabulary feedback

[View](#) Yes it is. It is problematic because we cannot improve instruction if we don't know where to begin to improve. It would be helpful if we were given time to go observe other language teachers and have them observe us.

[View](#) Not really.

[View](#) Not problematic. Administrators cannot be expected to have the expertise to evaluate all aspects of all content areas; administrators should easily be able to evaluate teacher skills, preparation, engagement of students, etc.

[View](#) I was evaluated as an undergrad on my presentation of vocabulary and grammar, but never as a professional. Honestly, I think it makes it very hard for observers to provide valuable feedback and areas of suggestion to teachers because that is not a skill that they are trained in. I am always looking for new ways to present grammar and vocabulary and it is problematic in the sense that I cannot necessarily approach my observers for quality ideas. They may be able to apply some strategies from Language Arts, but what we teach is rather unique from Language Arts. I think Foreign Language teachers are often accustomed to being "left out" because they are not a core class, and thus realize that their evaluation instruments are not going to be much different.

[View](#) if you are the one responsible for the program getting done and expanding then do it right do not expect to be told what to do you are a professional do your job as one should

[View](#) I believe it is problematic. We all have so much to learn - whether we are new teachers or veterans. Yet, since there is no focus on our content, feedback is rather useless.

4.1.1.4 Overall Satisfaction with Observational Feedback

The final Likert-scale question on the Observation Impressions Survey asked teachers to indicate their overall satisfaction with observational feedback from their primary observer. Of the 12 participants, 75% (N=9) reported that they were somewhat to extremely satisfied, while only 8% (N=1) was neutral and 8% (N=1) was dissatisfied.

Table 4.4 - Overall Satisfaction with Observational Feedback

Overall Satisfaction with Observational Feedback	Satisfied	Neutral	Dissatisfied	Never receive
	75%	8%	8%	8%

It is interesting to note that in nine of the twelve (75%) questions presented above, one third or more of participants reported to have never received such feedback. Despite the absence of feedback in several facets of teaching, the majority of participants indicated that, overall, they were satisfied with the observational feedback given to them.

4.1.2 Administrator Interviews

Upon transcription and analysis of administrative interviews, three questions in particular prompted insightful responses. Principals elaborated on what exactly they look for during observations, how and observation of a foreign language classroom might differ from that of a core subject, and the perceived strengths and weaknesses of their administrative team charged with observation duties.

4.1.2.1 What Observers Look For

Administrators were asked to list what that they look for during classroom observations with no particular focus on any content area. The three participants reported that they look for signs of preparation, like whether the day's objective is clearly visible and if vocabulary is posted in the room. They assess how frequently students interact with each other, and how well they engage with the material and participate in practice activities. They indicated that they observe teacher behaviors, like how teachers activate students' prior knowledge, how they scaffold difficult material, and what classroom management techniques they employ. Absent from all three responses is a focus on content. While they did mention the delivery of content material, none of the participants mentioned that they focused on the accuracy of the content.

Teachers who responded to the Observation Impressions survey noticed that administrators do not focus on content. In an open-response question, teachers commented on how the feedback they get might be impacted by their observer's inability to comprehend the target language. Their comments are visible in Figure 4.2, seen above in section 4.1.1.3.

4.1.2.2 How Foreign Language Observations Might Differ

Administrators were asked to describe their approximation to observing a foreign language classroom, and how that might differ from how they observe other classrooms. All

three participants indicated that their approach to foreign language observation is fundamentally no different. All three mentioned that because they do not speak the target languages of their world language classrooms they may miss key components of a lesson, they all three defended the principle that no administrator can be an expert in all content areas, echoing some of the comments made by teachers in the Extended Response Survey. One principal reiterated that content is not his priority:

We're not here to teach content. We're here to teach kids. There is much more to teaching a student than teaching him to speak Spanish. It is building that relationship with that student, understanding where that student comes from, his background, their skills and their interests. [Teaching them to use] all of those things to master their craft is probably the bigger key. I'm never going to be an expert in all 14 content areas.

Administrators were posed a follow-up question that asked if they had ever engaged in conversations with their foreign language departments about the singularities of their methodology, and how an observation may be different from their neighboring content teachers. Two of the three participants said that those conversations have not happened. Their responses are summarized well in this quote:

I can't say we've spent a ton of time doing that to be honest. But, I think that's where that trust and dialogue comes between evaluators and staff to make sure that what they're doing is what they feel like is the absolute best for our kids, not necessarily fitting a square peg in a round hole.

The other principal did not specifically say that her administrative team had discussed foreign language methodologies, but she did mention that they regularly attend departmental meetings and discuss how each teacher approaches certain lessons or concepts.

In the Observation Impression Survey, 66% (N=8) of teachers reported that they have never had a conversation with their administrative teams regarding foreign language

methodology, and that data supports the finding above that 66% (N=2) of observers reported the same.

4.1.2.3 Strengths and Weaknesses of Observers

Finally, participants provided what they perceived to be their administrative teams' strengths and weaknesses in regards to observations. All participants mentioned that their greatest strength as a team is how visible they are in the daily life of their schools because of how frequently they perform informal walk-through evaluations.

Each participant cooperates with at least three other licensed administrators to share observational duties. Consistent with previous research findings, these principals reported that they often struggle with consistency. One principal who shares observational duties with four others said:

We have to always calibrate, calibrate, calibrate, calibrate because consistency is difficult [when you have] five different people.

Another principal echoed this statement, citing time limitations and excessive responsibility as key factors:

There are four of us on the team. Two of them get really bogged down, which, you know, is not their fault... I'd say our biggest weakness is that we say we're going to do this, and we have a little schedule, and this is what we are going to follow, but sometimes there is a couple of them that don't always follow through.

Chapter 5 - Discussion

Results from all three data collection instruments support the findings of previous publications concerning teacher observation, as well as shed light on components of teaching that either go unevaluated or are, in teachers' opinions, not satisfactorily evaluated. As the tables above show, many facets of teaching simply do not receive attention from administrators conducting observations. Results indicated that many teachers have never received feedback on curriculum, which could result in undesirable consequences for their language programs. If, as respondents of this study indicated, good language teaching is dependent upon successful completion of course goals and attainment of benchmarks and milestones, departments who do not assess the scope, pace and development of courses and their programs cannot ensure that their students are making as much progress in the target language as time would allow. It is crucial that departments evaluate the progression of the courses and language proficiency of students after each course, especially if schools employ many teachers to instruct several different courses in a language sequence. Just as one principal mentioned that his observation team must continually calibrate to ensure valid results, teachers within foreign language departments must also regularly calibrate the expected outcomes of each course.

Because foreign language classes in public high schools are not assessed by the state of Kansas, achievement data is not readily available, which leaves principals and departments to subjectively evaluate the success of their programs. Teachers and principals should cooperate yearly to use state standards to establish acceptable achievement benchmarks for each course level as well as the evaluation tools used to measure them. This yearly collaboration would align courses from the top-down, provide a sense of direction and accountability, and allow for calibration of goals and measurement tools.

It is no surprise that because observers are largely unfamiliar with target languages they focus on easily observable teacher behaviors like classroom management and interaction with students. The administrator interviews revealed that principals do take observations seriously, and look for fundamentals of good teaching, like evidence of scaffolding and proof of student success. However, repeated feedback on a limited scope of the elements of instruction could lead teachers to devalue feedback, as one teacher alluded to in the Extended Response Survey. Adjusting and refining the focus of observations to include comments on the presentation and practice of vocabulary and grammar may prove more useful to teachers.

If no other action is taken, administrators should at least engage in a conversation with foreign language teachers to discover what type of feedback would benefit them most. During one interview, a principal with nine years of experience came to a sudden realization when told that many teachers reported receiving no feedback on grammar and vocabulary:

A light bulb just went on! There's an opportunity that I have missed. It is interesting that you say that, because we have never specifically talked about that. It has been pedagogy; that's all... It would be interesting to hear from our teachers what kind of feedback they want on that content specifically.

In follow-up correspondence, the same principal mentioned that this since the interview, she carved time out of her schedule to sit and discuss what changes might be made to their school's foreign language classroom observational procedures.

One could easily argue that grammar and vocabulary instruction are the fundamental building blocks of a foreign language course, and that teachers will inevitably spend a majority of their class time on the presentation of these aspects of language and practice, yet nearly half of respondents have never received such feedback. By increasing feedback specifically related to content instruction and practice, administrators would assist teachers in increasing student success and ultimately lead to more accomplished language learners.

Administrators could cooperate with the foreign language department chair or experienced foreign language teachers to create a culture of peer evaluation. By relinquishing the responsibility of evaluating language use and instructional techniques to teachers knowledgeable in the target language or foreign language methodology, principals could alleviate themselves of this responsibility and help fill this gap in feedback. Principals could give department chairs an additional planning period or a few excused workdays annually to conduct observations. Teachers who are observed by both an administrator and a content-expert colleague may find that those different perspectives complement each other well, and could lead to greater satisfaction with evaluation procedures and more implementation of strategies recommended for teacher growth.

This cooperative observation procedure would likely require new observation tools. The tools in use currently are often generic; therefore foreign language teachers could collaborate to establish a new, informal rubric or checklist that fits their school and departmental context. These checklists or rubrics could include areas like amount of target language use, evidence of incorporating the four language skills, incorporation of relevant cultural and current event lessons, and rate and comprehensibility when speaking the target language. These procedures would give both teachers and department chairs agency in institutional changes and allow principals to depend on the expertise of their staff to compensate for current shortcomings.

After the fourth year of teaching, Kansas teachers are only formally evaluated once every three years, which means the only indicator of their performance might be a handful of walk-through observations lasting just a few minutes each. Over half of the respondents of both surveys are highly experienced teachers with more than 15 years of experience. Teachers with such a significant amount of experience are often considered experts, but when many experts

report having never received feedback on genuinely crucial elements of foreign language teaching, their expertise could legitimately be called into question. But, what creates expertise? Is it years of experience? Years of teaching experience? Staying informed of research-based pedagogical practices? Academic degrees? Receiving regular observational feedback from fellow teachers and others? A combination of these qualities? With such a gap in foreign-language-specific feedback, these teachers might be entrenched in behaviors of language instruction and presentation that may be ineffective or outdated.

The most surprising result of the Observation Impressions Survey is the reported overall satisfaction with observational feedback. Although many participants indicated that they have never received feedback in many areas of teaching and satisfaction rates rarely exceeded 50%, three fourths of participants reported that they were somewhat to extremely satisfied with the observational feedback given to them. This could indicate that teachers do not desire more feedback and that they are happy with the current protocol. Increasing feedback in regards to curriculum and practices unique to foreign language classrooms might strike them as excessive or even unnecessary. This idea, though, seems to be contradicted by responses to the Extended Response Survey and open-ended questions of the Observation Impressions survey, as several participants comment that they sometimes found feedback to be inadequate.

Chapter 6 - Conclusions

The insight provided by teachers and administrators in this study sheds light on areas where administrators and foreign language teachers might have different perceptions of the usefulness and quality of summative and formative feedback, and could lead to conversations dedicated to the improvement of local procedures and expectations. The results of the present study were shaped by certain demographics that, if changed, could result in largely different results. A similar study could be conducted with only new teachers, a demographic that is presumably observed more frequently yet under-represented in this study, to see how their perceptions compare. Similarly, a study could be aimed at retrieving data exclusively from veteran teachers to see what gaps in observational feedback might exist, and what areas of observational instruments they identify as problematic. Yet another future study could focus on smaller schools with fewer teachers per department where a foreign language teacher might lack colleagues and work in relative isolation from others in the field. A study of this nature might reveal different results since smaller schools also typically have only one or two principals in charge of observations who may know their teachers and their instructional practices more intimately.

Although teacher observation and evaluation has gone through significant transformation in recent years, there are still systemic changes to be made. Change must first be enacted locally. Along with recommendations made above, I propose that teachers be observed informally more frequently and for longer time frames, and that formal evaluations occur on a yearly basis to ensure that feedback from administrators and department chairs is being implemented and teachers strive to develop as professionals. Principals and department chairs should strive to systematically and regularly follow-up with teachers concerning if and how observational

feedback changed or altered instruction, and continually calibrate and improve observation procedures. State and local policymakers should strive to collaborate with experienced and accomplished foreign language teachers develop to supplemental evaluation tools, like rubrics and checklists, to help both principals and foreign language department chairs provide valuable, content-specific feedback aimed at professional development and, ultimately, student growth and success.

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Appendix A – Introductions

Observation Impressions Survey Introduction

This message appeared to potential subjects on the first page of the initial survey:

This study is concerned with foreign language teachers' perceptions of observational feedback given to them by their building administrators. During this survey, you will rank your satisfaction with the frequency and effectiveness of observational feedback provided to you by your principal observer. You will also be asked to provide some short answer responses to questions concerning your own classroom and building context.

Survey responses are anonymous, and a teacher or school's identifying information will be excluded from the published research report. By completing this survey, you grant the researcher permission to utilize your response data in their report.

Through this study, the researcher hopes to identify the areas of foreign language pedagogy and practice that teachers perceive to be inappropriately or insufficiently evaluated. By doing so, he hopes to provide some ways that foreign language teacher and building administrators/peer coaches can cooperate to change the formative and summative evaluations and feedback provided within foreign language departments.

After data has been collected and analyzed, you will receive another survey which will contain portions of the aggregate data and invite you to comment on the data with regards to your current teaching situation.

If you would like to receive a report of this research when it is complete (or a summary of the findings), please contact Seth Oldham at soldham@ksu.edu.

This message appeared after the last question of the survey:

Thank you for participating in this survey. Your responses are greatly appreciated.

Extended Response Survey Introduction

This message appeared to potential subjects on the first page of the follow-up survey:

This study is concerned with foreign language teachers' perceptions of observational feedback given to them by their building administrators. During this survey, you will see portions of aggregate data collected in a prior survey and provide your own opinions and perceptions of the results, especially in light of your own teaching context.

Survey responses are anonymous, and a teacher or school's identifying information will be excluded from the published research report. By completing this survey, you grant the researcher permission to utilize your response data in their report.

Through this study, the researcher hopes to identify the areas of foreign language pedagogy and practice that teachers perceive to be inappropriately or insufficiently evaluated. By doing so, the researcher hopes to provide some ways that foreign language teacher and building administrators/peer coaches can cooperate to change the formative and summative evaluations and feedback provided within foreign language departments.

If you would like to receive a report of this research when it is complete (or a summary of the findings), please contact Seth Oldham at soldham@ksu.edu.

This message appeared after the last question of the survey:

Thank you for participating in this survey. Your responses are greatly appreciated

Administrator Interview Overview

This message was read to interview subjects before the interview begins:

This study is concerned with foreign language teachers' perceptions of observational feedback given to them by their building administrators. During this interview, you will be asked to comment on some of the data collected as well as provide your perception and opinions on various issues regarding observational feedback in foreign language classrooms.

Interview responses will be recorded, but interviewee identity will remain anonymous and protected by pseudonym, which you may choose. All identifying information will be omitted to conserve anonymity.

Through this study, the researcher hopes to identify the areas of foreign language pedagogy and practice that teachers perceive to be inappropriately or insufficiently evaluated. By doing so, he hopes to provide some ways that foreign language teacher and building administrators/peer coaches can cooperate to change the formative and summative evaluations and feedback provided within foreign language departments.

If you would like to receive a report of this research when it is complete (or a summary of the findings), please contact Seth Oldham at soldham@ksu.edu .

By signing the Informed Consent Form, you agree to allow the researcher to use this interview data in his published report.

This message was read to interview subjects after the interview:

Thank you again for participating in this survey. Your responses are greatly appreciated.

Appendix B - Survey Questions

Observation Impressions Survey Questions

Part One: Demographics

First, teachers will fill out a short section on demographics.

1. Please indicate all levels of foreign language that you teach:

Level 1

Level 2

Level 3

Level 4

Level 5

Level 6

2. Please indicate if you teach (choose all that apply):

Regular Education Courses

Advanced Placement Courses

International Baccalaureate Courses

Heritage Learners (separate class from second language learners)

Heritage Learners (same class as second language learners)

3. Please indicate how much total foreign language teaching experience you have:

1-2 years

3-5 years

6-10 years

11-15 years

16+ years

4. Please indicate how long you have been teaching at your current school:

1-2 years

3-5 years

6-10 years

11-15 years

16+ years

5. Please indicate your highest degree achieved:

Bachelor's Degree

Master's Degree

Doctoral Degree

6. Are you a native speaker of the language you teach?

Yes

No

7. Please indicate who is primarily responsible for observing your classroom and providing feedback:

Principal

Assistant Principal

School curriculum coach

District curriculum coach

School department head

Another foreign language teacher

Other: Please explain

8. The person primarily responsible for observing your classroom and providing feedback:

Does speak the foreign language that I teach

Does not speak the foreign language that I teach

Not sure

9. Please indicate how often you are observed each year:

1-2 times

3-5 times

7-10 times

11+ times

10. Please indicate the ideal number of times you would like to be observed in a year:

1-2 times

3-5 times

7-10 times

11+ times

11. Please select all that are true. The person primarily responsible for observing your classroom and providing feedback:

Arrives unannounced

Asks to see lesson plans before arriving.

Announces observation date and time in advance

Schedules a follow-up meeting to discuss observation

Part Two: Satisfaction Ratings

A 7-point Likert-scale will survey teacher satisfaction with the feedback provided by administrators and peer coaches.

1. Extremely dissatisfied
2. Very dissatisfied
3. Somewhat dissatisfied
4. Neither dissatisfied nor satisfied
5. Somewhat satisfied
6. Very Satisfied
7. Extremely Satisfied
8. I have never received feedback on this topic

Please indicate how you satisfied you are with the feedback provided to you concerning:

12. Strategies used to engage students in lessons
13. Relevancy of curriculum and activities
14. Scope and pace of the course you teach
15. Scope and pace of the program in which you teach
16. Teacher-student interactions
17. Student behavior management
18. Grammar instruction and practice
19. Vocabulary instruction and practice
20. Accuracy and relevancy of cultural lessons
21. Teacher questioning techniques
22. Pace and development of lessons, units
23. Setting and achieving classroom goals
24. Strategies used to motivate students
25. Communicative focus of lessons, units
26. Comprehensibility while speaking in FL
27. Quality of in-class practice activities
28. Quality of homework activities
29. Incorporation of four language skills (speaking, reading, listening, writing)
30. Overall satisfaction with the quality of feedback you receive from your primary observer

Part Three: Short Response Questions

31. If the person who is primarily responsible for observing your classroom and providing feedback *does not* speak the language that you teach, how do you feel that this affects the feedback provided?

32. Have you and your observer discussed differences between teaching a foreign language and other disciplines when debriefing about observations? If so, what changes were made, if any, in the way your observer provided feedback?

33. In what ways could your observer change the feedback given to you?

34. Please leave any additional comments:

Extended Response Survey Questions

1. What language do you teach?

2. How many years of foreign language teaching experience do you have?

3. How does your language department define “good” foreign language teaching?

4. Over 90% of teachers surveyed said that their administrator/observer does not speak the language that they teach. Is this the case for you? How could this positively/negatively affect the quality of feedback given by the observer?

5. 42% of teachers said that they have never received feedback on grammar instruction and practice, while an additional 34% said that they were “somewhat dissatisfied” or “neither satisfied nor dissatisfied” in the same category. Additionally, 42% of teachers said that they have never received feedback on the presentation and practice of vocabulary. If grammar and vocabulary are the most fundamental components of language, is this a problem? Why or why not? Please elaborate.

6. What changes would you make to the tools (rubrics, checklist, etc.) used during your evaluations? Would you make them more specific to your content area? If so, what type of criteria would you include?

Appendix C – Administrator Interview Questions

Potential Questions of Context

Questions may sound something like this:

1. How long have you been in this position?
2. How often do you personally observe teachers in this building?
3. Could you describe your standard observation procedure? Are you happy with the system you're currently using? What would you change, and why?
4. What teacher behaviors or strategies you looking for during classroom observations?
5. In your opinion, how are observations beneficial to teachers?
6. What are your strengths as an observer? And your weaknesses?
7. Please describe your foreign language department. What are its strengths and weaknesses? What are the goals of the department, and how do your teachers reach those goals?
8. How do your observations of foreign language classrooms differ from observations of other disciplines?
9. What is your level of proficiency in a language besides English? Does this impact the way you observe and evaluate foreign language teachers in this building?
10. What is your experience with foreign language methodology and pedagogy? How does this impact your observations of foreign language classrooms?
11. Have you had conversations with your foreign language staff about their pedagogies and methodologies, and how they differ from those of other disciplines? What insights did you glean from those conversations?

Potential Questions Concerning Data

Questions may sound something like this:

42% of teachers said that they have never received feedback on grammar instruction and practice, while an additional 34% said that they were “somewhat dissatisfied” or “neither satisfied nor dissatisfied” in the same category.

Additionally, 42% of teachers said that they have never received feedback on the presentation and practice of vocabulary. If grammar and vocabulary are the most fundamental components of language, is this a problem?

___% of teachers surveyed said that they were either very dissatisfied or extremely dissatisfied with observational feedback concerning _____. Why do you think they responded that way? Do you agree with them? Please elaborate.

___% of teachers surveyed who have 3 years of experience or more said that they were observed less than 3 times each school year. Do you think that is enough observation? Does that give administration/peer coaches a valid idea of how a teacher performs and how their classroom functions? Why or why not?

100% of teachers surveyed said that their administrator/observer does not speak the language that they teach. How could this positively/negatively affect the quality of feedback given by the observer? How do you think this affects foreign language teachers and programs as they attempt to reach benchmarks and standards set by the KSDE?

Appendix D - Extended Response Survey Results

My Report

Last Modified: 04/01/2016

1. What language(s) do you teach?

Text Response

German

SPANISH FRENCH

German

Spanish

Spanish

Spanish

Statistic	Value
Total Responses	6

2. How many years of foreign language teaching experience do you have?

#	Answer	Response	%
1	1-2 years	0	0%
2	3-5 years	0	0%
3	6-10 years	2	33%
4	11-15 years	0	0%
5	16+ years	4	67%
	Total	6	100%

Statistic	Value
Min Value	3
Max Value	5
Mean	4.33
Variance	1.07
Standard Deviation	1.03
Total Responses	6

3. How does your language department or supervisor define "good" foreign language teaching?

Text Response

If they don't understand anything, when I'm teaching, I'm doing ok! Also, when my students are engaged, they appreciate this.

When the students are able to communicate and comprehend.

Aligned to standards; students develop communicative proficiency over time.

Students should be able to communicate in and understand the language.

review of curriculum very regularly

By providing students with quality instruction, the resources to succeed, and the ability to advocate for those resources from students and parents. We mostly see the effects of "good" teaching at the next level of the language that the students take - are they adequately prepared? Are they reaching the proficiency levels that they should be after x amount of study? Is there a pattern with students from particular teachers?

Statistic	Value
Total Responses	6

4. 1. Over 90% of teachers surveyed said that their administrator/observer does not speak the language that they teach. Is this the case for you? How could this both positively and negatively

affect the quality of feedback given by the observer? Please elaborate.

Text Response

It affects any feedback negatively, if the observer is not speaking the language. Am I speaking too fast? Am I using i+1 or i+10? Just by saying that "I didn't understand a word, so you must've done it right" is not usable feedback. Unfortunately, my supervisors do not observe me hardly at all, so it doesn't make any difference either way.

I have never in 48 years of teaching had an observer/evaluator who knew the languages I teach. Our administrators do not speak any of the languages offered. Obviously, they may not understand all parts of a lesson, but that would be true in any lesson where they are not well-versed in the topic.

When classes are conducted in the language, there is the possibility that the observer may not understand the details of the interactions in the classroom. On the other hand, it should not detract from the observer's ability to evaluate student engagement or rigor of the lesson.

i guess you could do as you please and never accomplish a thing teach as it matters to you and the curriculum so that students master the language at the level they are being taught

Yes - this is the case for me. It helps in the sense that they are not focused on "exactly" what I am saying and gives them the opportunity to see it from the students' perspective where they may not understand exactly what we are saying, but can infer meaning from our actions/procedures and reactions from the students. It can negatively affect the quality feedback because I know that the observers do not understand exactly what I am saying and therefore don't really see the scaffolding of the concepts or what I am specifically asking of my students. Even sometimes the main goal of an activity or lesson is easily misinterpreted by an observer.

Statistic	Value
Total Responses	6

5. 42% of teachers surveyed said that they have never received feedback on grammar instruction and practice, while an additional

34% said that they were “somewhat dissatisfied” or “neither satisfied nor dissatisfied” in the same category. Additionally, 42% of teachers said that they have never received feedback on the presentation and practice of vocabulary. If grammar and vocabulary are the most fundamental components of language, is it problematic that many teachers have never received feedback on vocabulary and grammar instruction? Why or why not? Please elaborate.

Text Response

Yes it is. It is problematic because we cannot improve instruction if we don't know where to begin to improve. It would be helpful if we were given time to go observe other language teachers and have them observe us.

Not really.

Not problematic. Administrators cannot be expected to have the expertise to evaluate all aspects of all content areas; administrators should easily be able to evaluate teacher skills, preparation, engagement of students, etc.

I was evaluated as an undergrad on my presentation of vocabulary and grammar, but never as a professional. Honestly, I think it makes it very hard for observers to provide valuable feedback and areas of suggestion to teachers because that is not a skill that they are trained in. I am always looking for new ways to present grammar and vocabulary and it is problematic in the sense that I cannot necessarily approach my observers for quality ideas. They may be able to apply some strategies from Language Arts, but what we teach is rather unique from Language Arts. I think Foreign Language teachers are often accustomed to being "left out" because they are not a core class, and thus realize that their evaluation instruments are not going to be much different.

if you are the one responsible for the program getting done and expanding then do it right do not expect to be told what to do you are a professional do your job as one should

I believe it is problematic. We all have so much to learn - whether we are new teachers or veterans. Yet, since there is no focus on our content, feedback is rather useless.

Statistic	Value
Total Responses	6

6. What changes, if any, would you make to the tools (rubrics, checklist, etc.) used during your evaluations? Would you make them more specific to your content area? If so, what type of criteria would you include? Please elaborate.

Text Response

Rubrics used in my school/district are prescribed by the state. There are no content specific criteria (vocabulary use, 90+% target language, effective classroom management, grammar instruction etc.).

I would definitely make them more specific to my content area.

I would make them less elaborate.

I would make the forms more tailored to the needs of each teacher and focused on student learning and engagement in the class.

by coming in and observing teaching in action

Since we use the Danielson Framework, it is very specific already, but it covers general teaching behaviors and just briefly touches on content knowledge. I would like to see there be more areas tied to specific strategies like: teaching in target language. It's hard to think of things that could be added that don't fit somewhere in the framework. It's almost as though better post-bachelors training would be more useful than merely adding something to an evaluation rubric. Honestly, if you're going to add more content-specific requirements to evaluations, you will have to find more observers that are qualified to do so. In our system, our evaluators are our administrators and two of our colleagues, all of which are incredibly busy, at a time where this is not a large amount of money to "contract out" those services.

Statistic	Value
Total Responses	6