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Conceptual Change as an Agent for Teacher Recruitment

Abstract: Rural education is faced with a serious teacher shortage, specifically FL educators. FL enrollments are increasing at both the K-12 and higher education levels as the number of qualified FL teachers is decreasing rapidly. The purpose of this study was to recruit undergraduate students into language teaching by investigating students' perceptions of second language learning and becoming a FL teacher in a rural context. Two quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews with undergraduates in second- and third-semester FL courses at a western university were used to evaluate this group as a potential pool from which to recruit rural FL educators. Working through Posner et al.'s (1982) Conceptual Change Model, students were invited to participate in a teacher recruitment event. Later, 15 students changed majors to become FL educators. This article details the project and provides recommendations for not only the recruitment of language teachers but for all teachers regardless of content area specialty.

Over the last decade, efforts have been focused on helping rural school districts be more responsive to growth and survival needs of their communities (Israel, Coleman, & Ilvento, 1993; Spears, Combs, & Bailey, 1990). These efforts have been driven by a number of factors that have made rural communities vulnerable to the economic, social, and environmental trends emerging from the nation's move away from local manufacturing and resource-based industries toward a more global economy, which negatively impacts those communities with low population density and geographic isolation. Clearly, this is important information since almost half of the nation's 80,000 public elementary and secondary schools are located in rural areas or small towns.

Further, nearly one in three of America's school-aged children attend public schools in rural areas or small towns of fewer than 25,000 inhabitants, and more than one in every six attend schools in the very smallest communities (Johnson, 2003; U.S. General Accounting Office, 1996). These rural schools play an important part in many small communities, and can be the community center and symbol of community pride (Hobbs, 1995; Miller, 1995).

Characteristically, rural districts tend to serve fewer children, have less construction money available, have lower property value assessments, and have a higher proportion of residents in or near poverty compared to metropolitan areas (Deweese, 1999).

In many rural areas, there are shortages of teachers and currently there is a shortage of FL (FL) educators. Research indicates that student enrollment in higher education FL classes is increasing 17% (Welles, 2004) but the number of FL educators available to teach them is decreasing (Georgia Professional Standards Commission, 2006; Konanc, 1996). Unfortunately, this phenomenon is not novel. More twenty years ago a series of reports and reviews suggested a severe teacher shortage in America's schools (Boe & Gilford, 1992; Darling-Hammond, 1984; Haggstrom, Darling-Hammond, & Grissmer, 1998; National Academy of Sciences, 1987; National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983). Now, research indicates the shortage still exists, especially in the areas of special education, science, mathematics, bilingual education, and FL (American Association for Employment in Education, 2006; Bradley, 1999; Grissmer & Kirby, 1992; Murnane, 1991).

Specifically, bilingual education and Spanish as a FL face significant shortages (American Association for Employment in Education, 2006; Bradley, 1999). In fact, considerable shortages of the two aforementioned areas were reported in Region 3 (Montana, Wyoming, Colorado, and New Mexico) and a report from Wyoming's Professional Standard Teaching Board indicated that 10.95% of all Wyoming FL teachers were non-certified or teaching outside of their areas (Stowers, 2004). Other rural states have similar issues.

In Montana during 1999-2000, 73 districts had only one teacher (Nielson, 2001, p. 15). The average salary paid in these rural areas was extremely low, with "many (teachers) in the \$12,000 to \$19,000 range with few benefits" (p. 14). The American Federation of Teachers (2004) reported that the national average for teacher pay in 2002-3 was \$45,771 and "Montana had the lowest average beginning salary in the US in 2002-03, at \$23,052" (p. 1).

In West Virginia, “there has been an exodus of teachers from the state within the past few years due to this low salary, failing benefit system and a bill which encouraged early retirement” (Rosenburger, 2008, p. 1). In 2006-2007, the state ranked 48th in teacher pay with an average salary of \$40,531, well below the national average of \$50,964 (Mohajer, 2007).

Literature Review

There are at least five factors associated with the shortage of FL teachers: retirement, attrition, legislation, the perception of teaching, and increased enrollments (Swanson & Moore, 2006). Briefly discussed here, these factors pose serious threats to FL education in rural schools. First, the American Association for Employment in Education (2003) reported that 24% of elementary and 26% of secondary teachers were 55 years old in the late 1990s. Further, the same organization indicated that the same percentage of elementary and secondary teachers can be expected to retire between 2005 and 2010 and if student enrollments remain constant, more than 24% of the teachers at each level would need to be replaced in the next ten years. Second, attrition figures are startling. The National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future (2002) found that “almost a third of America’s teachers leave the field sometime during their first three years of teaching, and almost half leave after five years” (p. 4).

Adding to retirement and attrition, *No Child Left Behind (NCLB)*, has complicated matters by requiring all teachers in federal core academic areas, and FL is one of those areas, to meet “highly qualified” criteria. For all of the legislation’s philosophical merits, this new qualification is of concern since FL teachers who are licensed to teach in their respective states may find they are not highly qualified according to the federal government. For rural school districts, *NCLB* further complicates teaching. Members of the U.S. Department of Education traveled throughout the country, listening to teachers and school officials and discovered that the

highly qualified teacher provisions mandated by *NCLB* “don’t adequately accommodate the special challenges faced by teachers in small, rural districts” (U.S. Department of Education, 2004, p. 1).

Many times rural educators are required to teach more than one academic subject, receive lower salaries and benefits, have less access to professional development opportunities, and have multiple extracurricular duties (Jimerson, 2005; National Education Association, 1998; North Central Regional Educational Laboratory, 2003). Additionally, rural school districts face the challenges of decreasing student populations, high transportation costs for students, and the difficulty of attracting quality teachers (Phillips, 2003).

Next, it appears that the profession suffers from perceptual issues. Very frequently teaching is described as being a dead-end job with perceived low-status, low salaries, poor working conditions, feelings of isolation, ineffective administrative support, classroom discipline issues, and frustration with colleagues (Boles, 2000; Boser, 2000; Brunetti, 2001; Stanford, 2000; Weld, 1998). Finally, increased enrollments in FL classes appear to play a role. National secondary FL enrollment figures have been increasing from 16.3% of total enrolled in FL in 1890 to 42.5% in 2000 (Draper & Hicks, 2002) and regrettably, the number of FL teachers has not increased to meet this demand. At institutions of higher education, FL enrollments grew from 3,789,000 to 15,608,000 between 1960 and 2002, an overall increase of 411.9% (Welles, 2004). Specifically, Spanish enrollments have been steadily climbing while French and German enrollments have been declining since 1964 (Draper & Hicks, 2002).

Clearly, these five factors are becoming more and more problematic and efforts to thwart the FL teacher shortage seem minimal. A review of the literature on FL teacher recruitment uncovered a few strategies designed to increase the number of FL educators. From a

governmental level, the latest responses to this crisis are student loan forgiveness (Wyoming Teacher Shortage, 2005) and a lowering of standards to allow school districts to fill these positions with teachers holding provisional certification (Darling-Hammond, 2001). However, even though a lowering of teacher certification standards to fill these positions may offer temporary relief, it is unlikely to be a long-term solution to this persistent problem since research indicates that for people who enter the teaching profession through some alternative pathway, the attrition rate can be as high as 60% (Darling-Hammond, Berry, & Thoreson, 2001).

In an isolated case, the Alabama Association for FL Teachers Association encouraged French teachers to invite their best students to the association's annual meetings in hopes of recruiting prospective French teachers (Spencer, 2003) by provide a vehicle for students to find out more information about teaching French. However, what appears to be most common are recruitment that include attending career fairs, posting job vacancies on the Internet, and identifying qualities of the "best, brightest, and most talented new staff" (Scheetz, 1995, p. 10).

Lastly, research designed to begin recruiting rural students at the secondary level to investigate FL education as a career appears to have merit. Swanson and Moore (2006) reported that some adolescents hold serious misconceptions about teaching and that these misunderstandings may serve as obstacles to improving the FL teacher shortage. The focus of this research was to correct secondary students' misunderstandings about teaching as a profession by giving them factual information about teaching and to offer vocational guidance about becoming a FL educator. Using a quasi-experimental procedure, the researchers discussed perceptual problems with students and presented actual information (both encouraging and not so encouraging) about the profession (in only the experimental classrooms). Data analysis indicated that student perceptions of teaching could be changed in regard to issues (1) adequacy of a

teacher's salary, (2) advantages of becoming a FL educator, (3) value of taking FL, and (4) the societal importance of FL education.

Thus, in an effort aimed at undergraduate students enrolled in FL courses at a western university and working in spirit with Long (2000), who feels that postsecondary faculty must be proactive in K-12 teacher recruitment, a mixed methods strategy was developed to encourage college students to investigate a career as a rural FL educator. The research questions addressed were:

1. What are the reasons students in intermediate levels of FL study a second language?
2. What are these students' perceptions of becoming a rural FL teacher?
3. Can students' misconceptions regarding teaching in a rural environment be changed by presenting factual information about the profession?

Theoretical Framework

This research project was designed in accordance to with two distinct theories. The first suggests that people begin to crystallize vocational preference between the ages of 14 and 18 (Super, 1990). During this period, adolescents begin to formulate ideas about appropriate work and begin to develop occupational self-conceptions that guide their educational decisions. Thus, students in their second and third semesters of FL learning were selected for this study.

The Conceptual Change Model (CCM, Posner, Strike, Hewson, & Gertzog, 1982), based on Piaget's notions of assimilation, accommodation, and disequilibrium, is the second theory guiding this research. CCM is a method that seeks to restructure meaning by replacing existing conceptions with new ones. In order for conceptual change to take place, students must reevaluate their existing knowledge and restructure existing concepts.

CCM proposes that if someone is to change their ideas, four conditions must occur: (1) dissatisfaction with existing conceptions, (2) the new conception must be intelligible, (3) the new conception must appear initially plausible, and (4) the new concept must lead to new insights and have the potential for new discoveries (Posner et al., 1982). Further, CCM places students in a setting that encourages them to confront their own preconceptions and those of their peers, then work toward resolution and conceptual change through a six-stage process (Stepans, 1996).

1. Students become aware of their own preconceptions about a concept by pondering it before any activity begins.
2. Students explain their beliefs by sharing them, initially in small groups and then with the entire class.
3. Students then confront their beliefs by testing and discussing them in small groups.
4. Students work toward resolving conflicts (if any) between their ideas (based on the revealed misconceptions and discussion) and their observations, thereby accommodating the new concept.
5. Students extend the concept by trying to make connections between the concepts learned and other situations, including their daily lives.
6. Students are encouraged to go beyond, pursuing additional questions and problems of their choice related to the concept.

Methods

Research Context and Procedure

The research study took place between 2005 and 2008 at a western Research 1 university that has approximately 11,000 fulltime students and offers seven languages: Spanish, French, German, Russian, Japanese, Chinese, and Arabic. Spanish and French are the two most popular

languages with over 80% of the students who take FLs enrolled in those two classes. The present study involved three independent but interrelated studies where the prior study informed the next. At the time the research began, 2,609 undergraduates were enrolled in FL classes on campus and the number of undergraduates studying languages remained steady during the research project.

For the first stage of the study, the researcher contacted the department chair of the Department of Modern and Classical Languages to solicit assistance gathering information about students' perceptions of FL classes. The chair consented and contacted faculty members teaching second- and third-semester courses and informed them of the research study. In an effort to randomly select a reasonable number of students for the sample, the researcher randomly selected three intermediate level FL courses from the seven faculty members who agreed let their students ($N = 63$) participate in the study. The researcher developed a survey that used a 5-point Likert scale from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree) to understand (1) why the students were taking this non-required class and (2) to gain insight into the students' perceptions of teaching FLs.

Following data analysis of the surveys, the researcher asked instructors to solicit volunteers from the three classes to be interviewed (without compensation) to gain a deeper understanding of why these students ($N = 14$) were enrolled in a non-required intermediate FL course and to explore their perceptions about teaching FLs. Instead of focusing on the survey questions' topics, the researcher developed 13 protocol questions. Qualitative data analysis revealed several interesting themes that led to a collaborative FL teacher recruitment event.

The researcher, working together with faculty members from the College of Arts and Sciences, invited undergraduate students enrolled in all of the intermediate FL courses at the

university ($N = 442$ undergraduates) to a dinner to learn more about the teaching profession. Students were emailed invitations and 51 returned an RSVP. At the end of the recruitment dinner, students were asked to fill out a survey designed to measure their conceptual change about teaching FL as a profession. This survey was composed of three sections: (1) nine statements regarding becoming a FL teacher asking participant to rate responses using the aforementioned Likert scale, (2) one question asking students to rate what most influenced their decision to participate in this final part of the research project, and (3) a student demographic sheet.

Data Analysis Processes

The survey data were entered in to *SPSS 16.0* and verified for accuracy by a research assistant. The qualitative data followed Patton's (1990) suggestion whereby "the first decision to be made in analyzing interviews is whether to begin with case analysis or cross-case analysis" (p. 376). The researcher began with cross-case analysis of the interviews, using a modified version of the "constant comparative analysis" (Glasser & Strauss, 1967) to group answers and make connections to common questions. Field notes and memos were used to help establish major themes as well as interesting observations, as noted during the interviews. Additionally, the researcher conducted member checks (Guba & Lincoln, 1985) to help validate the findings. Member checks are a procedure in which the researcher talks with the participants about the findings from the study and shares the researcher's interpretations of the participants' perceptions. Such a procedure allows the participants to identify anything they might find inaccurate, unfair, or uncomfortable for them. In doing so, Guba and Lincoln argue that talking with participants following data analysis helps preserve the dignity of the participants and ensures the researcher accuracy in reporting the results. The member checks took place during a

two hour focus group that helped triangulate the accuracy of the survey (Mathison, 1988) and the interviews.

Results

Initial Survey

The researcher began the data analysis by calculating reliability coefficients for the two parts of the survey and the Cronbach's alphas ranged between 0.63 and 0.75. Next, the participants' demographics were studied and the results showed that most of the sample were females (79%) and Caucasians (88%). Ten percent of the group self-reported their ethnicity as Latino/a and 56% were classified as freshman and sophomores. Average ranged from 18 to 49 with the majority (79%) of the participants between the ages of 18-21. Most were single (88%) while 8% reported to be married.

Next, the researcher conducted descriptive analysis of the survey items. Students reported strong agreement on the items measuring student interest in becoming bilingual, wanting to travel abroad, and understanding other cultures (See Table 1). Students expressed moderate

Table 1

Means and standard deviations for preliminary interest survey.

	M	SD
I feel it is important to bilingual in today's society.	4.69	0.75
I want to travel abroad.	4.67	0.72
I feel that understanding other cultures is important.	4.56	0.74
Teachers are among the people I admire most.	4.24	0.70

I know I'll need to use the language in my chosen profession.	4.17	0.88
It is too late in my collegiate career to change majors.	2.73	1.28
I would consider becoming a teacher if I knew more about the education major program.	2.67	1.04

agreement for the items measuring the need to use the language in their chosen profession and how much teachers are among the most admired people to the participants. Disagreement was noted on when asking students if they felt it was too late in their collegiate careers to change their majors and the participants suggested that there were slightly undecided when asked if they would consider becoming a teacher if they knew more about the education major program.

Encouraged by the initial findings but not convinced that the findings were generalizable to the larger group of undergraduates studying languages at the intermediate level, the researcher decided to solicit volunteers from the three classes to be interviewed in order to gain a deeper understanding of these students' perceptions of the specific reasons for studying FLs, as well as more profound insight into students' opinions regarding teaching as a profession.

Qualitative Interviews

Fourteen students volunteered to be interviewed and each interview lasted between 55-80 minutes. The majority of the participants were between the ages of 18 and 21 with three non-traditional students (ages 34, 40, and 49). Similar ethnic, class standing, and civil status data were found for this group suggesting that this small group of undergraduates well-represented the entire group of students studying languages at the university.

Data analysis of the sixteen hours of transcripts revealed seven emergent themes: (1) love of language and learning, (2) intrigue with foreign cultures, (3) vocational economics, (4) international travel, (5) educator stress, (6) employment, and (7) experiences as students. The

interviews provided an interesting mosaic of students' interests and reasons for taking FL courses that appeared to have quite a bit in common with characteristics of high quality educators such as passion for content area specialty, knowledge of content, having a sense of humor, and being organized. Of the seven themes, the first five were of particular interest.

The interviews indicated that students were enamored with language and learning as well as having the linguistic and cultural knowledge needed to travel abroad successfully, which supported the initial survey findings. However, many of the students had incorrect information about teacher salaries and benefit packages, including the two of the three non-traditional students. One of the women stated that they had heard that [certified] teachers only earn about \$17,000 per year without benefits while one of the men thought that educators had to work during the summers because teachers are paid over twelve months. Furthermore, some of the students expressed a heightened sense of the occupational stress that teachers face while many suggested various levels of uncertainty about their future career plans. The majority of the interviewees stated that they had declared a major in the language and they were not sure in what fields they might be able to secure employment.

Overall, findings from the first two parts of the study indicated that the undergraduate intermediate level FL student wanted to become bilingual, had keen interest in foreign cultures and travel, viewed knowing a second language as a requisite for securing employment, and admired teachers above many other professions. Equally, they felt it was not too late to consider a change of major and appeared open to knowing more about teaching as a profession even though on the survey they seemed undecided about considering becoming a teacher if they knew more about the profession. More importantly, they had acquired incorrect information about the

profession with respect to salaries/benefits and possibly even issues of classroom management. Consequently, the findings suggested that this rather large group of undergraduate language learners could be approached as possible pre-service FL teacher candidates.

Recruiting Event

After discussing the findings with representatives of the College of Education and the College of Arts and Sciences, the researcher received permission to initiate a campus-wide FL teacher recruiting campaign. The event was financed by grant funds as well as money from both colleges. The recruitment project involved inviting undergraduate students ($N = 442$) enrolled in second and third semester FL courses on campus by email to a dinner where the idea of becoming a FL educator would be introduced to students using the Posner et al.'s (1982) model of Conceptual Change as a theoretical lens. The focus of the event was to see if student perception of teaching FLs as a profession could be changed and ultimately improved by meeting with the students in an informal context. Topics that were discussed included from teacher characteristics, teachers' salaries/benefits, advantages FL teachers have, the societal impact of teaching, short presentations from invited speakers, as well as other topics of interest students care to address. Of the 442 invitations sent, 147 had opened the email and of that group, 51 students accepted the invitation by sending an electronic RSVP. Thirty-two students actually attended the event. In addition to the students, 14 faculty members representing both colleges attended and sat among students at tables to serve as discussion leaders.

In the invitation, the researcher informed the students that they shared many of the same qualities found in teachers as well as some of the advantages of becoming a FL teacher such as (1) teachers worked an average of 181 days/year as compared to year around like most professions, (2) teachers receive state retirement and medical benefits, (3) educators' salary

schedules allow for annual increases not only due to years of service but also additional education (master's and doctorate degrees), (4) many FL teachers travel abroad each summer improving language skills and experience foreign cultures daily, (5) teachers enjoy special tax benefits that many other professions do not, (6) and that there is currently a shortage of FL educators in the United States and in many countries throughout the world. Additionally, invitees were encouraged to contact school districts and educators to inquire about teacher salary/benefit packages as well as to conduct internet searches to learn more about teaching FLs as a profession.

The majority of the individuals who attended the dinner were women (77%) and were classified as either sophomores or juniors (75%). Caucasians (82%) were the largest ethnic group in the sample followed by Latino/as (11%). Sixty-three percent reported to be majoring in their language of study (French, German, or Spanish) and the average age of the group was 20 years. The group's demographics were remarkably similar to the national teaching population in terms of gender and ethnicity (National Center for Education Statistics, 2006).

The event began by asking attendees to brainstorm and make a list of qualities found in effective teachers. Once finished with the task, the researcher presented a list of characteristics found in the literature such as teachers being humorous, enthusiastic, friendly, creative, flexible, a motivator, and having knowledge and command of the FL (Brosh, 1996 ; Prodromou, 1991; Thompson, Greer, & Greer, 2004). The students were asked if they believed that they possessed any of these qualities. Many expressed immediate agreement and it appeared that many students sensed a degree of commonality between themselves and teachers.

Next, the conversation turned to economics. Students were asked what they hoped to earn after graduation with their bachelor's degrees. Students called out salaries in the range of

\$30,000 - \$40,000 per year. One of the students mentioned that she was nervous since she was not sure what she was going to do professionally upon graduation. Using the seating arrangement of approximately six students per table with at least one faculty member, the professors gave copies of actual teacher salary schedules and benefit packages to the students. Faculty members explained how the salary schedules functioned and encouraged students to discuss their beliefs about teachers' salaries and benefits. Almost all of the faculty members noted that it was interesting to see students accommodating this new information. Several of the students commented that they were surprised to learn that educators made more money than originally thought.

Afterwards, one of three guest speakers, the State FL Association President, spoke briefly about her life as a FL teacher. She talked about the impact she felt she had on the next generation of people in the United States and discussed her travels to foreign countries throughout her career spanning almost three decades. She highlighted the importance of knowing and teaching culture and even talked about how her teaching contract allowed for her to have the same vacation dates as her children. She allowed time for a question and answer session, where the students became increasingly engaged with the sharing of knowledge.

Students appeared very interested in two parts regarding her talk. First, apparently the students had not previously considered having the same vacation schedule as their children. Second, the students had first-hand testimony about the societal impact teachers have. Both topics seemed extremely important to the students as they remained very attentive throughout her presentation. Next, based on the data gained from the survey stating that students would be more inclined to pursue teacher education if they had more information about the program, the Director of the Education Undergraduate Office presented a *PowerPoint* presentation about the

course of study to become a FL teacher. Students had many questions about Wyoming requirements to become a FL teacher and about the process to change majors. Students expressed interest in finding out how much extra time they would have to spend becoming a FL teacher and the Director offered to meet with students individually to review their transcripts personally. Again, students discussed their misconceptions, first in small groups and later sharing as an entire group, regarding the amount of time required to change majors if they decided to pursue a degree in FL teacher education.

The final invited speaker, the Director of the International Studies Program, spoke briefly about the wide variety of study abroad programs offered by the university and how to go about participating on these exchanges. Students were intrigued by her first-hand knowledge. Reflecting on the important findings from the survey where the students stressed that international travel and cultural appreciation were important, the Director talked extensively about the program benefits beyond accumulating credits. This part of the evening served to broaden students' understanding of the importance and benefit of study abroad programs. It also helped to clarify misconceptions that the students held prior to the event. Many students did not understand that the credits taken at overseas universities would transfer to the U once prior approval was obtained from the registrar's office.

Finally, the evening came to a close when the researcher spoke about his experiences teaching in public schools and how the shortage of FL teachers is affecting schools citing data from national studies (American Association for Employment in Education, 2003; Draper & Hicks, 2002; National Center for Education Statistics, 2002). It was emphasized that many people graduate from college and cannot find employment in their chosen fields. Further, it was

emphasized that many FL teachers presently are not qualified to teach and that jobs exist in all regions of the US.

It is important to note that there were moments of cognitive dissonance that called the optimism for recruiting some of these talented individuals into question even though positive conceptual change appeared to be happening. While the agenda called for the presentation of both the pros and cons associated with teaching, students intervened rearranging the event's agenda. Given the informal atmosphere of the event, as off-topic issues were raised, discussions followed attempting to answer questions in an effort to allow a transparent view of education.

Specifically, three students asked about educational issues that appeared to concern them about becoming a FL teacher, namely professional status, student disciplinary issues, and perceived lack of support from administrators and parents. For example, one student asked about teachers suffering from low status in America. Immediately, the topic was opened for discussion. Interestingly, as the discussion progressed, faculty members and students offered insight into the development of status. One student remarked that status should not be viewed as a function of profession as much as it should be a function of the person. In similar fashion, as other concerns were expressed, time was taken to discuss each one. However, as information was presented and discussed, faculty members later shared that some of the students remained uncertain about seriously entertaining the notion of becoming a FL teacher. Informal discussion immediately following the event with only the faculty members indicated that the event became a critical moment where many of the attendees began to challenge and modify their perceptions about becoming FL teachers.

Recruiting Event Survey

Following the event, students were asked to respond to a survey containing 11 statements/questions using a scale from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree) and data analysis again revealed an acceptable reliability coefficient (0.91). Results from descriptive analysis of the survey items showed that 69% students felt they had learned more about education and that 82% expressed that the dinner provided information about career options (see Table 2). Overwhelmingly, students also expressed agreement that they learned more about an

Table 2

Means and standard deviations from recruitment event survey.

	M	SD
I learned more about the education major than what I already knew.	4.67	0.93
The dinner meeting was helpful to show me my career options.	4.19	1.11
It's too late in my college career to contemplate a change of major.	1.88	0.89
I will seriously consider becoming a FL teacher because of this dinner.	3.34	1.11
Teacher pay is too low to attract me to the teaching profession.	2.31	1.40
I was not aware of the shortage of FL teachers until tonight.	2.69	1.40
Discipline problems in the classroom discourage me from becoming a foreign language teacher.	2.19	0.98
Having the UW faculty present was an important factor to the success of this dinner.	4.55	0.63
The dinner meeting provided insight for me into education as a career option.	4.31	1.08

education major than they already knew ($M = 4.67$) and that it was important to have faculty members present at the event ($M = 4.55$). Offering contrary evidence to one of the reasons people

do not becoming teachers, specifically, issues of classroom discipline, 77% of the respondents reported that such concerns would not discourage them from becoming a FL teacher. Further, students responded with moderation ($M = 3.34$) to the notion that they would seriously consider becoming a FL teacher. However, the final question asked if the students would like more information about becoming a FL teacher and 81% affirmed.

The following week, the researcher contacted the event's participants and offered consulting appointments with them if they were interested in becoming a FL teacher. Over half of the attendees chose to meet with either the researcher or one of their language professors to talk about changing their majors or a double major. One very interesting after effect was noted a few weeks following the event that could possibly be added to the CCM: seeking confirmation of given information. To this end, several language professors mentioned that within a few days after the event, students contacted them to verify the accuracy of the information presented during the event. It appeared the students felt comfortable enough to seek advice from their language instructors, with whom they had had contact for at least a few semesters of study.

Finally, and deemed as the most important finding of all, by end of the fall semester, eight students had matriculated at the College of Education by either changing their major to FL education or to double major in FL education and the language they were studying. By the end of the academic year in May of 2006, another five students decided to pursue FL education. During the summer, two additional students changed majors. Before this recruitment initiative, there were less than 10 students in the pipeline to become FL teachers. The initiative was responsible for almost quadrupling the number of pre-service FL teachers. Interestingly, 89% of the new FL pre-service teachers were French or Spanish language students. During the next three academic years, three more joint recruitment dinners were held. The results indicate that the events

function properly as a recruitment technique and the number of FL teacher candidates is increasing.

Discussion and Implications

The purpose of this mixed methods study was to investigate and understand postsecondary students' perceptions of second language learning and FL instruction as a profession. The initial two studies of undergraduate students at the intermediate level of FL learning suggested that FL students at the intermediate level of language learning could serve as a potential pool of individuals to target as future FL educators. Data analysis revealed that students expressed that they had a love of learning language(s), found foreign cultures intriguing, and expressed a desire to travel internationally. Additionally, many of them were found to harbor incorrect perceptions about the teaching profession and were irresolute about their career plans upon graduation. Furthermore, the students felt that it was not too late to consider a change of major and they were undecided about possibly becoming FL teachers, even if they had more information. Such information appeared valuable from a teacher recruitment perspective

In most cases during the recruiting event, the researcher and faculty members could track students' ability to work through the CCM. An environment for discussion and learning was established to create dialogue and understanding between the students, faculty members, and invited speakers. The sharing of information helped students negotiate vocational meaning by listening to others discuss their conceptions about becoming a FL teacher. The goal of the study was not to get students to arrive at consensus, but rather to create opportunities to verbalize and listen to other points of view as well as accommodate new information.

For example, during the discussion regarding teachers' salaries and benefits packages, it was apparent that students became aware of their own preconceptions. Students were helped to

expose their beliefs by engaging them in small group discussions as well as discussions with everyone attending the event. As the students were exposed to genuine information, they confronted their beliefs by talking with other students and even with their language teachers. As the discussions proceeded, the new knowledge appeared to become integrated into their belief systems. Furthermore, it was learned that some students continued to investigate independently whether the information presented during the event was factual or not. Several professors reported that students had met with them to verify information given at the event. It became apparent that once the students realized that they were receiving factual information, conceptual change could occur more freely.

The process through which students process conceptual change, as conceptualized by the CCM, was found to be recursive and not linear: as students confronted new ideas, they shared their ideas with peers and faculty members, re-shaped their conceptions, and began to accommodate this new information before extending it to other situations. Occasionally, students would revert to prior stages proposed by the model to verify their understandings. Thus, from a theoretical standpoint, the present research tended to support the CCM. Similarly, Super's (1990) notion that adolescents crystallize vocational preference between the ages of 14 and 18 could possibly become extended by a few years. Some students participating in the three studies reported not having declared a major and indicated that they were still vocationally searching for direction even though they were older than 18 years of age.

In addition to supporting the notions of the theoretical framework, this research has implications for the FL teacher shortage. First, it is important to not only recognize that there is a shortage of FL educators, it is equally important to actively address the issue. The future of FL education cannot be left to the mere hope that students with FL ability will somehow find their

way the doors of Colleges of Education. Efforts must be made to encourage undergraduate students enrolled in FL courses to consider teaching languages as a profession. This research indicates a viable methodology for identification and recruitment of this talented group. As shown here, individual and small group attention can be a key to rural FL teacher recruitment. Further, as described here, there are many postsecondary students enrolled in FL courses and some of these talented individuals may harbor incorrect information about the teaching profession that is inhibiting them from becoming FL teachers. By working with these individuals, perceptions of education can be positively influenced through use of the CCM.

Second, the profession needs to become proactive. Rural educators need to work with vocational counselors in secondary schools and institutions of higher education by offering them factual, valuable information about teaching languages such as teacher salary and benefit schedules, literature on the current teacher shortage, and advantages teachers have that other professions do not. Further, FL organizations and FL teachers need to become proactive agents of FL teaching recruitment by sponsoring more active measures for FL teacher recruitment.

Finally, the theoretical frame used as a lens for this project revealed that many of the participants passed through a series of conditions set forth by the CCM. During the entire process, students had the opportunity to express opinions, pose questions, and receive answers that helped them discover new vocational insight. During this study, conceptual change became a tool for changing vocational understandings and this methodology was shown to have serious implications for recruitment of not only FL educators, but for teachers in all content areas.

Clearly, more research in this area needs to take place. Who is listening to rural secondary students when they are discussing vocational choices? Who is helping these individuals investigate potential career options in education? The world is abundantly aware of

the impending rural teacher shortage due to the five factors listed at the beginning of this article and it is obvious that the problem will not solve itself. The days of ringing the bell to announce an impending teacher shortage need to end. A proactive campaign concentrating on this potential pool of rural teachers needs to begin immediately.

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