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Peter Swanson

United States Air Force Academy, peter.swanson@afacademy.af.edu

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Language Teachers' Sense of Efficacy During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Pete Swanson, PhD
United States Air Force Academy, USA

ABSTRACT

To say that the COVID-19 global pandemic quickly changed the educational landscape in an understatement. The pandemic added another challenging hurdle for educators and students alike as they had to pivot almost immediately from one week to another from traditional face-to-face teaching practices to unfamiliar remote, online environments. Research shows that few teacher education programs in the United States of America (USA) prepared pre-service teachers to deliver instruction remotely (Archambault et al., 2016). In an effort to explore world language teachers' sense of efficacy during the pandemic, the author surveyed in-service world language teachers ($N = 497$) in the United States to understand differences in one's sense of efficacy teaching languages in the traditional face-to-face context as compared with having to teach remotely online. Participants took the Second/Foreign Language Teacher Efficacy Scale online near the end of the academic school year in 2020. Results show stark differences in the participants' sense of efficacy teaching languages in traditional, face-to-face contexts and teaching online. The findings provide manifold implications for world language teacher preparation as well as teacher retention and professional development.

Keywords: teachers' sense of efficacy, world language teachers, mastery experiences, vicarious learning, verbal persuasion, physiological responses, language teacher shortage, Albert Bandura, Megan Tschannen-Moran, Anita Woolfolk Hoy.

INTRODUCTION

According to the World Health Organization (WHO, 2020), near the end of 2019, the WHO's China Country Office learned of a pneumonia of unknown cause. Detected in the city of Wuhan in Hubei province, China, some of the patients were found to have been vendors in the Huanan Seafood market. By mid-January, China determined and shared the virus' genetic sequence, which became critical information as other countries began to develop specific diagnostic kits. About the same time, the first case of what was known as the *novel coronavirus* was reported outside of China in Thailand. On January 17, 2020, the United States federal government began screening travelers for symptoms associated with 2019-nCoV from Wuhan to the United States at three U.S. airports that receive most of the travelers from Wuhan, China: San Francisco, JFK in New York, and LAX Los Angeles (Centers for Disease Control and

Prevention, CDC, 2020a). The Director of CDC's Division of Global Migration and Quarantine, Dr. Martin Cetron, stated, "investigations into this novel coronavirus are ongoing and we are monitoring and responding to this evolving situation" (p. 1).

On January 21, 2020, the first case of the novel coronavirus was reported; a Washington state resident after having returned from Wuhan a week earlier (AJMC, 2020). The same day, Dr. Zhong Nanshan confirmed the virus can be transmitted from person to person and the term *contract tracing* emerged in the public vernacular. At this point, more than 200 had been reported infected in China along with four deaths. However, the WHO remained unsure about the necessity of declaring a public health emergency (AJMC, 2020). A week later, Health and Human Services Secretary Alex M. Azar II declared a public health emergency for the entire United States (Health and Human Services, 2020) and WHO Director-General, Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, declared the outbreak a Public Health Emergency of International Concern. On February 2, 2020, global air travel was restricted and the following day the Trump administration declared a public health emergency as more than 9,800 cases and 200 deaths were confirmed globally (AJMC, 2020).

On February 11, 2020, the CDC (2020b) announced an official name for the disease that caused the 2019 novel coronavirus outbreak, COVID-19—*CO* for corona, *VI* for virus, and *D* for disease. Near the end of February, the CDC stated that the outbreak was heading toward a pandemic. Over the next several months, organizations like the CDC and the WHO continued to study the virus while governments around the world continued to determine best practices to protect their citizens while the infection and death rates continued to rise dramatically. On February 25, 2020, Lieberman (2020) reported that federal officials warned that schools "need to prepare for a nationwide surge in cases of the coronavirus that's currently wreaking global havoc and could disrupt daily life in some communities" (p. 1). Two weeks later on March 11, the WHO declared COVID-19 a pandemic (AJMC, 2020), the Trump administration declared a national emergency, and mass disruption of schooling began to take place. In an effort to slow the spread of the virus, school officials and state leaders closed schools across the nation (Education Week, 2020).

In the state of Colorado, for example, officials at Denver Public Schools closed schools on March 16, 2020 (Zalubowski, 2020). Two days later, Governor Jared Polis ordered all schools closed in the state, and teachers began to prepare to teach learners in an emergency remote teaching environment. Similar action took place in other states like Arizona. On March 13, 2020, the Arizona State University Preparatory Academy announced it would move its 11 schools to online learning (Adams, 2020). While teachers should ideally pass through at least several days if not weeks of professional development learning how to teach remotely online, school district leaders pushed teachers to pivot quickly from traditional instruction to remote learning.

Research shows that online teaching presents a unique set of challenges compared to traditional face-to-face instruction (Dawson & Dana, 2014; Kennedy & Archambault, 2012) such as identifying, constructing, and deploying a learning management system to name a few (Russell & Murphy-Judy, 2021). A review of the literature shows that just a few years ago, only four states and the District of Columbia required teachers to participate in training or professional development related to online instruction (Watson, Pape, Murin, Gemin, & Vashaw, 2014). Archambault et al. (2016) reported survey findings where 88.2% of teacher education programs nationally lacked having an online field experience as part of their teacher preparation program. Thus, results from a recent national survey of more than 1,200 K-12 teachers, mainly elementary public school teachers, administered in mid-March 2020 affirmed that most teachers were not prepared to teach online and that slightly less than half (42.8%) reported they alone were responsible for deciding what remote/online tools to use (Newton, 2020).

Knowing that the majority of teachers were prepared to teach in traditional settings, Moore and Hodges (2020), like many others, immediately responded and began to offer practical considerations for synchronous and asynchronous learning environments. However, time was of the essence and teachers were required to pivot to online teaching without much, if any, professional development. Findings from surveys regarding the rapid transition to teaching remotely showed that educators reported feeling stressed, anxious, overwhelmed, lonely, and socially isolated (Henebery, 2020; Hughes, 2020; Schaffhauser, 2020). One survey respondent commented, “We did not have transitional time, nor did we

have a grace period to test out methods. Our school district wanted us to have it perfect within hours. So I felt unsupported and definitely unappreciated” (p. 2). Additionally, it took almost as much time preparing for virtual classes (three hours) as it did teaching them (four hours). Such feelings led to many teachers feeling less confident (Henebery, 2020), especially in schools without supportive working conditions (Hawkins, 2020).

Given the current circumstances and abrupt changes to the educational system, the purpose of this research study was to examine world language (WL) teachers’ perceptions of their sense of efficacy teaching face-to-face and then remotely during the COVID-19 global pandemic in the USA. The following research questions guided the study:

1. What is the perceived level of efficacy of WL teachers in the United States when teaching in a traditional (face-to-face) environment?
2. What is the perceived level of efficacy of WL teachers in the United States when teaching in a remote online environment?
3. How likely are the participants to leave the profession due to the COVID-19 pandemic?

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Self-Efficacy

According to Bandura (1997), people are proactively engaged in their own development and create their own destiny by their actions. Among certain personal factors, individuals have self-beliefs that allow them to exercise a degree of control over their feelings, thoughts, and actions. Bandura advances the notion that an individual’s beliefs about himself / herself are crucial elements in the exercise of control and personal agency. When examining the operation of human agency in this interactional causal structure, Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1997) designates a dominant role to cognitive, vicarious, self-reflective, and self-regulatory processes.

Among the mechanisms of personal agency, Bandura posits that none is more central or pervasive than people's beliefs about their capabilities to control events that affect their lives. Self-efficacy—

“people’s judgments of their capabilities to organize and execute courses of action required to attain designated types of performances (Bandura, 1986, p. 391)”—is an important set of proximal determinants of human motivation, action, and affect (Bandura, 1986). From an operational standpoint, self-efficacy differs from other conceptions of self, such as self-esteem, self-worth, and self-concept. As Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk Hoy, and Hoy (1998) clarified, self-efficacy is task specific. It is a future-oriented belief about the level of competence an individual expects he / she will exert in a given situation. Self-efficacy beliefs affect an individual’s thought patterns and emotions that facilitate courses of action in which a person expends significant effort in the pursuit of goals, continues when confronted with adversity, recovers from temporary setbacks, and exercises a degree of control over events that affect one’s life (Bandura, 1997).

A person’s perception of self-efficacy affects not only expectations of success or failure, but one’s beliefs also affect goal setting and motivation. Tschannen-Moran et al. (1998) theorized that if a person has a strong sense of efficacy in any given area, he / she tends to set higher goals, fear failure less, and persevere longer in the face of obstacles. Conversely, if the individual has a weaker sense of efficacy, he / she may avoid the task altogether or give up easily as difficulties emerge. Brouwers and Tomic (2000) added that if a person’s vocational perception about his/her performance is low, he or she is more likely to perceive potential problems as much bigger than what they actually may be and develop negative attitudes that may lead to leaving the career field. Tschannen-Moran et al. (1998) advanced the notion that efficacy beliefs are a cyclical in nature. That is, the proficiency in a performance creates a new mastery experience, which provides new information that will shape future efficacy beliefs. Increased efficacy leads to greater effort and persistence, which in turn leads to better performance and stronger efficacy. Conversely, a poor performance leads to less effort and giving up easily, leading to poor outcomes, which then produces a decreased sense of efficacy.

Bandura (1997) suggested that people who enter adulthood inadequately equipped with skills and troubled with self-doubt might determine that many aspects of their adult life have elements that are depressing and stressful, especially in terms of careers. Vocationally, rapid changes, such as redefining

job descriptions, can provoke better problem-solving abilities and resiliency in terms of self-efficacy in coping effectively with new demands. During early professional preparatory phases in teacher education programs, pre-service teachers' perceived self-efficacy can, to some extent, determine how well they can develop the basic cognitive, interpersonal, and self-management skills on which their future careers are based. Such perceptions about one's abilities are powerful determinants of the professional pathways that people select, their success or lack of success vocationally, and their choices to remain or leave a career field like teaching.

According to theory, there are four sources of self-efficacy: mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, social persuasion, and physiological factors (Bandura, 1997). Among the four, Bandura posits that mastery experiences are the best to increase an individual's self-efficacy. Mastery experiences foster a hardy belief in one's efficacy while failures tend to challenge it. Similarly, the belief that one is mastering a certain task is much more powerful in building a stronger sense of efficacy than the other four sources. Vicarious experiences (i.e. modeling), the second source, are important because the effect of seeing people succeed by continuous effort promotes the belief that he/she too has the ability to master comparable tasks. Conversely, watching others fail in spite of continuous effort tends to lower one's beliefs about his/her own efficacy, which tends to discourage future endeavors. Skilled models convey knowledge and can teach effective skills and strategies for accomplishing workplace demands via behavior and ways of thinking.

Along with mastery and vicarious experiences, social persuasion, the third source, strengthens an individual's beliefs that he/she too has the ability to succeed. According to theory, as people are persuaded verbally to believe that they too are capable of mastering a given activity, the probability increases that they will exert greater effort and maintain it than if they focus on personal deficiencies and harbor self-doubts when problems arise. With regard to language teachers, it is important for supervisors to be realistic in one's social persuasion. Mendacious verbal persuasion about a less than communicative approach to teaching a lesson can lead only to short-term boosts in efficacy because the individual may soon realize that he/she is not equipped to complete certain tasks successfully, which can result in

becoming disappointed by his/her efforts. In similar fashion, convincing teachers that they lack capabilities leads people to avoid challenging activities that can nurture a stronger sense of efficacy.

Finally, the fourth source of efficacy is a person's physiological responses. Bandura theorizes that people rely, at least to a certain degree, on their emotional states, physical reactions, and stress levels when appraising their abilities. Swanson (2012a) noted that a novice language teacher who becomes extremely nervous before teaching a lesson in front of peers may begin to develop a weak sense of self-efficacy in this situation. However, a beginning teacher who feels confident about teaching the lesson may not experience any negative physiological responses (e.g., fatigue, sweating), which can lead to an increased sense of efficacy. Nevertheless, it is imperative to note that it is not the intensity of physical and emotional reactions; it is how they are interpreted (Bandura, 1997).

As noted earlier, efficacy beliefs are task-specific and context-specific constructs. With respect to teaching, instructors do not feel equally efficacious in all teaching situations. Thus, by developing strategies to manage the stress and elevate one's mood when faced with challenging tasks, people can increase their sense of self-efficacy. Research for decades has shown that there are manifold benefits from having a strong sense of efficacy. For example, teachers who report a stronger sense of efficacy exhibit greater enthusiasm for teaching (Hall, Burley, Villeme, & Brockmeier, 1992) and have greater commitment to teaching (Coladarci, 1992). They tend generally to outperform those teachers who report a weaker sense of efficacy (Good & Brophy 2003), and are more likely to remain in teaching (Burley et al., 1991). With respect to learners in WL classrooms, not only are teachers more likely to remain in the classroom (Swanson, 2008, 2010a, 2010b, 2012a, 2014), but also the students in classes with highly efficacious Spanish teachers score significantly higher on the National Spanish Exams than their peers in classes with teachers who report a weaker sense of efficacy teaching Spanish (Swanson, 2014).

Taken collectively, when examining WL teachers' sense of efficacy, it is important to keep in mind the powerful nature of building and maintaining a strong foundation of self-efficacy, especially in terms of two important areas, teacher retention for novice educators and teaching remotely during the COVID-19 pandemic. The WL teacher shortage has been a serious problem since the 1950s, not only in

the United States but also in many countries around the world (Swanson & Mason, 2018), and the attrition rate of language teachers continues to exceed other content areas such as math and science (Swanson, 2010a). For example, in 2011-2012, the US language teaching force consisted of 98,993 WL teachers. That same year, 15,607 language teachers were hired and 14,843 transferred or left the teaching profession (Hlas Cummings et al., 2018). Using the leaky bucket as a metaphor, “the profession must find ways to retain teachers in addition to recruiting them” (p. 52). However, such retention may be challenging given the trials and tribulations created when educators had to leave their classrooms due to the Covid-19 pandemic and began teaching remotely and online, which most likely was new to most teachers and learners.

METHODS

Instrumentation

The researcher used the 14-item *Second/Foreign Language Teacher Sense of Efficacy Scale* (S/FLTES, Swanson 2012a) that measures language teachers' sense of efficacy in teaching WLs. The S/FLTES was validated against the 12-item *Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale* (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001), which was validated against other eight well-known and regarded measures of teacher efficacy. The S/FLTES contains three subscales: the facilitation of instruction, content knowledge, and cultural instruction. Overall reliability for the S/FLTES (.93) implies satisfactory consistency for research purposes (Henson, 2001). Researchers have used the S/FLTES with respect to various outcomes such as language teacher attrition (e.g., Swanson, 2012a, 2014), language learner performance on the National Spanish Exams (Swanson, 2014), and preservice teacher efficacy beliefs (Dumančić, 2020).

Along with the S/FLTES, the researcher created a demographic questionnaire. The demographic questionnaire asked participants about their age, gender, ethnicity, the number of years having taught languages, route to teaching, highest degree earned, the state in which the participant taught at the time of the survey, the participants' educational setting (e.g., rural), the language(s) taught by the participant, and the likelihood of quitting the profession due to the new challenges created by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Subjects

Four hundred ninety-seven language teachers self-selected to participate in this study. Of that total, 248 filled out the entire survey and are part of this study. Females (85.7%) outnumbered males and the mean age was 48.16 years. The majority of the sample self-reported as Caucasian (74%) and Latino/a (15%). The remainder self-reported as Multiracial (4%), Asian (3%), Other (3%), and African American (1%). The majority held graduate degrees (65% master's degree, 17% doctorate). Fifty-eight percent reported taking a traditional route to teaching while the remainder reported taking alternative routes to becoming a teacher. Data analysis showed a mean of 19.07 years that the participants had taught languages. The majority of the participants reported teaching only Spanish (56%) or French (22%). Five percent reported teaching both French and Spanish. One percent reported teaching three different languages. The remaining participants taught German (4%), Japanese (4%), Latin (2%), Italian (3%), Chinese (1%), Russian (1%), and Arabic (1%). Overall, participants were teaching in 41 states and the District of Columbia in mainly urban (30%) and suburban schools (51%). The sample's demographics reflect the demographics for the national teaching population in general as well as the demographics in terms of age, ethnicity, gender, and level of education for language teachers (Hussar et. al., 2020).

Procedure

Following Institutional Review Board approval for human subjects testing in April 2020, the researcher placed the 14-item S/FLTES (Swanson, 2012a) along with a participant demographic sheet online via *Quatrics*. The researcher asked the participants to answer each of the sense of efficacy items with respect to teaching in the traditional face-to-face manner and teaching remotely online for the Teacher as Facilitator and Cultural Instruction factors of the instrument. The researcher theorizes that one's sense of efficacy regarding content knowledge remains relatively constant regardless of teaching contexts, thus, the participants were asked to rate their sense of efficacy in general. The researcher tested the instrument to ensure the data collection system functioned properly. Next, the researcher contacted board members of state language teaching associations (e.g. Colorado Congress of Foreign Language

Teachers) and national language teaching associations (e.g., American Association of Teachers of Spanish and Portuguese) to send the survey to their members. Data collection ended in June 2020.

RESULTS

The researcher used *SPSS 18.0* for data analysis and first calculated reliability coefficients for the S/FLTES and its three subscale. Coefficients similar to those reported in earlier studies using the S/FLTES (Swanson, 2012a, 2014) were found for both the instrument (.90) and each of the three subscales: content knowledge (.88), the facilitation of instruction (.91), and cultural instruction (.88). The researcher did not conduct tests of statistical significance because it was expected that there would be decisive differences in levels of efficacy between traditional teaching and the sudden pivot to remote teaching.

To answer the first and second research questions about the levels of teaching efficacy for the sample for both in-person and online teaching, the researcher calculated means and standard deviations for the S/FLTES items that measured one’s sense of efficacy teaching in-person and

Table 1. *Means and Standard Deviations for S/FLTES Items for in-person and remote teaching*

	In-Person		Remote	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Teacher as Facilitator				
How much confidence do you have in...				
(1) your ability to help students learn at the first year level of the language(s) you teach?	95.25	7.07	61.77	22.28
(2) your ability to help students learn at highest levels of the language(s) you teach?	92.87	9.11	65.33	21.49
(3) your own knowledge of the language(s) you teach that you can increase student achievement in your classes?	91.59	9.01	55.52	25.07
(4) your own knowledge of the language(s) you teach that you can lower your students’ anxiety about learning the language you teach?	90.45	10.42	58.71	24.93
(5) your own knowledge of the language(s) you teach that you can foster your students’ interest about learning the language(s) you teach.	89.12	9.95	55.78	25.41

(6) your own knowledge of the language(s) you teach that you can motivate your students to learn about the language(s) you teach?	89.01	10.00	52.64	25.40
Content Knowledge	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
(7) your ability to read and understand a newspaper printed in another country in the language(s) you teach?	98.26	4.24	-	-
(8) your ability to write a personal letter to a pen pal in the language(s) you teach who is living in a foreign country?	96.41	6.61	-	-
(9) your ability to have a conversation with a native speaker in the language(s) you teach?	93.95	11.24	-	-
(10) your ability to fully understand a movie that only uses the language(s) you teach?	90.33	11.32	-	-
Cultural Instruction	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
(11) your ability to teach how people from different countries and cultures act and communicate?	90.58	10.36	62.12	25.23
(12) your ability to teach about the relationship between the practices and perspectives of the culture studied?	89.90	11.64	61.67	25.70
(13) your ability to teach about the relationship between the products and perspectives of the culture studied?	89.42	10.60	60.21	25.97
(14) your ability to teach about how people from different countries and cultures perceive the world around them?	87.09	14.16	59.92	27.39

online. Table 1 shows the rank order of 14 survey items for the sample by subscale for teaching in person. Overall, an inspection of the individual items asking participants about their sense of efficacy when teaching in person showed that the means were at the higher end of the scale, indicating that the participants had a strong sense of efficacy when teaching in a traditional setting. The mean range for these items was from 95.25 to 87.09. The two highest items were found for one's ability to help students learn at the first year level of the language(s) taught and one's ability to help students learn at highest levels of the language(s) taught. The two lowest ratings were found for participants' perceived ability (6) to motivate students to learn about the language(s) taught (Teacher as Facilitator) and (13) to teach how people from different countries and cultures perceive the world around them (cultural instruction).

With respect to the means for the questions that asked participants about their sense of efficacy teaching remotely, the means were significantly lower. The mean range for these items was from 65.33 to 52.64. The two highest items found for one's ability to help students learn at highest levels of the language(s) taught and how people from different countries and cultures act and communicate. The two lowest ratings were found for one's knowledge of the language(s) he/she teaches in order to increase student achievement and one's knowledge of the language(s) he/she teaches in order to motivate students to learn about the language(s) he/she teaches.

Overall, the mean differences in the participants' perceived sense of efficacy were significantly different for the two teaching contexts. As shown in Table 2, participants' perceptions of their content knowledge was at the higher end of the S/FLTES scale ($M = 94.79$, $SD = 12.46$)

Table 2. Means and Standard Deviations for Differences between In-Person and Online Teaching by S/FLTES subscale

	In-Person Teaching		Online Teaching	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Teacher as Facilitator	91.36	6.50	58.33	21.25
Content Knowledge	94.79	12.46	-	-
Cultural Instruction	89.29	9.99	60.91	24.72

while their perceptions varied for teaching in person compared to teaching remotely. A mean difference of 33.03 was found for the Teacher as Facilitator factor, and a difference of 21.38 was found for the Cultural Instruction factor with higher standard deviations for the remote teaching factors, denoting more variance in opinion about one's sense of efficacy teaching languages in a non-traditional setting.

Turning to the final research question regarding how likely the participants are to leave the profession due to the COVID-19 pandemic (see Table 3), 22% of the participants reported that they were slightly likely to highly likely to leave teaching languages due to having to

Table 3. *Frequency distribution of the likelihood of leaving the profession*

Extremely Likely	2.1%
Moderately Likely	7.1%
Slightly Likely	12.6%
Slightly Unlikely	5.9%
Moderately Unlikely	18.5%
Extremely Unlikely	53.8%

teach online. However, 54% of the participants reported that they were extremely unlikely to depart teaching.

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this research was to examine language teachers' perceptions of their sense of efficacy (1) teaching face-to-face and (2) teaching remotely during the COVID-19 global pandemic as well as investigating (3) the likelihood of language teachers leaving the profession due to the complications of having to teach remotely during the pandemic. As noted earlier, the demographics of the sample mirror the demographics for the national teaching population in general as well as the demographics in terms of age, ethnicity, gender, and level of education for language teachers (Hussar et. al., 2020).

With respect to the participants' perceptions of their content knowledge, the data revealed a strong sense of efficacy among the participants. Such a finding is not extraordinary given the emphasis on content knowledge due to the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act known as *No Child Left Behind* (Swanson, 2010b). During pre-service preparation, language teacher candidates must demonstrate via a variety of standardized tests that they have strong target language proficiency in order to be able to apply for certification/licensure. For example, many states in the USA require pre-service teachers to take and pass the Praxis Spanish Exam and/or the ACTFL Oral Proficiency Interview as well as college/university examinations of a teacher candidate's ability to use the target language. Such

examinations are costly requirements in order to apply for certification/licensure regardless of how a person chooses to enter the teacher pipeline (e.g., bachelor's degree in content area, alternate route to certification).

With respect to the participants' sense of efficacy teaching languages in the traditional face-to-face setting, the data were negatively skewed (the mass of the distribution of means was concentrated at the higher end of the scale, closer to 100), which supports findings from previous studies about language teachers prior to the COVID-19 global pandemic using the S/FLTES (Swanson, 2010a, 2012a, 2014). Participants expressed the most confidence in their ability to work with students at both ends of the learning spectrum. However, participants were least confident in their perceived ability to motivate students to learn about the language(s) being taught and the teaching of how people from different countries and cultures perceive the world around them (cultural instruction). A closer examination of the findings indicated that the participants rated their confidence highest on the items measuring teachers' efficacy in facilitating instruction, which supports earlier research about language teachers' sense of efficacy (Swanson, 2010a, 2012a, 2014). Similarly, finding that one of the lowest rated items was from the Cultural Instruction factor supports earlier research (2012a, 2014).

However, when examining the data about the participants' perceptions of their sense of efficacy teaching languages online in a remote setting, the means are much lower. Unfortunately, there is a complete dearth of research on language teachers' sense of efficacy teaching in a remote setting. Thus, making any comparisons is not possible at this time. Nevertheless, data analysis showed that the participants had a moderate sense of efficacy in their ability to help students learn at highest levels of the language(s) taught while teaching remotely ($M = 65.33$), which was not surprising. Language teachers tend to develop innovative, in-class activities based on Advanced Placement or even International Baccalaureate curricula for students at the higher levels of language learning. Such learning activities can include in-person group projects as well as cultural and literary studies, which can become complicated to enact in an online environment when many K-12 children lack connectivity (Anderson & Perrin, 2018) and even home computers (Auxier & Anderson, 2020). Additionally, these activities can be further

complicated if the participants' schools chose to implement asynchronous lesson delivery, which would hinder or even prevent the academic progress that the instructors hoped to achieve.

Such complications in designing and delivering curricula can lead to a decreased sense of efficacy to motivate learners to acquire a new language. For decades, researchers have studied learner motivation and have concluded it is a challenging endeavor given that motivation is usually associated with commitment, enthusiasm, and persistence to achieve goals (Guerrero, 2015). It is important to note that motivation, or the lack of it, is the most commonly cited explanation for success or failure in language learning (Hadfield & Dörnyei, 2013). Perhaps the participants became overwhelmed with the challenges of teaching during the onset of the pandemic and began to question their ability to motivate their learners as they usually do in a traditional classroom.

In similar fashion, the teaching of culture while in a classroom can be a complicated endeavor even under the best of circumstances. Given that teachers and their learners had been forced to move abruptly and unpreparedly to a remote, finding that the participants' reported a moderate sense of efficacy regarding teaching about how people from different countries and cultures act and communicate was not unexpected either. Language teachers' perceptions of their sense of efficacy regarding the teaching of culture has been the lowest of the three subscales on the S/FLTES (Swanson, 2012a, 2014). Since the early spring of 2020, teachers have had to become even more creative about teaching culture. Instead of creating a physical environment with realia and even the aroma of food and artifacts from studied communities and nations, language teachers have been forced to develop new ideas, enact lessons from their living rooms, and spend considerable time foreseeing and overcoming impediments to learning. Such obstacles to unit and semester plans can be detrimental to teachers' sense of efficacy—"judgments of their capabilities to organize and execute courses of action required to attain designated types of performances" (Bandura, 1986, p. 391).

Kramersch (1993) advances the notion that cultural instruction is present on the first day of instruction. She notes that language is not just a code that can be translated from one language to another. Swanson (2012a) found that language does not exist apart from culture; language and culture are

intertwined. Further, he proposes that many learners enter language classes excited to learn more about foreign cultures. However, when it becomes apparent that the teaching of culture is problematic when taught remotely (out of the classroom), or not going to be taught at all, students' interest in language learning may begin to decay. As their interest declines, a multitude of problems can begin to arise such as classroom management problems. Sensing a lack of control over student learning, language teachers may begin to feel less efficacious, perceiving a lack of student attention in the digital classroom being more problematic than what it may actually be (Brouwers & Tomic, 2000). Bandura (1997) posited that such perceptions can negatively affect one's sense of efficacy. As these language teachers' sense of efficacy begins to plummet, they may lose their enthusiasm for teaching. In turn, their commitment to teaching can decrease (Coladarci, 1992), setting off increased likelihood of leaving the profession (Burley et al., 1991; Hall et al., 1992) as a result of such negative attitudes and feelings (Swanson, 2010b, 2012b, 2014).

As noted earlier, one's sense of efficacy is cyclical in nature. Mastery experiences shape future efficacy beliefs. Increased efficacy leads to greater effort and persistence, which in turn lead to better performance and increased efficacy. However, struggling to achieve one's goals leads to a lower sense of efficacy, which in turn, leads to less effort expended, and ultimately, giving up. In order to build a strong sense of efficacy, research shows that teachers who implement best practices in the classroom not only report having a higher sense of efficacy but can also note improvements in student progress (Englert & Tarrant, 1995). Unfortunately, most language teachers were never prepared to teach online (Archambault et al., 2016) and, consequently, lacked best practices for teaching online. When Denver Public Schools closed schools on March 16, 2020 (Zalubowski, 2020), school leaders were not in a position to develop and implement professional development activities for remote teaching. Adams (2020) noted that teachers quickly learned that there was "not enough time to really do the training that a teacher needs to understand how to teach online" (p. 1). Furthermore, the professional development to teach online is time consuming. Adams reported that some colleges in the USA require teachers to complete nine credits in order to receive a certificate in online teaching, and the planning, development, and delivery of a high-quality online course can take more than a year. Without such training, the pivot from traditional face-to-

face teaching to remote teaching left many feeling anxious, stressed, and socially isolated (Henebery, 2020; Hughes, 2020; Schaffhauser, 2020).

It is no wonder why so many teachers felt less confident about their abilities to deliver a quality lesson (Henebery, 2020). Consequently, dealing with so many setbacks may help explain why 22% of the participants reported that they were slightly likely to highly likely to leave teaching languages due to having to teach online. Such findings are almost four times higher than other studies investigating the intersection of language teachers' sense of efficacy and intentions to leave the profession during traditional teaching contexts (Swanson, 2010, 2012a, 2014; Swanson & Huff, 2010).

While it was not extraordinary to learn that teaching during the COVID-19 global pandemic has had adverse effects on language teachers' sense of efficacy teaching languages, finding that more than one in five of the participants expressed thoughts of leaving the profession should capture America's attention. Since the 1950s, there have been calls from government leaders (e.g., Eisenhower), researchers, and educationalists to thwart the shortage of language teachers (e.g., Swanson, 2008, 2014; Swanson & Mason, 2018). For years, language teachers have been one of the most difficult groups to find and hire, well above special education, math, and science (Feinberg, 2016; Murphy, DeArmand, & Guin, 2003) and language teachers continue to be a rare commodity (US Department of Education, 2017). According to data from the US Department of Education (2017) regarding the WL teacher deficit, 49 of the 56 states and territories reported a shortage of language teachers. While the governmental report shows that there are shortages in the three WLs primarily taught in the USA (French, German, Spanish), there are reported teacher shortages in other languages such as Chinese, Italian, and the classics (i.e. Greek, Latin). The American Association for Employment in Education (2020) also warned that states are reporting a shortage of WL language teachers. While the problem exists nationally, it is pervasive globally. Swanson and Mason (2018) reported that countries such as Australia (Weldon, 2015), Canada (Canadian Parents for French British Columbia & Yukon Branch, 2015), and New Zealand (Richards, Conway, Roskvist, & Harvey, 2012) report shortages of language teachers as well.

SOLUTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The reporting of such shortages not only on a national but international level is alarming, but finding that 22% of the participants reported to be slightly likely to highly likely to leave the teaching profession due to having to teach online is reason for concern and denotes immediate importance to continue to investigate the WL teacher shortage. Institutions of higher education that prepare K-12 teachers were unprepared for such an event. With so few pre-service teacher preparation programs in the USA providing instruction in online lesson development and delivery (Archambault et al., 2016), the researcher calls for immediate curricular changes in the preparation of future WL teachers. As noted earlier, Will (2020) reported that educators are worried about the health implications of resuming classes in person with students, and this research substantiates his claim that the implications of the pandemic “has increased the likelihood that they will leave the classroom altogether” (p. 1). Educator Preparation Providers need to begin preparing future teachers to teach both in traditional and remote educational contexts. Clearly, such a swift curricular change can be daunting, but it is likely that education may rely more and more on remote teaching practices. Such expedient changes will certainly require more professional development at the local level for in-service language teachers.

While this research highlights important implications for the profession, it does have its limitations. Although the researcher made efforts to have a representative and reasonably large sample, the timing for data collection and the number of language teachers that started the survey but did not complete it hindered the total number of participants in the study. Nevertheless, the sample’s demographics mirror the actual general and language teaching population. Additionally, data were self-reported and collected near the end of the academic year. A limitation is that the researcher had no way of verifying the accuracy of the respondents’ answers to the survey. Thus, observing and interviewing language teachers may help better understand (1) language teachers’ perceptions of their teaching and (2) their feelings about departing the profession. Given the shortage of language teachers here and abroad, studying the efficacy of individuals who are contemplating leaving would help broaden our understanding of the findings reported in this article.

FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

Given the limitations, there is a need for further research. The researcher calls for more research to understand more about language teachers' perceptions of teaching during the COVID-19 global pandemic. It would be informative to know more about the specific challenges language teachers faced and continue to face teaching classes remotely. Additionally, it would be helpful to know what practices language teachers deemed successful when pivoting to online teaching and learning from both the practitioner and the language learner perspectives.

CONCLUSION

Slightly more than a year ago, the WHO declared the spread of the COVID-19 a worldwide pandemic. Reacting to local, state, and federal government leadership to determine a coherent path for the continuation of education for K-20 learners regardless of content area, institutions around the world scrambled to find ways to teach its learners. Almost overnight, teachers, students, and educational leaders quickly adapted to an entirely new way to delivering education.

Findings from this study suggest that American teachers were not prepared to pivot to remote teaching so quickly. Data showed that language teachers' sense of efficacy was significantly lower than what studies have shown prior to the global pandemic. Being forced to teach in non-traditional contexts was obviously stressful for many educators, and finding that so many were considering leaving the profession remains problematic due the ongoing shortage of language teachers in the United States. Losing so many language teachers year after year cannot continue to happen. "It is time to stop ringing the bell to alert the public of a teacher shortage and to begin building teacher capacity in earnest" (Swanson, 2012a, p. 97).

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ADDITIONAL READING

Russell, V., & Murphy-Judy, K. (2021). *Teaching language online: A guide for designing, developing, and delivering online, blended, and flipped language courses*. Routledge.

KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

Content knowledge: A teacher's familiarity and understanding of the language(s) he or she teaches.

Cultural knowledge: A teacher's intercultural competence and knowledge of the practices, products, and perspectives of the culture(s) studied.

Sense of efficacy: People's beliefs about their capabilities to organize and execute courses of action required to attain designated types of performances.

Teacher as facilitator: Instead of the instructor merely imparting knowledge to learners, the teacher facilitates the acquisition of the second language through interaction with the learners in the target language.