

WORLD LANGUAGE STUDENT AND TEACHER
PERCEPTIONS OF 21ST CENTURY READINESS

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Abstract

Transformations of the education system in the United States have occurred throughout the 19th, 20th, and 21st centuries with the goal of ensuring that high school graduates are productive members of society through contributions associated with postsecondary education and work. Despite changes in federally mandated education policies, studies continued to show that students graduated high school without the necessary knowledge and skills insight that the American Council for the Teaching of Foreign Language (ACTFL) standards included the basic principles associated with the 21st-century skills that were identified by the Partnership for 21st Century Learning. This qualitative study examined student and teacher perceptions of the 21st-century readiness skills of creativity, critical thinking, collaboration, and communication. The data showed that a sample of students and teachers from Kansas perceived world language classes as having provided opportunities for students to have used and developed these skills. The analysis of this study provided information about the need for further professional development for teachers and that students could benefit from world language instruction.

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Dedication

I dedicate this work to all of *my* teachers that helped to prepare me to be the teacher I am today.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Introduction and Background of the Study

Those who worked within the world of education experienced not only changes in the society's attitude toward public education but also changes in the mandates that dictated what was being taught in the classrooms from coast to coast and at all levels. Teachers that were in those classrooms experienced two main shifts in educational policy, the first was No Child Left Behind (NCLB) from 2002 until 2015 that focused on students mastering content and the second was the 2015 Every Student Succeeds Act, which focused on the basic principle that students across the nation were receiving quality instruction and that the students were building their soft skills. The No Child Left Behind Act was first introduced by an Ohio Representative in March 2001, and after going through the process in the United States House of Representatives and United States Senate, the final bill was signed into law by President George W. Bush on January 8, 2002 (GovTrack.us, 2018). This act dictated what happened in public schools across the United States from 2002 until 2015 and it held schools accountable for what students were learning and their learning was demonstrated through standardized tests. The focus of NCLB ignored many of the issues that were happening within society of the time, which divided students and their achievement abilities (Karen, 2005). The components of NCLB were the following five items: 1) students were required to be tested in grades 3 through 8 in reading and math and at in at least one test in grades 10 through 12 in science with a measure of success as the high school graduation rate, 2) states and districts were required to report data school-by-school that detailed students' test results that were broken down into ethnic categories, 3) states were required to set adequate yearly progress goals to improve student scores, 4) schools that did not meet their goals were labeled as need of improvement and this allowed students to choose

another school to attend, and 5) schools were required to employ teachers that were considered highly qualified to teach core subjects (Karen, 2005). The goals of this reform were aimed to address the needs of students, especially those that were low-income. The implementation of the annual testing and the reporting of the results were to ensure schools were meeting the goals of improvement (Rose, 2003). Near the end of 2013 studies showed that the overall changes made to comply with the act had varied levels of success. To have met the mandates of the act, school districts had to make changes to their practices, from the hiring and compensation of teachers to the amount of time spent in classrooms. The data showed there was an increase in teacher compensation, but there was no effect on class size. Also, there was not an overall change in the amount of instructional time for core academic subjects, but found that many schools simply reallocated time away from science and social studies to focus on reading and math (Dee, Jacob, & Schwartz, 2013).

In 2015, the No Child Left Behind Act was replaced when then President Obama signed the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) into law. The implementation timeline for this act began in August 2016 when No Child Left Behind expired. In March-July 2017 Title I plans were due to the Education Department and the following school year, 2017-2018, was seen by many as the first full implementation year for schools across the United States (NASSP Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) Overview, 2018). States and districts were allowed time to implement this new act, so schools had time to plan how they launched the new changes. ESSA had nine titles, or areas of focus: 1) to improve basic programs that were operated by state and local educational agencies, 2) to prepare, train, and recruit high-quality teachers, principals, or other school leaders, 3) language instruction for English learners and immigrant students, 4) 21st-century schools, 5) state innovation and local flexibility, 6) Indian, Native Hawaiian, and Alaska Native

education, 7) impact aid, 8) general provisions, and 9) education for the homeless and other laws (The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), 2015). This act released much of the federal-level control over schools and what was being taught to the individual states, which allowed more localized decisions for their students. ESSA no longer mandated schools to be federally penalized for low performance (Lee, 2015). When compared to NCLB, ESSA shifted the power to each state and allowed them to determine and measure the standards they defined (Heise, 2017). Although the ESSA improved teaching and learning conditions for public schools across the United States, it also maintained some of the punitive aspects of NCLB in regard to the sanctions that were put on schools considered to be under-performing (Mathis, Trujillo, 2017). After the 2016 election, the future of ESSA was unclear. At the time of this study in 2019, there had not been a replacement act signed into law.

Much lesser known to the average person in the United States was that in 2002 The Partnership for 21st Century Learning (P21), then called the Partnership for 21st Century Skills, was founded by Ken Kay and Diny Golder-Dardis with the intention to combine the needs of the business community with educational policies that were being enacted by policymakers in NCLB (P21 Partnership for 21st Century Learning, “Our History,” 2018). Ultimately, P21 put a focus on providing K-12 students with opportunities to enhance their readiness for the world beyond their K-12 public school education and the areas of focus were for all students - not just those who were college bound. P21 collaborated with a plethora of organizations, teachers, education experts, and business leaders to develop their framework to put a focus on student outcomes and support systems that help students achieve those outcomes (P21 Partnership for 21st Century Learning, “Our History,” 2018). In fact, Title IV of ESSA, 21st-Century Schools, aligned with

many of the core principles of P21 which reflected the connection between education experts and the development of P21.

The P21 standards described outcomes and themes as part of its framework. One of the outcomes of the P21 standards was titled content knowledge and one of the 21st-century themes included studying world languages. The inclusion of these particular outcomes and themes created a perfect opportunity for teachers to teach students in a way that incorporated ESSA standards, P21 standards, and world language standards determined by each state. The Kansas Department of Education based their world language curriculum, the latest being the July 2017 Kansas Curricular Standards for World Language, on an adaptation of the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) standards. These standards include five main areas: 1) Communities, 2) Communication, 3) Cultures, 4) Connections, and 5) Comparisons, in order for students to be able to proficiently communicate in a language other than English (or their native language) in a real-world setting (Kansas Curricular Standards for World Languages, 2017). World language teachers were in a position to teach standards with aspects of content, methods, and measurable outcomes designed to prepare each student to enter post-secondary studies or the workforce after their high school graduation while being conscious of the inclusion of 21st-century skills that aimed to prepare students with invaluable abilities such as collaboration, communication, critical thinking, and creativity. Essentially, world language classes had the chance to help students not only learn another language but to develop and strengthen these essential skills.

Research Problem

A simple search of “are high school students prepared for the workforce” or “are high school students prepared for college” in any online search engine produced hundreds of

thousands of results from a variety of sources, all of which had multiple perspectives. While different sources argued the root causes, they shared or came to a similar conclusion: students were not prepared for life after high school graduation- whether it was for a continuation of their education in a postsecondary institution or if they planned to enter the workforce.

In terms of college readiness, reports showed only a third of students were actually ready (Camera, 2016). Analysis of data from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) results indicated students are not adequately prepared. The results showed less than forty percent of students were prepared for college-level math and reading, results that were lower than they had been in previous years. As an example in 2017 nearly sixty percent of recent high school graduates in Tennessee were placed in remedial courses in a 2-year post-secondary school, and nearly forty percent of all first-time students in Kansas were placed in remedial courses (Butrymowicz, 2017).

The outlook for students who were ready for the workforce was not better than it was for those ready for college. In March 2018, reports showed that although the education system had been improving through the standards-based reform, which was a major component of ESSA, many students that were graduating high school were still not career ready (Committee For Economic Development, 2018). At the K-12 level, the overall graduation rate rose, which was a positive effect, but a gap remained based on race- white students were graduating at higher percentages than students of minority groups (Committee For Economic Development, 2018). The overall achievement rates on the NAEP had either not changed or decreased (Committee For Economic Development, 2018). At the postsecondary level, the average composite scores on the ACT exam, which was designed to predict how well a student will do in college, was slightly under 21 out of a possible score of 36, which was the same as it had been nearly 20 years prior in

1995 (Committee For Economic Development, 2018). Without the proper preparation, students could not enter postsecondary studies or the workforce with the skills they needed. Another group of students to consider were the approximate fifteen percent that did not enroll in a postsecondary program nor entered the workforce (Ross & Bateman, 2018). Within this group roughly half had a high school diploma, nearly twenty percent had taken college-level courses but did not earn a degree, and a quarter did not finish high school (Ross & Bateman, 2018). The data from this study and many others showed students were not leaving high school prepared for postsecondary study or the workforce.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine whether students and teachers perceived world language classes as helpful in the development of readiness for a postsecondary education or to enter the workforce after high school graduation. This study demonstrated whether students perceived their world language classes as contributing to their overall preparedness and whether or not students felt their world language classes had strengthened their 21st-century skills of communication, collaboration, critical thinking, and creativity. The study also examined teachers' perceptions of their contributions to students' preparedness for postsecondary studies or to enter the workforce and whether or not they perceived themselves as having helped students to develop the 21st-century skills of communication, collaboration, critical thinking, and creativity.

Research Questions

1. What are educators' perceptions of their impact on students' development of 21st-century readiness skills, such as communication, collaboration, critical thinking, and creativity?
2. What are students' perceptions of the impact their world language class have on the

development of the 21st-century readiness skills, such as communication, collaboration, critical thinking, and creativity?

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical foundation for this qualitative study was the concept of framing. Framing involved understanding the broad topic by categorizing the smaller parts. Framing helped to build a better understanding of the topic as a whole through understanding its parts. This theoretical approach was chosen because it helped to inform each of the research questions. The research questions examined both teacher and student perceptions, so by framing each of them into their own concentration, it was easier to ensure the literature and research supported the main focus of the questions.

The conceptual framework for this study involved the concept of learning beyond the content. This framework helped to focus the results of the survey and information to answer the research questions. A significant amount of data and response from the participants focused on content knowledge or included data on student achievement, but the research questions were concerned with the learning beyond the content. This concept ensured the qualitative data analysis focused on answering the research questions.

Rationale for the Study

Many studies and articles were written about whether or not students were prepared for postsecondary study or the workforce after high school graduation, but the intention of this study was to provide information about a possible solution that was already available in many schools: world language classes. The results of this study gave details and insight to teacher, administrator, and community stakeholders in regards to the importance of the role of world language classes that went beyond learning words and phrases in a second language, such as the

development of 21st-century skills. The results of this study helped justify the need to continue world language programs in schools that may have been considering cutting programs due to budget constraints.

Researcher Positionality Statement

The researcher for this study taught at the secondary level for four years- two years in a middle school English Language Arts classroom in an urban district in Tennessee and two years in a German classroom in two different high schools in eastern Kansas. The researcher had to justify to parents, administration, and other community members when faced with the question, “Why should students take your class?” The explanation often was more focused on the importance of studying the world language that extended far beyond the actual language itself- students were able to develop the 21st-century skills that essential to employers and critical to being successful in a postsecondary classroom. The researcher observed many instances of those outside of the world language department being unable to understand the significance of these skills and wanted to provide opportunities to inform others about the importance of these skills and in addition offer support to other teachers and professionals within the world language field to help them better advocate for their departments or programs. The researcher’s role in this study was to ensure that all research, observations, surveys, interviews, and data collections were conducted with no bias and were free of personal opinions, perceptions, and perspectives. The researcher was solely responsible for the integrity of the collection and analysis of the data that determined an understanding of the impact of world language classes on the students’ development of 21st-century skills.

Limitations and Delimitations

A limitation of this qualitative study was the time constraint for the collection and

analysis of data. The time between the collection, analysis of data, and the reporting of the research was a valid concern because the number of participants and the amount of information collected was itself limited. In order to curb the effects of this limitation, the data was collected in an efficient manner that required as little disruption to the participants' schedule as possible.

A delimitation of this qualitative study was the sampling of students and teachers. The students and teachers were all from the same school, which was a high school in eastern Kansas with a population of approximately two-thousand students. The delimitation of this study was addressed through the sampling of students in several world language classes including students studying French, German, Spanish, and American Sign Language. The sample group of students was also as diverse as possible and participants were only limited to being in twelfth grade and in a Level 2 or above world language class, no other consideration based on age, ethnicity or race identification, gender identification, or any other qualifiers were considered. The teacher sample for this study was limited to the teachers within the department, but no limitations or qualifications were made to exclude any teachers as participants.

Definition of Terms

World Language: Languages that were spoken in other areas of the world, such as Spanish, French, and German (Fernandez, 2017). Languages should no longer be categorized as *foreign*, but as *world languages* in the modern time of globalization. (Tochon, 2009).

Secondary: The purpose of secondary education, also known as middle and high school, was to educate students in a variety of subjects. Districts across the United States had a variety of formats for curriculum, building structures, and graduation requirements. Generally, all students participated in academic classes and elective classes. (Corsi-Bunker, nd).

Postsecondary Studies: Postsecondary studies or postsecondary education was any

continuation of study after graduating high school that could result in a student receiving a certificate or degree for the completion of requirements. This could be academic or occupational in focus, as well as at a two-year or four-year institution. (Baum, Kurose, McPherson, 2013).

Workforce: The number of workers that were actively employed in or were available to work in a particular area or nation. (Webster's New World College Dictionary, 2010).

21st-Century Skills: Abilities or skills students needed aside from academic knowledge in order to be successful in the 21st-century. These skills focused on thinking critically, solving problems, and interacting with others. These skills were also known as soft skills. (Watanabe-Crockett, 2016).

Organization of the Study

The presentation of this qualitative study was in five chapters. The first chapter served to introduce the study and provided a purpose for the study. This first chapter also identified the research questions, details the rationale for the study, and included the researcher's positionality statement. The first chapter concluded with the definition of terms and a summary. The second chapter served to review the research and studies that have been done in this field that related to the study. The literature included a focus on the history of governmental acts that have impacted education, the development of world language standards, and the creation of P21 standards in relation to student preparedness for postsecondary studies and the workforce. The third chapter presented the research methodology, including a description of the population and sampling, the research techniques used in the qualitative study, and the procedures that were used. The fourth chapter provided the findings of the data collected from students and teachers. The fifth chapter presented the conclusions the researcher drew based on the data analysis. This final chapter included the researcher's conclusions, implications, and recommendations for further research.

Summary

Despite the implementation of the Every Student Succeeds Act in 2015 and the development of the P21 framework standards, students that graduated high school in the United States continued to not be college and career ready. Furthermore, many students lacked the 21st-century skills of communication, collaboration, critical thinking, and creativity. World language classes could help support students in the development of these skills as their standards lent themselves well in this area to address the lack of 21st-century skills while still maintaining instruction in the content. This qualitative study presented student perceptions of readiness for postsecondary studies or the workforce and the impact their world language classes had on developing their 21st-century skills, as well as teacher perceptions of their impact in preparing students for their chosen path after high school.

Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

The content in classrooms across the country has changed significantly from the days of reading, writing, and arithmetic, due to the acts that are put into law by Congress, of which current iterations can be traced back to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (Kivunja, 2015; Dee, 2003). These acts dictate how schools were held accountable for students learning the content. The ultimate goal of the acts and education as a whole is to have each student prepared for postsecondary study or the workforce upon high school graduation and be productive and contributing members of society. The approach of preparing students for and measuring success within each act is different, but both were created in bi-partisan ways in an attempt to meet the needs of the students in the classroom and prepare them for the world they enter. By examining and comparing the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act and the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), it is clear that both acts fall short in the goal of preparing students and that even more is needed to help ensure that students are graduating high school prepared for their choice of postsecondary study and/or the workforce in the 21st Century. This need leaves an opening of opportunity for world language classes to fill the students' voids in academic and practical skill preparedness through instruction which meets both the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) and Partnership for 21st Century Learning (P21) standards.

High School in the 21st Century

In the nineteenth century, only those that were college bound went to high school. It was not until decades later that the age of students and time spent in high school were seen as important to helping adolescents move from childhood to adulthood. This revelation brought changes to what students were being taught, especially with the inclusion of job training aspects

into the learning. The school systems essentially began to meet the needs of the industrial economy (Soulé & Warrick, 2015). Then in the twentieth century schools started to offer even more options for students, especially programs that helped prepare students for the workforce. This was in response to the economy because this type of preparation was done in hopes of building a stronger economy (Balfanz, 2009). While schools were working towards these goals for society, many students were still not graduating high school with the basic knowledge and skills needed for college and career. Jorgensen and Hoffmann (2003) summarized reports from 1983 that just over ten percent of high school students aged 17 were functionally illiterate, scores were declining in several areas of the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) with nearly forty percent of students not being able to make an inference, nearly twenty percent unable to write a persuasive essay, and nearly thirty percent could not solve a multiple-step math problem. In addition to these statistics, data at the college level reflected the effects of students not being prepared. Nearly a quarter of all mathematic courses at the college level were remedial classes (Jorgensen & Hoffmann, 2003). It was clear that although the social role of high school was changing, the academic standards and accountability for student learning needed to change as well in order to ensure that students were actually prepared for the workforce or to enter college after their high school graduation. In response to the findings of the 1983 report the NCLB (No Child Left Behind Act) and ESSA (Every Student Succeeds Act) were designed in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries to ensure that quality education was happening across the United States and students graduated high school after grade 12. In return, students would be then enter postsecondary studies or the workforce prepared and ready with the knowledge and skills they would need to be successful.

From NCLB to ESSA. The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act was signed into law in 2002 by President Bush, and it revamped the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA), which had already been reauthorized every five years since its creation. NCLB remained the law until 2014. The intention of the law was to increase federal government involvement in education and to provide more federal government support for schools that were not meeting yearly progress goal measures, which are based on student performance (Dee, 2003, Jorgensen & Hoffman, 2003). The objective of the act as a whole was to narrow and eventually eliminate academic achievement gaps among groups of students and to ensure that all students were not only learning, but their scores were reported (Heise, 2017, Jorgensen & Hoffman, 2003). Many groups of students in minority populations and students from economically disadvantaged families score lower on assessments, and the measures within the law were to eliminate these differences through quality teaching and programs that provided aide and resources to schools. One of the federal programs provided specific support for students that qualified for free or reduced-price lunch, serving more than 15 million students in more than half of all the public schools in the United States in 2004. This program, known as Title I, aimed to provide resources for a foundational education in reading and mathematics and to provide additional funding to support a more well-rounded education for economically disadvantaged students in order to narrow the achievement gap (American Academy, 2017, Heise, 2017, Paige, 2004). NCLB also included opportunities for schools to use funds for the professional development and retention of teachers and provided resources for programs to help students that needed it most, such as English language learners (Jorgensen & Hoffman, 2003).

Accountability of schools was a major focus of the NCLB act, so the way schools were being held accountable was through the reporting of student data to show whether or not there

was improvement (Hanushek & Raymond, 2003). The source of this data was student test scores. Students were being tested annually in reading and mathematics from third through eighth grade and again while in high school, as well in science several times between the third and twelfth grades. The data from these test scores were made available to the public, allowing those within the community, parents in particular, to be more involved in the education of their children. According to the details within the act, parents were then able to choose a new school for their child if the school they were attending was not meeting the projected achievement goals. During this time, charter schools started to be pushed as an alternative to the public schools that students were already enrolled in. Charter schools were held to the same academic standards as the public schools but were not as regulated in terms of curriculum and teaching methods which allowed teachers to be more innovative in their practices (Paige, 2004). According to the Department of Education (2009), charter schools were attractive to parents because they offered even more accountability for their results, were in more control over their own oversight and budget, and they were more motivated to teach students because they could have been shut down if students were not performing well on assessments. In addition to providing information about charter schools, the government also provided over 1.4 billion dollars in funding during the time President Bush was in office and developed an extensive evaluation system of charter schools. Despite the push for charter schools and reallocation of funds from public schools to charter schools, in July 2015 the United States Senate passed the Every Child Achieves Act, which put an end to many of the NCLB policies, namely the mandated testing and reporting of student achievement data to prove whether or not a school was meeting the projected yearly progress measures (Walker, 2015).

In December 2015, President Barack Obama signed the Every Student Succeeds Act

(ESSA) as a reauthorization of the ESEA and update to NCLB shortly after the initial changes from the Every Child Achieves Act had been signed just a few months prior (Klein, 2016). This new law helped to provide a refreshed focus on education by reducing the federal government's involvement in schools and increasing state level involvement, especially in areas of student assessment and holding schools accountable for student learning (Heise, 2017). While the goal of ESSA was similar to NCLB in terms closing and eliminating the student achievement gap (since it had not been achieved during the 13 years of NCLB), the ESSA takes different factors into account as well. Major differences between the acts include changes in student assessment, the inclusion of English learners in data reporting, and the accountability measures including indicators that are not academic achievement data.

In many ways ESSA appears to be counter-response to aspects of NCLB, such as the language used regarding the testing students and the way schools have to report results. The push for a reduction in testing was a major factor in the development of the new law, as many schools were not meeting their projected annual progress scores and filing for exemptions and waivers (Heise, 2017). Teachers were not in favor of the amount of testing prescribed by NCLB. In a poll conducted in 2001, the year before NCLB was even signed into law, a majority of teachers reported they supported having standards for student learning but felt that increasing the amount of testing for students would hinder the overall quality of the students' education (Dee, 2003). Nearly 14 years after this poll and the amount of testing increased during NCLB, the law changed and there was finally a reduction in the amount of time students spent taking standardized tests. Under the ESSA, individual states were able to design and administer their own standardized test which reflected the content standards that were being followed in that particular state rather than the federal government dictating the tests. While schools were no longer administering federal

standardized tests, states were still mandated to create assessments for students in grades 3-8 and once more in high school for reading and mathematics as well as benchmark testing in science (“Lessons from NCLB for the Every Student Succeeds Act,” 2016). Another change from NCLB to ESSA in regard to testing was the students that were included in the reporting of the school data. Unlike NCLB, the ESSA required that English Language Learners (ELLs) be reclassified based on their language proficiency. Students who demonstrated an advanced level of proficiency were then to be reported as English Learners (ELs), rather than English Language Learners (ELLs). The scores for English Learners (ELs) were included in the overall achievement data, which changed the way information was reported in areas with high EL student populations (Ferguson, 2016b). The inclusion of English Learner scores largely lowered the overall proficiency levels for these areas but also showed significant drops in areas with a smaller overall student population that also included English Learner students. Aside from testing, another development through the enactment of the ESSA was that schools had the ability to focus on the overall well-being of their students and not just academic achievement. This was made possible because schools could report non-academic factors as a part of their overall accountability measures rather than solely test scores. Schools were encouraged to create learning environments that promoted effective learning through activities to support school readiness and student health and safety. Schools were also able to develop programs to address positive peer to peer and teacher to student relationships, mentoring, positive behavior supports, and communication (Ferguson, 2016a). Lastly, one of the major differences between the NCLB and ESSA was the definition of accountability. Individual states were now able to determine the standards that students were being taught, the development of assessments, and the measures at which students were compared to in order to determine growth in learning and/or proficiency.

States were able to lower indicators of proficiency if they chose to. Moreover, districts no longer had the pressure of federally mandated consequences if the yearly progress goals were not met. The only federal control that would happen at a school would be if the school was in the bottom five percent for the state and/or the high school graduation rate fell below 60 percent, which were carry-over ideas from NCLB (Heise, 2017).

States had a few years to plan the transition from NCLB to ESSA as the first year of full implementation of the Every Student Succeeds Act was the 2017-2018 school year (Klein, 2016).

Standards. The rhetoric revolving around NCLB and ESSA often used the term standards when describing what it was that students were learning and teachers were teaching. What were standards? Essentially standards were the backbone of the educational system as a whole- they determined the curricula that schools follow, the content of textbooks, and the assessments students took (Soulé & Warrick, 2015). Well-written standards also defined the expected student output, what knowledge should have been learned, and what skill was acquired or taught. The Common Core Stand Standards, also known as CCSS or Common Core, were released in 2010, which created a baseline of knowledge and skills for students that transcended state-to-state border lines in core subjects, especially English Language Arts and Mathematics. The rationale behind the standards was that they were to be used as a starting point for states to use to further develop and adapt to meet the needs of their own students (Soulé & Warrick, 2015). The standards included content and skills in speaking and listening, reading informational text, writing, mathematical reasoning, and problem solving. These skills were viewed as being important for both academic and workforce courses according to postsecondary instructors (Steedle, Radunzel, & Mattern, 2017). The shift in mentality of what students should know to

what students need to know in order to be prepared for high school graduation and beyond was a simple way of understanding the Common Core standards (Haycock, 2010). After adapting and adopting the standards and developing assessments based on the new standards, many states saw a decline in overall student proficiency in comparison to their previous data, which could have been contributed to a multitude of factors according to Lee and Wu (2017). One factor was that states that adopted CCSS had been reporting positive growth in student achievement in reading because students were formerly being assessed with state-level-created assessments, which were meeting the new more nationally-based standards. These scores were then able to be compared to the scores of other states because the standards were then the same. This comparison made it easier to determine in which states students were not demonstrating the same levels of readiness as students in other states (Lee & Wu, 2017). In addition to being more accessible to comparison, Common Core, as Venezia & Jaeger (2013) noted, was only truly beneficial when students were supported in their learning. It was not enough for teachers to use the standards as a checklist of things to teach without pushing students to build knowledge and skills, in other words, truly mastering the standard. The intent of the CCSS was to increase student knowledge and support the development of critical thinking skills that can be applied across various discipline areas (Venezia & Jaeger, 2013). Royster, Gross, and Hochbein (2015) recommended that students were to be exposed to the standards from the earliest of grades to ensure that the academic rigor and skill development helped to prepare students before they entered high school, which would then reflect in high scores on standardized assessments and postsecondary assessments. The knowledge and skills developed in these standards were important in a variety of courses at the postsecondary level and in various industry fields in the workforce.

Assessment in the 21st century. One of the major challenges both NCLB and ESSA had to address was the assessment of students. Student assessment data provided information for each part of the greater system and at the very least was a societal indicator of student readiness. Researchers such as Silva (2009), however, challenged that there was an effective way to measure student achievement, especially when trying to factor in students' skills and abilities and not solely content knowledge. Soulé and Warrick (2015) explained that it was difficult to measure a student's knowledge through one form of assessment and argued that multiple forms of data, such as high-quality standardized tests, portfolios, and rubrics could have all been used. In Silva's (2009) article, there were several different assessments that highlighted what was being used in schools as examples of this. The first was The College Work Readiness Assessment, which was used by several private schools in Delaware. This assessment consisted of a single question where students had 90 minutes to construct an answer to a situation-based question using a digital set of documents (Silva, 2009). Another form of assessment was called River City, where students were asked to create a virtual simulation that tested a self-created hypothesis. Silva (2009) commented on the International Baccalaureate Programme assessment, one that was different based on the subject area, but was also internationally standard and adjudicated. These assessments: The College Work Readiness Assessment, River City, and the International Baccalaureate Programme assessments, all provided students multiple ways within the assessment to demonstrate their academic knowledge and critical thinking skills by providing students various ways of addressing challenges and answering questions. Another form of assessment in the 21st Century was the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), which assessed students in many different countries and includes 21st-century skills like critical thinking. Students representing the United States did not score very high on this assessment in

2011, which indicated to scholars that more was needed to be done to help improve the skills of the American students (Soulé & Warrick, 2015).

Despite the difficulties in determining what a student knows through a single assessment, many postsecondary admission decisions were based on standardized assessment data. Once matriculated at a university, for example, students may have had to complete additional assessments to determine their placement in the university system. Hassel and Giordano (2015) discussed the University of Wisconsin's system of testing all incoming students to determine their placement in an English class despite having standardized test scores or high school graduation information. Even though the aforementioned researchers have indicated that snapshot assessments are not the ideal way of obtaining a full scope of student readiness, postsecondary institutions and employers continued to recognize and use this data in their decision-making processes.

Student Preparation for Postsecondary Studies and/or the Workforce

Did the American high school system still have a place in society? Were the laws created by Congress effective in ensuring the quality of education? Did a high school diploma still have value in the 21st Century? Balfanz (2009) and Vargas, Hooker, and Gerwin (2017) explored these questions nearly a decade apart. Balfanz (2009) argued that students and parents of the late 2000s would say that the main function of high school was the same as it was in the nineteenth century: to prepare students for college. A second function of high school was to prepare students to enter society as part of the workforce. Vargas, Hooker, and Gerwin (2017) later stated that while the lines of the end of high school and the beginning of college were not as distinct as they once were, especially when programs allowed high school students to take college-level classes or colleges were offering remedial classes, high school still played an essential role in

preparing students for their future. It was through a supportive and structured environment that students could have learned the skills they will have needed for their future. There was not as significant of a distinction of high school only serving to prepare students for college. Further supporting both of these views, Soulé and Warrick (2015) likewise added that schools provided an environment for students to learn the basic knowledge and skills that were needed to enter college and/or the workforce as well as society as a whole. Additionally, Clark (2015) identified that the momentum to prepare students for both college and career in high school increased as employers invested more in schools and are more involved in education policy, advocating to include more job skills in the curriculum. This increased interest and the overall shift in focus of the role of schools also led to an increase in the classes that were offered within schools, specifically courses in Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs. These courses focused on occupational-oriented work as well as academic knowledge, which provided an opportunity for students to gain entry-level experience while still in high school (Aliaga, Kotamraju, & Stone, 2014). Regardless if students choose to study at a postsecondary institution or enter the workforce, the reality was that the number of jobs in the United States that required some training, education, or other post-high school qualification was increasing, so it was imperative that schools prepared all students for graduation with the essential academic knowledge and skills they needed to be successful (Gross & Hochbein, 2015, Kivunja, 2015).

Indications of Readiness After High School

There was a seemingly widespread agreement that provisions and guidelines within the NCLB and ESSA laws were not preparing students and these students were graduating high school not ready with the necessary skills and knowledge that was needed for postsecondary studies or to enter the workforce as snapshots of testing data throughout the years indicated,

despite changes in policies students were still not proficient in the areas that were needed for postsecondary study or to enter the workforce (ACT, 2006, Royster, Gross, & Hochbein, 2015, Venezia & Jaeger, 2013). More specifically, ACT (2006) reported that nearly one out of three students in postsecondary studies were required to enroll in a remedial course in one or more core subject areas and more than 25% of students enrolled at a four-year college did not return for a second year because of lack of readiness for college-level course work. These students were then leaving postsecondary institutions and were suddenly entering the workforce, not ready nor prepared for either. One important distinction in terminology was the difference between readiness and preparedness because indications of student readiness differ from student preparedness. Steedle, Radunzel, & Mattern (2017) summarized that readiness indicated a student's academic knowledge and skill capacities while preparedness only indicated their academic knowledge. In order to be successful after high school, students needed to demonstrate their readiness, whether that be for postsecondary study or the workforce. Postsecondary study readiness was defined by a student's level of academic success and their ability to be successful at the college level without remedial coursework (Clark, 2015). It was important to note, as Steedle, Radunzel, & Mattern (2017) do, that students did require different readiness abilities based on their intended major or field of interest. When having considered workforce readiness, the definitions of the various terms were also critical to understanding them. Career and Work readiness were not the same, although they shared similar characteristics. Career readiness was when a student had foundational knowledge and skills in a particular career field and work readiness was when they demonstrated a specialized readiness for a specific role, job, or task (Clark, 2015). However, regardless if students choose to enter a postsecondary institution or the workforce, they needed to demonstrate a similar level of readiness in the academic skills of

reading and mathematics, and the applied skills they needed will have differed depending on the industry they chose to enter or the type of postsecondary institution students applied to (ACT, 2013). This was even more true in schools of the 21st Century where programs often merged the theory and practice of a particular field such as in many Career and Technical Education programs. These programs demonstrated the increase in need for the knowledge and skills involved in a particular field (Steedle, Radunzel, & Mattern, 2017).

To determine if students were ready, two common assessments that students entering postsecondary studies completed were the American College Test (ACT) and/or the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT). The ACT measured academic achievement and offered a projection of whether or not a student would have been successful at the college level, while the SAT was designed to measure a student's reasoning and critical thinking skills (Gross & Hochbein, 2015). These assessments were helpful tools for determining a student's overall readiness as high school graduation was not always a reliable indicator. Maruyama (2012) explained that not every state had the same requirements for students to graduate or the same measures to determine eligibility to graduate. ACT, the company that developed the ACT assessment, have also developed the ACT WorkKeys assessment to provide information to employers and to award National Career Readiness Certificates upon completing three assessments (ACT, 2019a). The data and certification from the ACT WorkKeys assessment indicated readiness to employers in similar ways that the ACT indicated readiness to admission committees at postsecondary institutions.

Postsecondary Study Readiness Postsecondary readiness preparation did not begin in high school but rather much earlier. Students began learning essential knowledge and skills in elementary and middle school as they prepared for high school and their future after graduation. In order to help students be successful, schools helped students plan for their high school courses

and monitored their progress (ACT, 2006). Schools worked to help students select courses that would help build the academic knowledge and applicable skills they needed for a postsecondary institution. When nearing their end of their high school time, students could have elected to take the ACT and/or the SAT to provide information regarding their readiness to postsecondary institutions in the United States. A vast majority of applications required students to report their scores on one or both of these assessments.

ACT. The ACT was an assessment that consisted of four tests that are in a multiple-choice format and an optional writing test in an essay format. The tests were in English, Mathematics, Reading, and Science (ACT, 2018c). The English test included reading passages that assessed various areas of English in the categories of production of writing, knowledge of language, and conventions of standard English (ACT, 2018c). The Mathematic test covered numbers and quantities, algebra, functions, and geometry (ACT, 2018c). Key ideas and details, craft and structure, and integration of knowledge and ideas were included in the Reading portion of the test, and lastly, the Science test included interpretation of data, scientific investigation, and evaluation of models, inferences, and experimental results (ACT, 2018c). The Writing test, which was optional, was scored based on a student's demonstration of their ideas and analysis, the development and support of their topic, the organization of their writing, and their use of language and conventions (ACT, 2018c).

Students often were concerned with cut-off scores to apply for scholarships or university admission after taking the ACT, but the scores for each of the six areas that were reported included a Readiness Benchmark which was used to indicate a likelihood of having success in a college-level course (Allen & Radunzel, 2017). The English test had a Benchmark Readiness of 18, the Mathematics test had a Benchmark Readiness of 22, and the Science test had a

Benchmark Readiness of 23. A student who received a score of 18 or higher on the English test, for example, had a high likelihood of being successful, meaning over a 50% chance of earning a B or higher and a more than 75% chance of earning a C or higher, in an entry college-level English Composition course (Allen & Radunzel, 2017). These Benchmark Readiness scores were developed using data from previous students that were in first year college-level courses in a variety of settings (Allen & Radunzel, 2017). Overall postsecondary readiness could have been determined by a student scoring at or above in at least three of the tested areas (Crouse & Harmston, 2018). Steedle, Radunzel, and Mattern (2017) highlighted, however, that the Benchmark Readiness scores were not always the most accurate in predicting the likely grade of students because the ACT test could not assess students in every aspect of a course. Students that were enrolled in majors that were skills focused, such as engineering or graphic design, may have had a lower score in an English course, for example, because they were not as skilled in composition. The ACT would not have been able to include this in the overall Benchmark Readiness score because the writing of essays and research papers was not included in the ACT assessment, only in the optional essay portion was (Steedle, Radunzel, & Mattern, 2017). Meaning that although a student scored above the Benchmark Readiness score on the ACT assessment, they may have had an overall grade that was lower than a B or C in their English Composition course. Maruyama (2012) also noted the discrepancy in the Benchmark Readiness score reporting and the actual likelihood of college-level success and further suggested that the reporting of the scores provided an opportunity for ACT to offer areas of refinement to students, which could have been used to help them better understand their weakness. This could have led to an increase in the likelihood of success at the postsecondary level.

SAT. The Scholastic Achievement Test, SAT, was created by The College Board, a not-for-profit organization that worked with students at all levels of education. College Board was founded in 1900 and continued to offer innovative ways of getting students connected to college through programs such as the SAT or Advanced Placement (CollegeBoard, 2019a). The SAT, like the ACT, was accepted by all colleges in the United States as an indicator of admissions qualification, consisted of three tests and an optional essay portion. The three tests covered reading, writing and language, and math (CollegeBoard, 2019b). The scoring of the SAT was based on individual sections and an overall total. Each section could have a score between 200 and 800 which made the total between 400 and 1600. Each section had a college and career benchmark indicator score and for Evidence-Based Reading and Writing (EWR) the benchmark score was 480 and the benchmark score for Math was 530. Students who scored these benchmark scores or higher indicated they had a 75% likelihood of earning a grade of a C or better in a beginning college-level course in that content area.

Workforce readiness. The working environments of the 21st century were always changing and adapting to new technologies and the global market, so employers were looking for employees that were not only academically competent in their respective field but also resourceful, adaptable, and flexible (Kivunja, 2015). While postsecondary readiness was often determined through data collected from the ACT or SAT results, workforce readiness had undergone changes over time and especially during the 21st century to meet the needs of employers.

The definition of readiness for the workforce was complicated. It was important to understand the differences between being work ready, career ready, and job ready (ACT, 2016). To be work ready was to have a foundation of academic knowledge and applicable skills that

could be used in a work environment. Even students who were not graduated from high school could have been work ready. Career ready indicated that a student had more specific knowledge or skills in a particular field or industry. Lastly, job readiness indicated that a student was ready for a more specific role within a particular field (ACT, 2016). To aid the understanding of these distinctions and where students were within this spectrum, ACT also developed an assessment called ACT WorkKeys which provided a quantified indication of an applicant's overall readiness.

Perceptions of employers. Aside from the perspectives of parents and students, future employers and higher education organizations added insight as well. Reports of surveys and research team findings based in interactions with employers provided the best insight into what those in the various hiring roles were noticing from actual employed novice applicants. One such example was the 2010 report from the University of Phoenix Research Institute which provided data regarding trends and changes to the global society and workplace (Davies, Fidler, & Gorbis, 2011). This survey did not focus on what jobs would be available a decade in the future but rather what skills those entering the workforce would have needed. To collect their data, the research team worked with a variety of companies, organizations, government agencies, and foundations to document their perspectives and then analyzed the data to develop a list of the ten critical skills: 1) sense-making, 2) social intelligence, 3) adaptive thinking, 4) cross-cultural competency, 5) computational thinking, 6) new-media literacy, 7) transdisciplinarity or the ability to understand concepts across multiple contents, 8) design mindset, 9) cognitive load management, and 10) virtual collaboration (Davies, Fidler, & Gorbis, 2011). In order for future applicants have been able to meet the requirements of these skills, the report suggested that schools could do their part to prepare the workers. Within the educational setting students could

learn how to develop their critical thinking and analysis skills, as well as collaborate, work in groups, and learn to read and respond to social cues. Additionally, schools could provide an environment for students to learn about essential topics in multiple subject areas (Davies, Fidler, & Gorbis, 2011).

To better understand if high schools were serving their purpose, it was important to know if employers believed that students were prepared and ready after high school. Soulé and Warrick (2015) reported that a major shift has happened when the manufacturing sector was replaced by the service sector in terms of new job growth. Projections indicated that this trend was only going to continue. The demand for workers with a wide skill base which could have been applicable in multiple settings was high. Looking back nearly a decade before Soulé and Warrick's work a collaborative survey and report in 2006 illustrated the general opinion of employers in the United States with a sample size of roughly 400 responding to the basic concepts of student readiness (Soulé & Warrick, 2015). Those surveyed were asked questions regarding whether or not high school graduates exhibited the qualities they identified as being the most critical to be successful employees or students. The most important skills the employers identified were not directly related to knowledge of a content area but could have been applied to any environment were professionalism and work ethic, the ability to communicate, collaboration, and critical thinking or problem solving. The basic knowledge areas that were reported included speaking abilities in the English language, English reading comprehension, writing skills in English, mathematic skills, and a knowledge of science (Casner-Lotto & Barrington, 2006). When it came to these skills and whether or not students who were applying demonstrated them, the employers overwhelmingly reported that students did not have basic, foundational skills as well as other skills which were important to their respective field (Casner-Lotto & Barrington,

2006, Soulé & Warrick, 2015). Within the report, several transcripts of interviews with leaders of human resource departments quoted responses that indicated test scores and grade point averages did not indicate whether someone will be a good employee for the company, but rather a candidate's display of professionalism during an interview was very important to them during the hiring decision-making process. They were finding, however, that applicants with a high school diploma and no further education lacked the skills or the ability to give the perception they had the skills that were needed for any position (Casner-Lotto & Barrington, 2006). The employers also reported that recent high school graduates were deficient in most all of the other aforementioned categories as well with the exception of being adequate in collaboration. More specifically, nearly seventy percent of students lacked the professionalism or work ethic and critical thinking skills that were required (Casner-Lotto & Barrington, 2006). In terms of basic knowledge, the reports from employers indicated that students were not ready for the workforce or postsecondary studies. Nearly three-quarters of respondents said that high school graduates were deficient in terms of their writing skills, slightly over half were deficient in their basic mathematic abilities, and nearly forty percent were deficient in their reading comprehension (Casner-Lotto & Barrington, 2006).

ACT WorkKeys. The ACT WorkKeys assessment, which was developed decades ago but had recently gained notoriety, assessed the areas of applied math, graphic literacy, workplace documents, applied technology, business writing, workplace observation, and fit (ACT, 2019a). ACT toted that the WorkKeys assessment was relevant to the current workplace industries of the time and employers and that the assessment encompassed skills and information that could have been applied to a variety of workplace environments (ACT, 2019a, LeFebvre, 2016.). Students who completed three of the five assessment areas in applied math, graphic literacy, and

workplace documents could qualify for a WorkKeys National Career Readiness Certificate (WorkKeysNCRC), which was offered in both English and Spanish. The certificate verified that students demonstrated high levels of competency in the skills involved in problem solving, applying information from documents to develop solutions to challenges, using mathematical reasoning, understanding graphic information, and reading comprehension. Employers could see the verification of the results of each assessment on the WorkKeysNCRC website (ACT, 2019b). The assessment had four levels based on overall test scores: Platinum indicated that a student has scored a level six or above on all three assessments; Gold was for a level five or above on all three; Silver was four or above; Bronze was for a level three or above for all three tests (LeFebvre, 2016). This information helped to inform employers of an applicant's strengths and readiness for their desired position. If an employer did not have this information about an applicant, they could have requested they take the assessment in order to have a better understanding of the position they may have been the best fit (LeFebvre, 2016).

The American Council for the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL)

History of ACTFL. While the lawmakers reauthorized legislation from 1965 by having updated policies, and changed names to what was now the ESSA, the American Council for the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) began in 1967 as a recommendation of the Modern Language Association Foreign Language Program Advisory Committee and continued to be a leading organization in the development of world language instruction. The founding goals for the organization and their continued work aimed to expand world language programs, to publish journals that informed teachers and other professionals in the field, develop standards of teaching languages, and provide a unifying body for all teachers of world languages (Roeming, 1976). Much of this work was done through advocacy by creating awareness of the benefits and

advantages of learning a language within society and this influenced changes in policies that effected language education (Moeller & Abbott, 2018). The mission of ACTFL, which was adopted in 2004, focused on the development of quality in the teaching and learning languages. This mission statement was also reflected in the vision statement that demonstrated the organization's understanding of the role of language and cultural understanding in a global context. The vision of ACTFL encased a variety of uses of language from professional to social needs as well as the need to be culturally aware and understanding ("About the American Council for the Teaching of Foreign Languages," n.d). To this end, over 12,500 professionals worked in various roles from teachers to administrators to business leaders and policy makers, which ensured that language learning opportunities were available for students.

One way of ensuring quality and fulfillment of the mission and vision of ACTFL was to set universal standards that were applied to the instruction and learning of all languages. In 1986, ACTFL first published *ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines* and in 1996 *Standards for Foreign Language Learning: Preparing for the 21st Century* which set the first iteration of standards that were continued to be used by teachers and students (ACTFL 50 Years, nd). These standards have been updated and edited, but they established the five main areas: 1) communication, 2) culture, 3) connection, 4) comparison, and 5) communities (American Academy, 2017, Minor, 2014).

Current world language enrollment. The National K-12 Foreign Language Enrollment Survey (2017) indicated that only eleven states in the United States had a specific requirement for graduation that included a world language class. Overall, roughly 20% of students in grades kindergarten through 12 participated in a world language class. The highest participation based on student population was in the District of Columbia where approximately 47% of students were enrolled in a world language program and followed by Wisconsin with nearly 36.5%. The

state of Kansas had nearly 15.5% of students, again K-12, enrolled in a world language class (The National K-12 Foreign Language Enrollment Survey, 2017). Looking more specifically at high school programs, 46% of schools reported having a Spanish program, 21% a French, nearly 9% a German program, and 3.5% an ASL program (The National K-12 Foreign Language Enrollment Survey, 2017). Within this report, the collaborators noted that it was very difficult to gather the data, that an estimated one-third of K-8 and less than half of high schools reported information and when contact was made, there was lack of knowledge regarding programs that were within the school and overall student participation. This lack of knowledge was widespread and significant enough to have been noteworthy and indicated an overall negative attitude about world language programs from some of those whom were contacted (The National K-12 Foreign Language Enrollment Survey, 2017).

ACTFL initiatives in the 21st century. ACTFL not only led the nation's teachers in standards, proficiency guidelines, and all of the technical behind-the-scenes operations for world language instruction, and they were also a strong advocacy organization for world language programs at all levels, from elementary through doctorate programs. Many of the ACTFL resources were shared at the annual conventions, through professional development meetings, publication series, and their website, all with the goal of increasing professional discussion and providing information for advocacy. This work helped to increase the outreach and awareness of the world language programs (Moeller & Abbott, 2018). Two of these initiatives included the Leading with Languages organization and the Seal of Biliteracy. Less than 10% of Americans were able to speak a second language, so increasing number was the mission ACTFL's Lead with Languages program (American Academy, 2017). This program worked to advocate for language learning to become a priority in schools and society (American Academy, 2017). These

efforts aimed to increase student participation in world language classes. Lead with Languages also focused on increasing the number of teachers that were qualified to teach in PK to 12th grade classrooms and connected various stakeholders to focus on collaboration, research, and policies. The organization also worked to support heritage communities to help explain the benefits of retaining their native languages while acquiring English in order to help students enhance their success in academics as well as later on in their careers (Moeller & Abbott, 2018). According to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences Commission on Language Learning (2017), the United States was behind most other countries in terms of the percentage of people who had some knowledge of a second language, and the United States needed more people that spoke languages other than English in many of the different economic sectors in order to help provide services for those who do not speak English. Examples of these fields were medical and legal aid. The commission also reported that access to technology increased learning opportunities, and learning a second language improved overall learning and social skills.

The Seal of Biliteracy was an indicator determined by the state or district that a student was proficient in English and another language (American Academy, 2017, Heineke, Davin, & Bedford, 2018). The first state to initiate this distinction for high school graduates was California in 2011 with Kansas joining in 2016 (Heineke, Davin, & Bedford, 2018). The Seal of Biliteracy was earned by any student that completed the necessary requirements and the indication of the award was done by placing a literal seal on the student's diploma and indicating the recognition on their official transcript. This meant that students with English as a native language who demonstrated proficiency in another language or students with a language other than English who demonstrated English language proficiency earned a Seal of Biliteracy after completing the necessary steps (Heineke, Davin, & Bedford, 2018). This opened up opportunities for students,

especially those who speak a language other than English as a first language, to earn an academic accolade to be added to their diploma and transcript which set them apart from other applicants' applications.

World readiness standards. One of the ways that ACTFL was helping to push the improvement and expansion of world language programs was to continue to develop nationally recognized standards that all states used and adopted in order to ensure students were being taught to high levels of proficiency from state to state, classroom to classroom. These standards were able to be applied to learners of all ages all languages (World Readiness Standards for Learning Languages, n.d.). Just as they were in the beginning, the ACTFL standards continued to focus on the 5 Cs of communication, cultures, connections, comparisons, and communities. These goal areas were designed to emphasize the need of using the target language outside of the classroom. A goal of ACTFL was that students of all grade levels and starting levels of proficiency would learn the language, these standards helped push students to apply their skills and cultural understanding to their future- whether it was in the workplace or in a postsecondary classroom. The ACTFL standards were written for three levels of language learners: novice, intermediate, and advanced (World Readiness Standards for Learning Languages, n.d.).

Communication. Cutshall (2012a) took an in-depth look at the communication strand within the ACTFL standard. She recalled what June Phillips said about the development of the standards, especially those that involved communication. The standards helped teachers better understand not only what to teach, but how it could be taught. By understanding what quality instruction looked like, all teachers made sure their students were prepared to maintain conversations in real-world contexts outside of the classroom. Within the communication strand, there were three main standards that involved three different modes of communication. Each of

these modes were grounded in the connection to the culture or cultures where the language was spoken: interpersonal, interpretive, and presentational. Minor (2014) also noted that the goal of communication was for students to learn how to use the language and not simply to learn about the language. In practice, this was a shift from focusing on grammar to focusing on usage. Communication was essential to function in various situations and purposes (American Academy, 2017). Interpersonal communication dealt with the type of communication that happened between individuals and included the participants having to negotiate a meaning of what was being communicated (Cutshall, 2012a). This type of communication was non-scripted and was a two-way conversation, such as one that would occur between two people at a store, on the phone, or at a restaurant. This form of communication was the exchange of ideas or information (Minor, 2014). Interpretive communication was when the communication that occurred was connected to a more cultural interpretation of meaning, and there was not another speaker to negotiate the meaning. This type of situation was typically when a learner was reading or listening to authentic materials. The student had an input of information from a painting or radio program, and they had to evaluate the information and then come to a conclusion (Minor, 2014). One important aspect to note was that interpretive communication does not mean that the learner was simply attempting to translate and comprehend, but rather they were trying to find the appropriate interpretation within the cultural context (Cutshall, 2012a). Presentational communication was often misunderstood as being the type communication that occurred when a speaker was giving a lecture-style presentation in front of a group. In reality presentational communication referred to any communication in which the message that was created was not able to be negotiated and there was not a consideration made for cultural context or understanding (Cutshall, 2012a). While this type of communication may have been a presented

speech, any kind of written or spoken communication that required the audience to interpret the meaning without an opportunity to respond was considered presentational communication. This type of communication was often scripted and did not occur in a natural setting.

Cultures. The significance of studying culture helped to give information context. When learning about daily routines, for example, teachers incorporated information about the daily routines of those that lived in a culture of the target language (Minor, 2014). Cutshall (2012b) added that the study of other cultures in their respective language helped the learner to learn about different people and ways of life. This helped learners to open up the world and consider ideas different than their own with understanding and competence (American Academy, 2017). Cutshall (2012b) shared that true communication in another language demonstrated a knowledge and sensitivity to a culture's perspectives. The ACTFL standards helped define what it meant to consider a culture's practices and products to the perspectives of those within that culture (Theisen, 2011). When it came to relating practices to perspectives, this standard focused on the practices of a culture such as the social interactions within the peoples of the culture, the use of space, or the perception of time. This standard brought forth an awareness that students needed to be able to display an understanding of this relationship within the culture(s) of the language they were learning (Cutshall, 2012b). Much like the aforementioned standard, this standard related the products to the perspectives. The products of a culture were typically tangible items that were used by those that lived within the culture, such as books, tools, foods, music, or games. Products also included intangible ideas such as laws or policies. (Cutshall, 2012b).

Connections. Cutshall (2012c) stated that if pressed, the connections standards were the ones that teachers would say is the least important and/or would spend the least amount of time focusing on. She argued, however, that all of the standard strands were crucial to learning a

language, and it was important to understand that everything students learn should be in the effort to connect the information to themselves or to other disciplines. It was through these connections that students were able to build on concepts and improved language proficiency. Minor (2014) stated that the incorporation of other subject areas helped to reinforce the information that students learned, and it provided opportunities for the use of authentic materials in the target language. To further the point, Minor added that when students learned more about various topics they could have actually used in conversation, students were more likely to use the target language outside of class. The first of the connection standards emphasized that students were to reinforce and deepen their knowledge of other subject areas through their study of a world language (Cutshall, 2012c). The content could be related to a variety of other discipline areas, such as history, science, social studies, or literature. Students should have been able to use the target language to learn more about the various topics, which would have not only helped to enhance their mastery in the target language but also would have also deepened their overall understanding of the topic or subject area. The second connection standard highlighted how students have better understood information or viewpoints through the target language and its culture. This standard defined that students gained information and identified various viewpoints different from their own that were only available through the target language and the cultures associated with that language (Cutshall, 2012c).

Comparisons. The comparison standards focused on students comparing their own experiences with those of the target language culture or cultures. Much like connections and communities, this standard was often misunderstood and underrepresented during instructional time by teachers (Cutshall, 2012c, Minor, 2014). Many teachers were able to point out explicit comparisons to their students, such as the differences or similarities in grammar structure or the

spelling of a word, but teachers needed to also allow the opportunity for students to organically discover comparisons during their time in the classroom. This standard, as Minor (2014) commented, went beyond a basic comparison of the target language and culture to the students' native language and culture and pushed students to identify patterns, make predictions, and analyze both the similarities and differences they identified. As Cutshall (2012c) discussed in regards to language comparisons, students were often be able to demonstrate their understanding of the target language through a comparison to their own language. Students were able to show what was the same by comparing sentence structure, word choice, grammar, and the types of words being used. Inversely, learners better understood the use of their own native language while they explored the context and use of the target language. Students were able to demonstrate an understanding of the concepts of culture by comparing the culture or cultures of the language they are studying and their own (Cutshall, 2012c). An example of this was demonstrated with *Cultura*, a program created by the French department at MIT. The program connected language learners in different parts of the world which allowed those from different cultures to help identify terms and acquire culturally appropriate meanings, which was often the connotation of the word and its translation. One example of this was when students were asked to identify what they associated with the term suburb. In the American context, a suburb generally had a positive connotation of a fairly safe neighborhood with fences, houses, and was quiet. In the French context, however, a suburb had a different connotation of being unsafe, dangerous, and heavily zoned (Cutshall, 2012c). By understanding the culture *and* the language, the cultural variation in the connotative meanings became much clearer. Without having the cultural comparisons, a learner could have assumed that the term suburb and its translation had the same meaning when they did not.

Communities. The last of the 5 Cs was communities. This standard was possibly the most difficult for classroom teachers to teach and implement because it focused on students' use of the language outside of their class time in authentic opportunities for interactions. This is something that teachers could not control or manage (Minor, 2014, Perrone, 2015). This, however, was arguably the most important of the standards because students were interacting with others in the target language in order to communicate in real-world situations (Perrone, 2015). One way to combat this was to bring authentic opportunities to the students by creating opportunities to travel to restaurants or museums during the school day or by bringing in guest speakers to interact with students (Cutshall, 2012d, Minor, 2014). Teachers and students could also take advantage of the technology that was available to connect with native speakers (Theisen, 2011). Perrone (2015) highlighted that this particular ACTFL standard was plural, meaning both school and global communities as well as lifelong learning were important. The communities that students were opened to in their world language class was not limited to their time in the classroom itself but is a lifelong opportunity to continue the interaction and learning. Cutshall (2012d) simply stated that students needed to use the language within the classroom and outside of the school setting. The last standard under the communities strand was to encourage students to use the target language beyond their experience in the classroom. The hope was that students would enjoy using the language and would continue to learn it on their own and reflect on their progress as they go (Cutshall, 2012d, Minor, 2014, World Readiness Standards for Learning Languages, n.d.).

Learning in the 21st Century

Education experts, business leaders, and various other stakeholders cited different skills and abilities as 21st Century skills, but researchers like Silva (2009) confirmed that the areas

identified were timeless skills that all students needed to know. There were new terms to describe these concepts: life skills, workforce skills, applied skills, digital literacy, or technology literacy. These skills have been required since the times of Socrates. The focus, Silva noted, is on these skills and how they transferred to the technology and industries of the time.

Partnership for 21st century learning (P21): History of P21 standards. The creation of the Partnership for 21st-century Learning (P21) began in 2001 and since its beginning the leaders and organizers continued to focus on advancing education for all students in schools across the United States. Many top companies and educational organizations were involved in the creation of the P21 standards. The education organizations included the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, the National Education Association, and Pearson. Business organizations involved in the P21 standards included innovative companies, such as Apple Inc., LEGO Education, and The Walt Disney Company (P21 Framework for 21st Century Learning, 2016). The intention of this collaboration was to encourage schools to combine the acquisition of knowledge with necessary supports that engaged students and prepared them for success in the 21st century in their work, personal life, and as productive citizens (P21 Framework for 21st Century Learning, 2016). In 2018, P21 joined Battelle for Kids, which was also established in 2001 with the goal of improving student achievement in schools in Ohio. This partnership had allowed for the goals of both organizations to be developed and to reach more students through the use of combined resources and complementing initiatives (Battelleforkids, About Us, 2018).

The P21 concept was a comprehensive framework that set definitions for students regarding not only the content knowledge but also the skills that students needed to succeed in the 21st-century. This framework identified the key subject areas of English, language arts, world

language, art, mathematics, economics, science, geography, history, government, and civics that included academic themes of global awareness and four types of literacy: financial, civic, health, and environment. This framework also incorporated technology, and life and career skills. The final area of this concept was the learning and innovation skills, which could be used in any context or environment: creativity, critical thinking, communication, and collaboration (P21 Framework for 21st-century Learning, 2016).

P21 Framework: A way of linking student skills and outcomes. The stakeholders that were involved in the development of the P21 framework came to a consensus when determining the knowledge and skills students would need in order to be prepared for their lives in the 21st century (Johnson, 2009). The visual of the P21 framework looked like a rainbow with several arches along the top and additional information on the bottom of the graphic. Along the top arch was the outcomes of the skills students acquired, which include life and career skills, learning and innovation skills, and information, media, and technology skills. Under these skills was a second arch with the key subjects and 21st-century themes, again with the student outcomes of learning with P21 standards. At the bottom of the rainbow-like figure were four semi-circular rings that included the names of the student support systems: Standards and Assessments, Curriculum and Instruction, Professional Development, and Learning Environments (P21 Framework for 21st Century Learning, 2016).

Overall, the P21 standards focused on interdisciplinary themes and put an emphasis on students gaining a deeper understanding of the 21st-century themes. These areas represented a way of creating integrated instruction and learning that met the needs of society both through knowledge and applied skills (Soulé & Warrick, 2015). The assessment of the standards should have been high-quality which included useful feedback for students and balanced the use of

technology with traditional methods. The overall goal was for more competency-based approaches to content and encouraged the use of technology as a tool. Additional goals included incorporating opportunities for problem-solving that were embedded in the methods used (P21 Framework Definitions, 2015, P21 Framework for 21st Century Learning, 2016). The student outcomes represented skills and knowledge that students should have mastered in order to be successful in living in the 21st-Century. (About Us-Framework, n.d.). The P21 outcomes recognized that today's society was saturated with access to technology and information, so within the information, media, and technology skills, students learned the skills to cope with the abundance of information that was available, the fast changes in types of technology available, and the ability to collaborate using technology. Lastly, P21 outcomes included life and career skills, which were for students that were college bound and for those who were entering the workforce after their secondary education, thus making the outcomes applicable to all students ("About Us-Framework," n.d).

P21 interdisciplinary themes. The interdisciplinary themes of the P21 framework were global awareness, financial, economic, business and entrepreneurial literacy, civic literacy, health literacy, and environmental literacy. Global awareness was the idea of learning about and from other parts of the world and a variety of cultures through working with diverse people and materials while having respectful conversations and learning environments (Oxford, 2010). P21 encouraged students to work with others to learn about other countries and cultures that were different from their own, especially those that were non-English speaking (Framework, 2019). Financial, economic, business, and entrepreneurial literacy regarded the consideration of larger economies when making personal choices and using these skills to participate in and better workplace environments and output (Oxford, 2010). Civic literacy instruction helped to inform

and encourage students to participate in civic duties by staying informed about what was happening around them at the local, regional, national, and global levels (Oxford, 2010). Lastly, health literacy encouraged healthy habits in terms choices, such as in nutrition and exercise, as well as being aware of public health and safety challenges and solutions (Oxford, 2010). This theme also encouraged students to set their own personal health goals and use the information they have learned to monitor their health (Framework, 2019). Lastly, environmental literacy was learning about and applying knowledge of understanding the environment and the conditions that have an effect on it. This theme also provided opportunities for students to investigate various environmental issues that were of personal interest and encouraged students to develop ways of protecting and preserving the environment (Framework, 2019).

P21 Learning and innovation skills: the 4 Cs. The discussion of this framework that included educators, civic and community groups, and business leaders led to the development of the framework as a whole. These leaders determined a set of skills they felt were essential to success in the 21st Century, with the learning and innovation skills being one strand. These skills were often summarized as the 4 Cs (Johnson, 2009). The 4 Cs of the P21 standards are: 1) critical thinking, 2) creativity, 3) communication, and 4) collaboration (P21 Framework Definitions, 2015).

P21 21st century skill: Critical thinking. Students that received instruction that involved critical-thinking were more willing to accept theories that were scientifically based and greater critical thinking skills are related to greater political participation (Guyton, 1988, Rowe et al., 2015). For these reasons, critical thinking skills were essential in preparing students for situations they may encounter in their futures. The four skills that fall within this category included: systems analysis, or the identification and determination of relationships between

variables to better understand the system; argument analysis, or drawing logical conclusions that were based on data or claims; creation, the creation of a strategy, theory, method, or argument based on evaluation of evidence; and evaluation, which was the judgement of the quality of procedures or solutions that involved the criticism of a work or product using a set of standards or framework. (Ventura et. al., 2017). The P21 standards focused on effective reasoning, the use of systems thinking, making judgements and decisions, and solving problems (P21 Framework Definitions, 2015). Critical thinking also required students to use other skills as well, such as communication to help analyze, interpret, and evaluate information (Preparing 21st Century Students for a Global Society, n.d.).

P21 21st century skill: Creativity. Although creativity was often thought of in terms of the arts, in today's world, creative thinking could have helped to find solutions to a gamut of problems that our world was facing, from the fast-changing economic challenges to concerns about Internet safety and data security. Creative skills in design and approach were important as companies looked for ways to make their products stand out when they were being mass produced (Preparing 21st Century Students for a Global Society, n.d.). As noted in "The Future of Jobs" (2016), the pace of scientific, technological, and engineering innovation accelerated in, which many were calling a fourth wave of the Industrial Revolution. While there was a variety of approaches to creative thinking, there were some things that helped learners in their development and defining of their creativity: a level of expertise in the subject, the ability to engage in unconventional thinking, intrinsic motivation to engage in creative applications, and innate personality traits, such as the willing and enjoyment of taking risks. (Lai et. al., 2017). In P21 terms, creativity and innovation were defined as thinking creatively, through using a wide range of creation techniques, creating new ideas, and elaborating on ideas to improve them, working

creatively with others to develop new ideas, demonstrate originality, and learn from mistakes, and to implement new innovations (P21 Framework Definitions, 2015).

P21 21st century skill: Communication. Authors and thinkers dating back to Aristotle understood the power that rhetoric (communication) could have. Aristotle focused his thoughts on rhetoric around three modes: ethos, pathos, and logos. These devices stood alone or were combined to make a more defined argument and a better appeal to the audience. Much later, in the 1960s, Shannon and Weaver developed their own model to better understand communication that contain the following elements: source, message, transmitter, signal, channel, receiver, destination, and noise. (Metusalem et. al., 2017). Although these two theories were developed hundreds of years apart, the essential elements of the speaker, audience, and message remained. Being able to communicate one's ideas and thoughts was a critical skill that was needed in the workplace or postsecondary study. Trilling and Fadel (2009) argued that communication skills were even more important in the 21st-Century because not all communication was occurring face-to-face because of digitalization and global access to technology. Those having a conversation with one another may not have been in the same place or time zone, but messages and ideas needed to be shared with one another in order to continue the work.

P21 21st century skill: Collaboration. Collaboration required that students worked together in a teamwork sort of fashion. This type of working environment was a skill that students needed to be taught how to function in and then they needed to be supported as they were working; it simply could not be assumed that students knew how to work with one another or that they were able to figure it out on their own. While collaboration skills were once seen as desired, they are now essential in the age of globalization and technology (Preparing 21st Century Students for a Global Society, n.d.). The P21 Definitions (2016) included that when students

work collaboratively, they demonstrated an ability to work in diverse teams with flexibility and a shared sense of responsibility that was needed to accomplish the goal as a unit. Collaboration, however, should not be confused with cooperative learning. Cooperative learning was a teaching method that was incorporated by the teacher to help students gain academic knowledge, while collaboration happened among the students, especially when they were working to complete a task or accomplish a goal (Lai et. al., 2017). As students were working together, they also needed to communicate their ideas and listen to others in order to understand and negotiate problems together (Bell, 2010). Students also needed to listen to one another, especially if there was conflict, and they needed to acknowledge other's strengths and skills, as well as adjust their desires to fit the needs of the group (Strathclyde, 2018).

ACTFL and P21

To better understand the need for students to have 21st-century skills and the impact world languages could have on the development of these skills as students prepared to enter college or the workforce, it was essential to better understand the intersection of the ACTFL and the P21 standards. While these concepts and standards were not new to world language educators, the focus and explicit inclusion of them in their teaching was a shift that was occurring as more districts worked toward preparing students for the 21st-century and not only for high school graduation (Preparing 21st Century Students for a Global Society, n.d.). The skills of leadership, adaptability, and person-to-person interaction were essential for students to succeed in the 21st-Century while navigating diverse environments and tasks (Oxford, 2010). Reports dating back to 2009 indicated that learning a world language was beneficial to students because it helped to support a well-rounded mastery of their first language as well as it enhanced their overall academic achievement. For example, students that learned a second language displayed

higher levels of language skills, wider ranges of vocabulary usage, and were able to perform better on memory-based tasks (Tochon, 2009). In addition, when surveyed in 2006, employers reported world language knowledge as one of the top five desired skills for high school graduates (Casner-Lotto, Barrington, 2006). These skills must be effectively and explicitly taught to students using a variety of teaching strategies and methods (Kivunja, 2014). The approach to world language instruction had also been updated to meet the demands of the 21st-century learner. Gone were the earlier days of focusing on isolated skills, only teaching the target language, or testing students to find out what they do not know. Here were the days of focusing on the three forms of communication, using the target language to teach other disciplines, and assessing students to find out what they could do with the language (Theisen, 2011). This concept of intersecting world language instruction and 21st-century needs was not lost on ACTFL or P21, as demonstrated by the document “21st Century Skills Map,” which outlined the P21 skills and the ACTFL standards with examples for each of the ACTFL levels (Theisen, 2011).

Critical Thinking. Critical thinking was not an explicit skill or standard that was addressed by the ACTFL standard strands, but students that were learning a target language were constantly having to put new information into context, analyze it for meaning, and work through problems. This complimented the P21 standard for critical thinking that required students to make choices based on information they have identified, analyzed, and interpreted (Theisen, 2011).

Creativity. Again, ACTFL standards did not have a specific standard labeled creativity, but students in a world language class were creative in the ways they approached and responded to a new language, culture, and perspective. They also used the target language in creative ways

that became more complex as they moved up the various proficiency levels from novice to advanced. The P21 standards also incorporated ways of being creative with the communication of ideas and approached problems or challenges with creative solutions. Both approaches required students to be receptive of new ideas and perspectives that may have been different than their own (Theisen, 2011).

Communication. Both ACTFL and P21 had standards with the label of communication. ACTFL and P21 focused on the use of language to participate in conversations, interpret meaning in written and spoken forms, and present ideas (Theisen, 2011). While the ACTFL standards divided communication into three modes, the P21 standards addressed all three in various ways. What was essential to both standards, however, was that the communication of ideas between two individuals or two groups was important. Communication skills in person-to-person interactions were important as well as one-way communication. Because of technology, it was important to be able to communicate ideas in ways that would be understood by the audience, which made communication with the use of technology very important (Preparing 21st Century Students for a Global Society, n.d.).

Collaboration. The ACFTL standard strand of connection included similar elements to the P21 standard of collaboration. For both of these standards, students worked with other students from other cultures in order to learn more of the target language and to learn more about the target culture. Both set of standards defined areas of working with others, being flexible with decisions, and making compromises to help establish agreed terms and understanding (Theisen, 2011). These skills were essential in a globalized world, especially when students demonstrated a knowledge and understanding of cultures that were different from their own (Moeller & Abbott, 2018). This ability was important in both the academic and workforce settings.

Interdisciplinary themes. In addition to the 4Cs and 5Cs, ACTFL and P21 standards complemented one another in terms of the content that is taught as well. ACTFL addressed content through the various strands, and P21 identified the key subject areas and interdisciplinary themes that were essential to learning. In terms of global awareness, which was the first of P21's themes, the ACTFL standards strongly supported this subject area. The strands of culture, comparisons, and communities explicitly detailed how students should have been more aware of cultures and perspectives other than their own. Students were able to better develop and respect the other cultures, views, and perspectives while interacting with others in the target language (Theisen, 2011). A true understanding of culture and language helped with negotiations and entrepreneurial pursuits within the global market, demonstrated a connection with the financial, economic, business, and entrepreneurial literacy theme, just as much as having an understanding of the functions of government in other countries and cultures could have had in terms of civic literacy (Theisen, 2011). Lastly, the ACTFL standards, especially in terms of comparison, helped to support the themes of health literacy and environmental literacy because students were able to be engaged with authentic materials in the target language which created a larger audience for issues that were happening throughout the world. Students were also able to use materials in the target language to learn more about how to take care of themselves and how to provide aide to others and the environment (Theisen, 2011). The interdisciplinary themes were incorporated throughout the study of a world language at each proficiency level.

Conclusion

Despite the development of NCLB and ESSA, rigorous standards and assessments, and collaborative organizations developing programs to reflect the needs of the 21st-century student and society, studies and reports indicated students were still not ready to enter postsecondary

institutions or the workforce with the necessary academic and practical skills that were needed to be successful. Nationally in 2018 only fifty-five percent of graduating students took the ACT and nearly forty percent of those students met the Benchmark Readiness scores in three of the four subject areas, and only twenty-six percent of students were likely to have the workforce readiness skills for top jobs (ACT, 2018b). The national average score on the ACT was 20.8, and the overall readiness levels in reading and math showed a decline, a trend that had continued since 2014 (ACT, 2018b). When considering the SAT, the average national score for 2018 was 1068, with an average of 536 in evidence-based reading and writing and 531 in math. Looking at the benchmark scores, less than half of the students met the minimum scores in both reading and math (CollegeBoard, 2019c). In addition, nearly thirty percent of students who took the SAT did not meet either the evidence-based reading and writing nor the math benchmarks (CollegeBoard, 2019c). More specifically in Kansas, nearly seventy percent of graduating students took the ACT and scored an average composite score of 21.6, which was a drop in both participation and average score from the results four years prior, and only close to thirty percent of students met all four areas of College Readiness Benchmarks (ACT, 2018). Additionally, less than thirty percent of students were likely to receive the Gold level of the ACT WorkKeysNCRC based on their composite ACT score, indicating that nearly seventy percent of students did not score high enough for the certificate (ACT, 2018a). Overall, nearly ninety percent of the graduating students in Kansas indicated that they would like to pursue postsecondary studies (ACT, 2018a).

In order to support the necessary academic knowledge and skills needed to be successful in postsecondary studies or the workforce after high school, instruction following the ACTFL standards in conjunction with the P21 standards could provide students with opportunities to practice skills, such as communication, collaboration, creativity, and critical thinking while

learning the academic knowledge they needed in order to be ready for whichever path they choose after high school, whether it was continuing to postsecondary education or entering the workforce.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to better understand students' and teachers' perceptions of whether or not a world language class can better prepare students with the 21st-century skills of communication, collaboration, critical thinking, and creativity to enter the workforce or post-secondary studies after high school graduation. In this study, a qualitative research approach was used to collect and analyze the information from the teachers and students involved which was most appropriate to answer the research questions while considering the factors of the population and sample sizes, the data collection procedures, ethical considerations, and the procedures used.

Research Questions

The focus of this research is based on the following research questions:

1. What are educators' perceptions of their impact on students' development of 21st-century readiness skills, such as communication, collaboration, critical thinking, and creativity?
2. What are students' perceptions of the impact their world language class have on the development of the 21st-century readiness skills, such as communication, collaboration, critical thinking, and creativity?

Description of Qualitative Research Approach

For this study, a qualitative research design was chosen and utilized to harvest authentic data from the participants who were teachers and students in a World Language class at a high school. The collection of data happened through surveys, which were the principal source of data. Information was also collected during small-group interviews, a focus group, and individual interviews. The researcher took notes throughout the interviews as well as audio

recordings when possible and appropriate. The artifacts for this study included written statements and notes taken by the students and teachers during the small group interviews as well as other documents collected by the researcher. This process was the best approach for this study because qualitative research is more holistic in nature and tends to focus on the overall scope of the problem other than the individual details. The goal of this research and the approach is to build a holistic picture and depth of understanding of the participants' perceptions rather than a numerical analysis of data. (Ary, Jacobs, Jacobs, Sorensen & Walker, 2014). Qualitative research was chosen because it allowed the researcher to collect a wide range of thorough data from the selected group of participants that were in a variety of world language classes. This type of research allowed for answers to be explained upon which was essential in understanding the perceptions of the students and teachers involved in the study.

This study calls for a basic interpretative study approach. The data collected through a variety of ways was used to gain a better understanding of the problem. While this approach may seem simple in nature, the gathering and synthesizing of data provided a better understanding of both teachers' and students' perceptions of the benefits of world language classes in relation to the overall preparedness for the workforce and post-secondary studies after high school graduation is a complex task. Participants began their involvement in the study by taking a survey which produced the bulk of information for the study. Participants were then asked to participate in small-group interviews which allowed the researcher access to the participants to ask more clarifying questions based on the general results from the survey. These questions were a mixture of open-ended questions and targeted questions to help foster a discussion among the participants that allowed the researcher to make additional notes based on the discussion. The information from the surveys and interviews was then used in the design of

questions for a small group interview and a focus group. These interviews were used as a check to collect additional information about the themes that emerged and gave the researcher an opportunity to follow-up on any areas that lacked information. The final data collection were individual interviews with teachers and students. These methods of research- the surveys, a small-group interview, a focus group, and individual interviews produced a sizable amount of data that aided in the formation of conclusions based on students' and teachers' perceptions.

Description of the Study Participants and Setting

The study was conducted in a high school with students in grades 9 through 12 in eastern Kansas with a student body population of approximately two-thousand students. This high school was the most ethnically/racially diverse in the district, of which fifty-two percent of students were White, twenty-eight percent Hispanic, eleven percent African American, and nine percent were of other minority groups (Kansas Building Report Card, 2018). The school itself was in an affluent county, but within the population of students within this school, forty-three percent qualified for Free/Reduced Lunch. The expected sample size for this study was fifteen students.

The teacher participants in this study were teaching the aforementioned students. The staff members represented three World Languages: French, Spanish, and American Sign Language. The teachers had a range of classroom teaching experience from 2 years to 15+ years. The education level of the teachers ranged from individuals having a Bachelor's degree to others having two Master's degrees in addition to a Bachelor's degree. The expected sample size for this study was five teachers.

The teachers and students responded to surveys and interviews by volunteering their time. The students who participated in this survey were in grade 12 and enrolled in a Level II or

above German, French, Spanish, or American Sign Language class. The group of students was chosen because the students were the closest to graduating high school and entering the workforce or applying to continue on to their postsecondary education. The data collection methods allowed the researcher to collect the data from a representative group of participants in an orderly manner. The participants provided information with the knowledge they were not going to be named in the study and the answers to the survey were anonymous and would only be used for the purpose of this study. Parents of the students were also notified of their student's participation and consented to their student partaking in the study.

Data Collection Procedures

The researcher began the study with following the prescribed procedures from the school district with regards to obtaining permission from parents or guardians for the students to participate in the study. Once permission was agreed to, the researcher followed procedures to obtain permission from the Carson-Newman University Institutional Review Board. Permission from parents and the Carson-Newman University Institutional Review Board were both required steps before beginning to collect data and research.

Upon receiving approval, the collection of data began with the distribution of anonymous online surveys using a Google Form to provide the teachers and students flexibility with the completion time. All participants were encouraged to provide feedback to the questions and offer any additional comments to their answer selection for each question. These surveys followed the Likert scale method. Each question required participants to select an answer from five pre-determined options and they were given the option to not answer the question. (Stephanie, 2015; Sullivan & Artino, 2013). The scale ranged from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree" with "undecided" as the middle point.

Participants were also asked to take part in small group or focus group interviews. The small group interviews included a group of five students. Focus group interviews were arranged with those that agreed to partake in a follow-up interview at the conclusion of the survey. During the small group interviews, the researcher audio recorded the participants' conversation so they could later be transcribed in order to have a better understanding and more critical analysis of the information. The researcher also took notes on the participants' responses, any major physical changes in posture or position, and asked follow-up questions to the group. The list of questions was predetermined. Follow-up questions were asked to clarify answers or to allow the participant to expand their thoughts or ideas. Again, all interviews were audio recorded along with notes that were taken throughout to document participants' answers. Following the interviews, the researcher conducted focus group meetings that targeted focus on the themes that emerged from the surveys and interviews. These final follow-up questions allowed for multiple responses and checks for the interviewer and an opportunity for the participants to reflect on their own participation on the development of their 21st-century skills and make positive changes to better develop their skills.

Ethical Considerations

All mandated and recommended procedures to obtain permission from the school district, building administration, and parents/guardians of students were followed in order to gain access to teachers and students. The Carson Newman University Instructional Review Board also authorized permission to conduct the study before any interactions with students or teachers began. To ensure that the parents, students, and teachers understood their participation in the study, all were asked to sign a permission form. Any parent, student, or teacher that did not complete the form was now allowed to participate in any form. All participants participated

freely and were able to object to or abstain from answering any of the questions that were asked. All participants were kept anonymous and any information that was collected from the surveys, small group interviews, or one-on-one interviews was kept confidential and used only for the purpose of this study. The names of any participants used within the reporting of the data do not reflect their true identity. There was also no identifiable information of a particular school or school district's name included in the reporting of the data. The transcriptions of the audio recordings were done with as much accuracy as possible and indicated when any person or school identifying information was included.

Before the data collection, all forms of ethical considerations were considered in order to prepare for any concerns of the participants or researcher. These considerations included the techniques that were used, the role of the researcher, the research design, and the autonomy that is involved in this form of research. Should a disagreement among different aspects of the study have arisen, the researcher had to deal with those by adjusting to appropriate methods. The researcher's role was to minimize this possibility as much as possible by all means. (Sanjari, 2014). The qualitative research method was used to explain, expand on, and clarify the perceptions of the participants, in order to better interpret the experiences and analyze the data. The collection of data was as thorough as possible with multiple collection methods being used, such as the audio recording and handwritten notes. Finally, when considering the autonomy of this qualitative research, it was important to ensure that participants were aware and informed of what they were consenting to. (Jelsma & Clow, 2005, Orb, Eisenhauer, & Wynaden, 2001).

Additional ethical considerations included the process of peer debriefing. The process of peer debriefing occurred when professional peers reviewed the collected information, such as transcriptions of interviews or survey results to confirm their accuracy, or checked the

triangulation of the data collection to ensure the multiple sources were being used to support conclusions. The triangulation of data meant that the researcher collected three sources of data from the participants-survey responses, interview notes, and interview transcriptions. The process of peer debriefing helped to ensure the researcher maintained accurate information and helped support the credibility of the study. Throughout the collection of the data, particularly during the interviews, the researcher also repeated information back to the participant so they could confirm the researcher's interpretation of what was said in order to strengthen the credibility of the responses and accuracy of the data. The researcher was also able to compare the notes taken during the interview with the audio that was recorded.

Data Analysis Procedures

Before the data as a whole could be analyzed, the researcher examined the data at the conclusion of each step of the collection process. The first sampling of data that was collected was the survey results. This preliminary data provided a foundation for the creation of the interview questions. The questions were focused on the areas that students and teachers rated overall very high and very low, allowing the researcher to better understand the survey results. After the small group interviews were conducted, the researcher was able to further analyze the data to prepare for the one-on-one interviews and focus groups. The interviews and focus groups helped to give the perspectives of individual teachers and students. Each interview consisted of a number of pre-determined questions posed to a group of five students and the responses were audio recorded and notes taken during the interview.

The data collected from the students and teachers with surveys, interviews, and focus groups were analyzed using three coding types. Coding is the process of determining the researcher's perception of the data and interpretation of the results. (Hedlund-de Witt, 2013).

The three types of coding used with the data were: open coding, axial coding, and selective coding. These three types helped to narrow the scope and focus of the information. Open coding was used as the initial stage of analysis as it is the reading through of the information and the formation of categories. (Grinter, nd). The information was read through and commonalities were determined. The second was axial coding, or the determination of connections from the various samples of data. (Grinter, nd). During this process, notes from the surveys were compared with those from the interviews. Lastly, selective coding was used to determine the core information for each of the areas that were considered for the students' and teachers' responses. (Grinter, nd). This multi-step coding allowed the researcher to focus on different aspects of the data to better understand the overall process and a chance to reflect on the information when creating the conclusions.

Summary

To best represent the data in this qualitative study, all informed and permission-granted students and teachers partook in surveys, interviews and focus groups, and the information was used to inform the researcher's questions of the perceptions of preparedness with 21st-century skills among the students and the impact on teaching among the teachers. The triangulated data was collected from multiple sources: a survey, small group and one-on-one interviews, and focus groups, which were all confidential with the identities and locations of the participants kept anonymous. In addition to ensuring anonymity of the participants, the researcher ensured that all procedures for obtaining permission to work with teachers and students was obtained from the Carson Newman Instructional Research Board, the school district, building administration, and the parents or guardians. The collected data were analyzed using open, axial, and selective coding in order to better understand the data and report accurate findings.

Chapter 4: Presentation of the Findings

Introduction

The question of whether or not world language classes were helping students to develop 21st-century readiness was the focus of this qualitative study. The collected information was collected to examine and analyze the perceptions of 12th-grade students regarding their experiences in their world language classes and personal feelings of 21st-century readiness as well as world language teachers to get a better understanding of whether or not they perceived their classes as being a factor in students' 21st-century readiness. This study consisted of twenty total participants, fifteen of whom were 12th-grade students and five teachers at a large suburban school in eastern Kansas. Anonymous online surveys were administered to all of the participants, followed by a small-group interview with five student participants, a focus-group with three participants, and concluded with three individual student interviews. Two teachers also participated in individual interviews after the data was collected from the surveys. The survey that was given to the teachers consisted of eight statements with a five-point Likert scale and four additional multiple-choice questions and an open-ended question. The survey that was given to the students consisted of nineteen statements with a five-point Likert scale, eight multiple choice questions, and one open-ended question.

The participants chosen for the study were 12th-grade students enrolled in a Level 2 language class or higher and teachers that were in the world language department. The teachers chosen for the individual interviews were done at random, and it is unknown whether or not they completed the anonymous survey. The students chosen for the small-group interviews and focus group were picked at random after their participation with the online survey. Throughout the data collection, the researcher collected notes as well as audio recordings when possible and

appropriate. The researcher's notes described the responses given by the participants, as well as any observations regarding their body language, change in demeanor, expression, or attitude. The research methods and process used in this study were to answer the following research questions:

1. What are educators' perceptions of their impact on students' development of 21st-century readiness skills, such as communication, collaboration, critical thinking, and creativity?
2. What are students' perceptions of the impact their world language class has on the development of the 21st-century readiness skills, such as communication, collaboration, critical thinking, and creativity?

Participant Demographics

The study was conducted in a high school with nearly two-thousand students in 9th through 12th grade and approximately one-hundred fifteen teachers in eastern Kansas. The sample size of students, all of whom were in 12th grade and enrolled in a Level II or above world language class, was fifteen and the number of teachers was five. This high school's population was the most ethnically and racially diverse in its district, of which fifty-two percent of students were White, twenty-eight percent were Hispanic, eleven percent were African American, and nine percent were of other minority groups. In terms of economic diversity, forty-three percent of students within this school's population qualified for Free or Reduced Lunch (Kansas Building Report Card, 2018).

At the conclusion of the survey, the researcher selected participants for the interviews. The researcher verbally asked the students if they would be willing to participate in a small-group interview or focus group. The names of those who affirmed they would be interested in participating were recorded. The five participants for the small-group interview were

immediately selected and the three for the focus group were given information on when to report for a meeting. After the initial collection of the small-group and focus-group interviews was complete, it was determined that more information was needed, therefore, an additional three students were contacted to participate in individual interviews. There was a group of five students, three female and two male, that participated in the small-group interview. The focus group consisted of three students, two female and one male. Only one student, a female, participated in both the small-group interview and the focus group. Three students, two female and one male, participated in the individual interviews.

Survey Data

The survey designed for the teachers was sent via email with a link that directed the participants to a Google Form. Teachers were able to complete the survey sent on April 4, 2019 and the results were collected at the end of the school day on April 5, 2019, allowing for teachers to respond to the form at a time that was convenient for them. The survey for the students was also a Google Form, which was accessed using their personal cell phones or their school-provided laptops, using a link that was provided via email. All of the survey responses were anonymous, but the students were gathered into a classroom on April 4, 2019 for an estimated fifteen minutes to complete the survey. The students were gathered in a classroom so that the researcher could explain the process of completing the survey, the role of the researcher, and to ensure that each student understood that their responses would be kept anonymous. The researcher also wanted to ensure that the students understood their consent and provided the students an opportunity to ask any questions. The researcher also wanted to be available to the student participants while they were taking the survey in case there were any questions or if any of the survey items required clarification. None of the students asked questions or for clarification during the survey. The

student survey was sent to thirty-one students, of whom fifteen replied, a forty-eight percent rate of return. Several students were absent the day the survey was given and others were unable to leave their class to participate, which contributed to the less than fifty percent rate of return. The teacher survey was sent to eight teachers, of whom five replied, a sixty-two and a half percent return rate.

Survey Appendices. The survey statements and questions for the teacher survey and student survey could be found in Appendix A. Also in Appendix A were the guiding questions for the individual student interview, the small-group interview, and the focus group. Lastly, the individual student and teacher interview questions are also listed in Appendix A.

Teacher Survey Data

The eight statements teachers ranked using a five-point Likert scale regarded the American Council for Teachers of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) standards and their relationship to the 21st-century readiness areas of creativity, critical thinking, collaboration, and communication and the impact teachers perceived to have on improving each of the skills within their students. Table 4.1 displays the overall percentages for each of the ratings for four of the eight statements. Statements 1, 3, 5, and 7 asked teachers to rank their level of agreement with whether or not the ACTFL standards provide opportunities for students to practice the four 21st-century readiness skills.

Table 4.1

Results of Teacher Survey in Percentages

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
Statement 1	0	0	0	100	0
Statement 3	0	0	20	80	0
Statement 5	0	0	20	40	40
Statement 7	0	0	0	40	60

According to the results, the teachers reported that the ACTL standards support 21st-century readiness to varying degrees, with at least eighty percent of each statement being ranked as agree or strongly agree. Statement 1 regarding creativity was ranked by each teacher with a four out of five on the Likert scale, which was labeled with Agree. A full description of the scale ratings can be found with the survey questions (see Appendix A). Statement 3 regarding critical thinking was ranked with twenty percent undecided and eighty percent agreeing. So while a majority of teachers still agreed that the standards provided opportunities for critical thinking, none of the teachers rated it strongly agree and one teacher was undecided. Statement 5 regarding collaboration was ranked by one teacher with a three and two teachers each chose agree and strongly agree. Statement 7 regarding communication was ranked by three of the teachers with a five of five on the Likert scale with strongly agree and two teachers chose a four, which was agree. It was noteworthy that Statement 1 and Statement 7 were the two with responses that were only a combination of agree and strongly agree, showing that one-hundred percent of the teachers believed the ACTL standards provided opportunities for students to be creative and communicate. Overall, the ranking of these statements indicated that teachers perceive the ACTFL standards as providing students opportunities to use the 21st-century skills.

Once it was determined that teachers did in fact perceive the ACTFL standards as providing opportunities for students to use the 21st-century skills, Statements 2, 4, 6, and 8 were examined to better understand teachers' perceptions of the impact their instruction had on the development of each of the skills. Statement 2 focused on creativity, Statement 4 focused on critical thinking and problem-solving, Statement 6 focused on collaboration, and Statement 8 focused on communication. Teachers gave identical rankings for these statements as they did for the aforementioned odd-numbered statements. Overall, they felt their instruction most supported students' creativity and communication followed by critical thinking and collaboration.

The next part of the survey involved teachers' perceptions of what a majority, meaning half or more, of their students would be doing after high school graduation and the skills associated with success in the workforce and success in a postsecondary institution. When asked if they knew what a majority of their students were planning to do within six months of graduating high school, four of the five teachers reported believing their students would go to a postsecondary institution and one of them said they believed fifty percent or more of their graduating students would be entering the workforce. None of the teachers reported that a majority of their students would enter the military.

To better understand the skills teachers perceived as being important for the 21st-century workforce or postsecondary education, teachers were asked to select three items from a list of skills and characteristics they felt were important to employers. Of the list provided (See Appendix A) teachers had a variety of responses that included all of the options except academics or grade point average, basic math skills, basic reading skills, creativity, and resume. Figure 4.1 shows the varying percentages of the responses from the teachers based on the skill or characteristic.

Figure 4.1

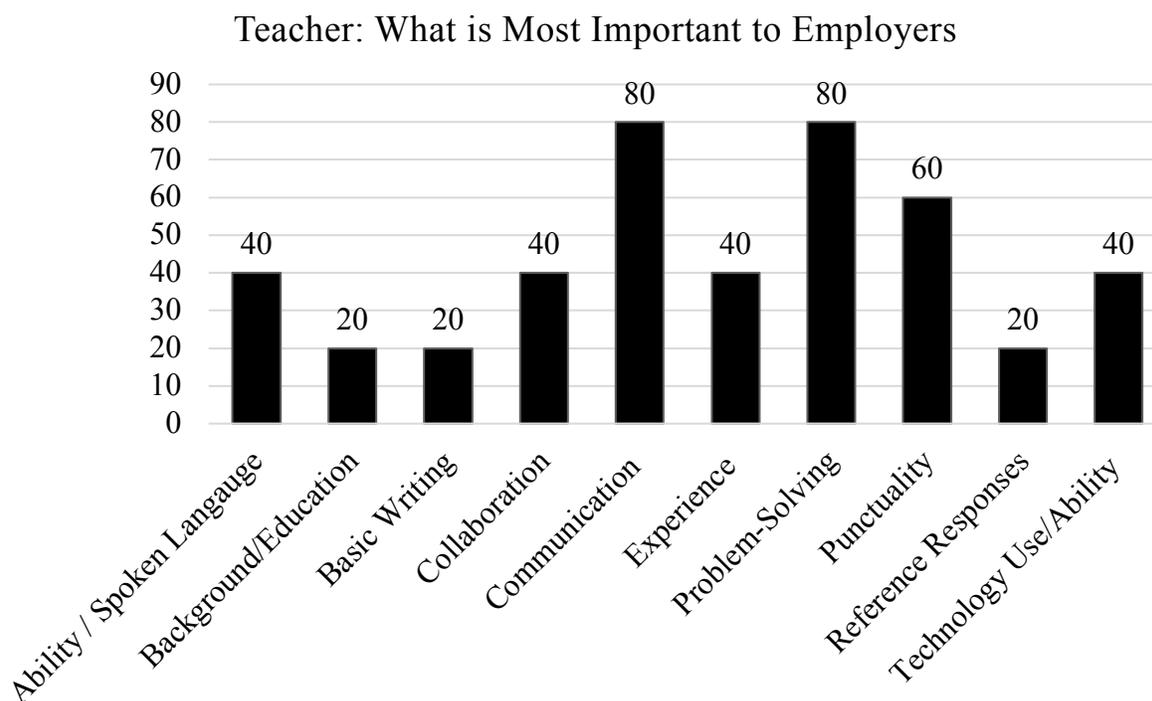


Figure 4.1 shows the top ranked skills or characteristics important to employers according to teachers' perceptions

Eighty percent of teachers chose communication skills and problem-solving skills from the list of skills and characteristics. Punctuality was second most selected, with three teachers selecting it as an important skill or characteristic.

Teachers were also asked to select the three things they felt were most important for success at a postsecondary institution. The only skills or characteristics that were not selected from the list were basic math skills, reference responses, and resume. Figure 4.2 shows the overall percentages of the selections made by the teachers.

Figure 4.2

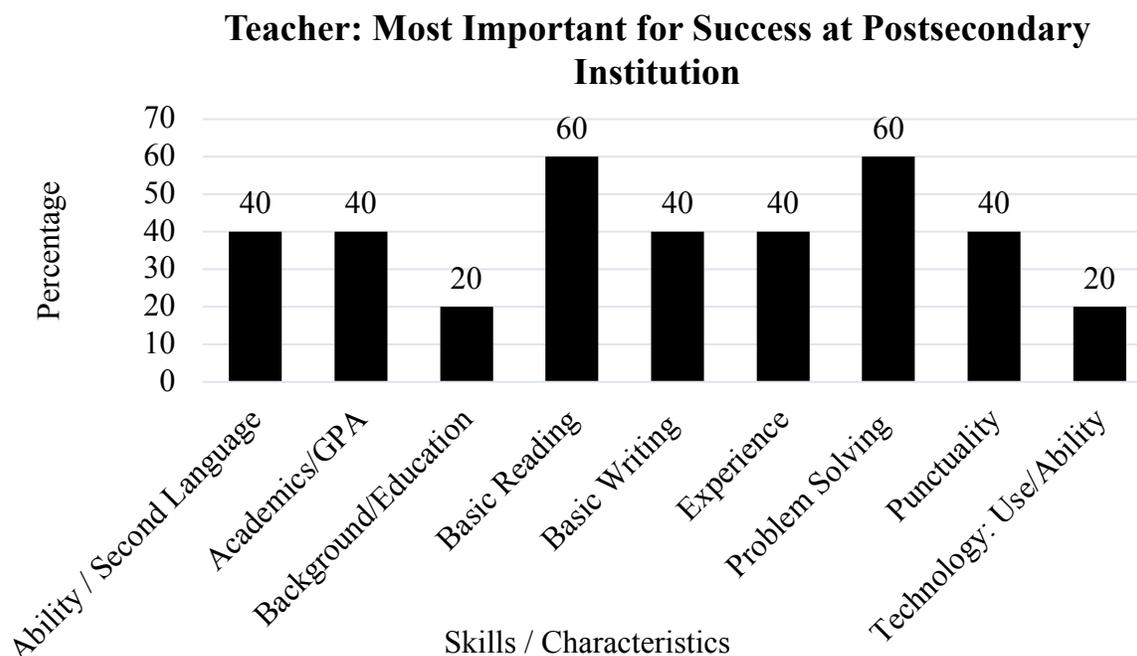


Figure 4.2 shows the top ranked skills or characteristics important for success at a postsecondary institution according to teachers' perceptions

The information from Figures 4.1 and 4.2 help provide insight to the skills that teachers feel are important for the workforce and for postsecondary education. Teachers identified three of the four 21st-century skills in what they perceive as important to employers and one of the four 21st-century skills as what they perceive as important for success at a postsecondary institution.

One teacher left the following comment on the survey:

I think being multi-lingual is important. I also believe and have had been told that having a language at some jobs isn't necessary, but it does help. I also believe that standards, curriculum, and pedagogy need to be aligned to meet the workforce and global needs and it be real-world and not dull.

Student Survey Data

The nineteen statements the students ranked using a five-point Likert scale focused on the four areas of 21st-century readiness of creativity, collaboration, critical thinking, and

communication. Statements 1, 6, 10, and 14 provided the overall thoughts about whether or not students believe their world language class provides the opportunity for them to use the skill, which are displayed in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2

Overall Percentages of Student Survey: Statements 1, 6, 10, 14

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
Statement 1	0	0	20	60	20
Statement 6	6.7	20	26.7	26.7	20
Statement 10	0	0	13.3	46.7	40
Statement 14	0	6.7	6.7	46.7	40

The survey results indicate that eighty percent of students strongly agree or agree they have an opportunity to be creative, nearly half of the students strongly agree or agree they have opportunities to think critically, roughly eighty-seven percent strongly agree or agree they have opportunities to both collaborate and communicate with others. The highest percentage of students that indicated they disagreed with a statement was regarding critical thinking, with one student choosing they strongly disagreed and three students choosing they disagreed. One student also reported disagreeing that their world language class provided the opportunity to collaborate, another student ranked the same statement as undecided as well.

The other statements with the five-point Likert scale use the language from the Partnership for 21st Century Learning (P21) standards to better understand the students' perception regarding the detailed elements of each of the readiness skills. Table 4.3 displays the results as percentages.

Table 4.3

Overall Percentages of Student Survey Statements with 15 Participants

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
Statement 1	0	0	20	60	20
Statement 2	0	0	40	33.3	26.7
Statement 3	0	6.7	6.7	53.3	33.3
Statement 4	0	0	0	40	60
Statement 5	0	6.7	33.3	33.3	26.7
Statement 6	6.7	20	26.7	26.7	20
Statement 7	0	0	13.3	46.7	40
Statement 8	0	0	6.7	40	53.3
Statement 9	0	6.7	26.7	20	46.7
Statement 10	0	0	13.3	46.7	40
Statement 11	0	0	0	13.3	86.7
Statement 12	0	6.7	46.7	40	6.7
Statement 13	0	6.7	6.7	60	20
Statement 14	0	6.7	6.7	46.7	40
Statement 15	0	0	13.3	66.7	20
Statement 16	0	6.7	13.3	66.7	13.3
Statement 17	0	13.3	6.7	53.3	26.7
Statement 18	0	13.3	13.3	46.7	26.7
Statement 19	0	0	0	73.3	26.7

As previously discussed, Statement 6 was the statement with the largest range of responses and the only statement that a student rated with strongly disagree. Statements 7, 8, and 9 used language from the P21 critical thinking sub-standards. By examining the responses to these statements, it was clear that students were actually using critical thinking skills more than their response to Statement 6 indicated. When considering the total number of students that selected strongly agree and agree, thirteen students reported they were able to identify words or phrases to better understand a passage as a whole. In addition, fourteen of the fifteen students choose strongly agree or agree that they are able to compare their experiences with others. Lastly, ten of fifteen students strongly agreed or agreed they are able to use technology to solve problems in their world language class. Again, these three statements are the sub-standards for

critical thinking in the P21 standards, so while students ranked the general statement regarding critical thinking overall lower than the other 21st-century skills, when looking at the related statements, students reported the more detailed statements much higher.

When analyzing the results from the survey, Statements 11 and 19 also were noteworthy. Statement 11 asked students to rank whether or not they have worked in a small group or with a partner on a project or assignment. Statement 19 was whether they practice reading, writing, listening, and speaking in their world language class. In these statements all of the students selected they either strongly agreed or agreed, making these statements the only two where all students chose four or five of five on the Likert scale.

In addition to the five-point Likert scale statements, students also completed several multiple-choice and selection questions. These questions were used to provide some context for the students' perceptions and insight into their future plans. The first multiple-choice question was what students were planning on doing within six months of high school graduation, to enter the workforce, attend a postsecondary institution, join the military, or there was an option to fill in an additional answer. Eighty percent of the students reported they planned to go to a postsecondary institution and twenty percent reported they would be entering the workforce. Additional questions asked students to select the most important characteristic or skill they felt was important to employers and the most important characteristic they felt was important to be successful at a postsecondary institution, regardless of their plans for six months after high school. Figure 4.3 displays the responses regarding characteristics or skills students perceived employers would find most important and Figure 4.4 shows the responses regarding characteristics or skills students perceived as being important to being successful at a postsecondary institution.

Figure 4.3

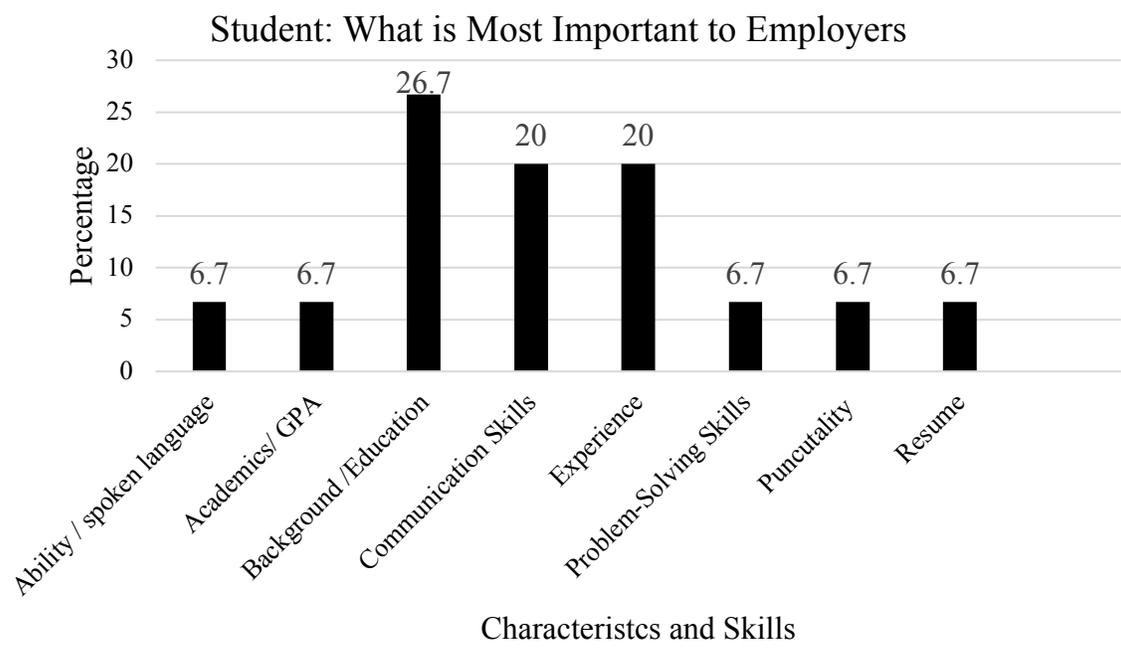


Figure 4.3 shows the top skills or characteristics important to employers according to students' perceptions

Figure 4.4

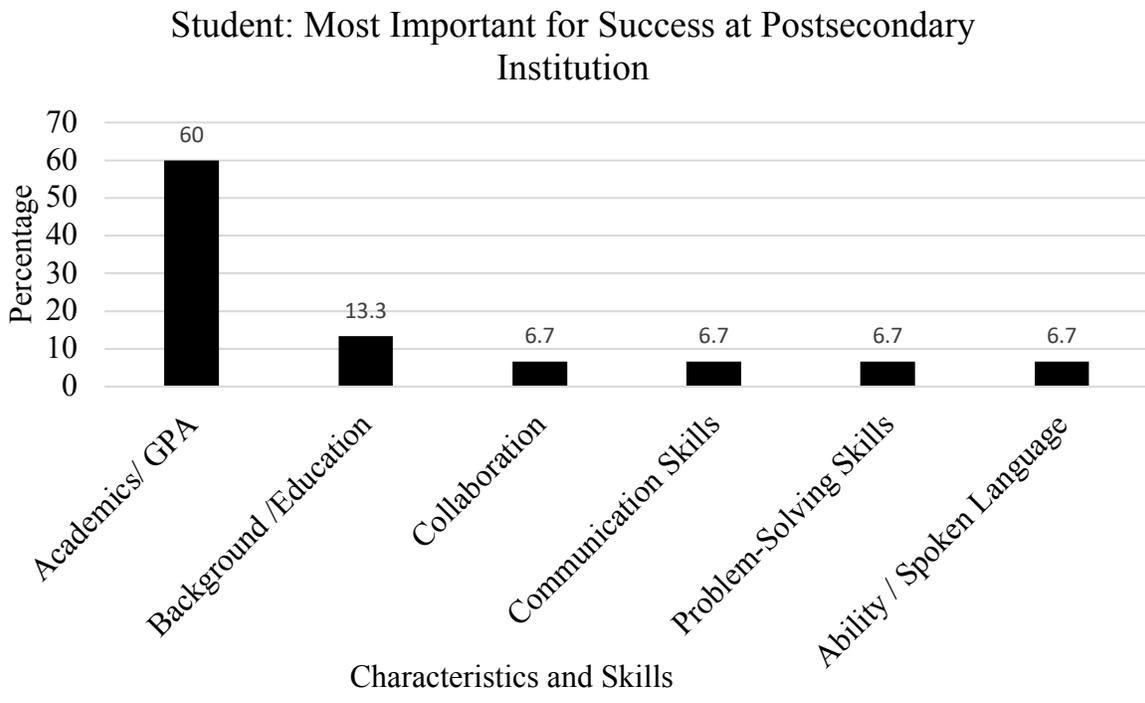


Figure 4.4 shows the top skills or characteristics important for success at a postsecondary institution according to students' perceptions

Figure 4.3 shows the skills students perceived as being important to future employers. Overall, students chose eight different skills. Four of the fifteen students choose background or education as being the most important, and three students each chose communication skills and experience. The ability to speak a second language, academics or GPA, problem-solving skills, punctuality, and resume were each chosen by one student.

Figure 4.4 shows the results to the students perceptions of what they feel is most important to be successful at a postsecondary institution. Academics or GPA was the most selected answer, with nine of fifteen students choosing this option. Two student chose background or education as their answer. No students chose basic math skills, basic reading skills, creativity skills, experience, punctuality, reference responses, resume, or technology use/abilities as the most important characteristic or skill to be successful at a postsecondary institution.

One student provided a comment on the survey:

I am currently enrolled in two world language classes. Learning American Sign Language has definitely been more helpful than German class in the way it has been taught and how much we need to communicate using the presented language. However, I enjoy the projects that are presented in German class more-so than the ones in Sign Language.

Individual Teacher Interview Findings

Two teachers were chosen at random and agreed to participate in individual interviews, which were conducted on April 10, 2019. It is unknown if the teachers that participated in the individual interviews took part in the online survey. The teachers were asked five questions (see Appendix A) and given time to respond to each question. Each interview lasted approximately fifteen to twenty minutes. Throughout the interview Teacher A and Teacher B both provided information about each of the questions which deepened the researcher's understanding of the survey results. While the teacher participants were giving their answers, the researcher took

notes. At the conclusion of the interview, the researcher read back the notes to the participant and asked for any clarification as needed. This process of member checking ensured the accuracy of the data. At the conclusion of the interviews the researcher debriefed with a peer to discuss the collection method and the information reported by the teachers.

Student Interview (Small-Group, Focus Group, Individual) Findings

The small-group interview was conducted on April 4, 2019. A group of five students met for approximately twenty-five minutes. The researcher began the interview with a reminder to the students that the data would be for the final project of a doctoral degree and that the group interview would be audio recorded. After receiving verbal confirmation that they understood the purpose of the interview, the researcher began to record and interview the group using the guiding questions (see Appendix A). These guiding questions were based on the results from the survey and were intentionally open-ended to allow the students to have a conversation among themselves with the researcher observing. Additional questions were used during the interview as follow-up questions to clarify the guiding question or were used by the researcher to help maintain the conversation. Throughout the interview the researcher took notes on what the students were discussing, changes in their body language, and any observable changes in demeanor or attitude. The researcher would read back the notes that were taken about the details of the answers to ensure that they were accurate before moving on to the next guiding question. At the end of the interview, the researcher paraphrased the discussion as a whole and asked the participants if there were additional thoughts or questions. This process of member checking helped to ensure that the researcher was understanding and collecting the answers as they were intended by the interviewees and the notes were accurate. After the small-group interview, the

researcher consulted with a peer to debrief details regarding the collection process and the data that was collected as another way of ensuring the fidelity of the data.

The data from the small group interview was coded and the same procedures that was used with the small-group was followed again on April 5, 2019 with a focus group of three students. As previously stated, one student participated in both the small-group interview and the focus group. In order to better communicate information for the first question, the opinions of the students in regard to what employers would find most important in an employee and what would be needed to be successful at a postsecondary institution, the list of characteristics and skills was written on the board for the students to see. (See Appendix A.) Following the same procedures as the small-group interview, the researcher received verbal confirmation that the student participants understood they were being audio recorded and notes were being taken. Although audio recording is not required for focus group interviews, the researcher chose to use an audio recording so that it could later be used as a reference during the data coding process if needed. Throughout the focus group, member checks were conducted to ensure information was being accurately collected. Following the interview, peer debriefing occurred once again to ensure the fidelity of the data and collection methods. After the conclusion of the focus group, it was clear additional information was needed from both teachers and students. In order to collect the additional information, the researcher conducted individual interviews with students. This additional data provided the most specific details, which was the final data component for this study.

The Process of Coding

The data collected from the teachers and students with surveys, small-group interviews, focus group, and individual interviews were analyzed using three types of coding, which helped

to build an interpretation of the results (Hedlund-de Witt, 2013). The three types of coding used with the data were: open coding, axial coding, and selective coding. The following description is an example of how the coding processed work, using the student data as an example:

The initial type of coding, open coding, occurred as a first step in each part of the process with the survey results, the small group interview notes and transcriptions, the focus group notes, and the individual interview transcriptions and notes. Open coding is used to better understand the data and to develop the main categories of information. This process was done by reading through all of the data to determine the commonalities within the information (Grinter, nd). Open coding revealed that students felt their world language classes provided opportunities to learn and use the 21st-century readiness skills. The next type of coding was axial coding, which is used to determine connections among the main categories that were determined during the open coding. During this process, a closer look at the main categories that were identified in the open coding are considered once more, looking for more in-depth commonalities. It was during this stage of coding that it was clear students felt their world language classes helped them to develop skills in creativity and communication the most followed by collaboration and then critical thinking. The results from the survey indicated to the researcher that this area needed to be further investigated in the small-group interview, the focus group, and the individual interviews. During selective coding, the final step of the coding process, all of the data was used to determine the essential themes and ideas. Figures 4.5 and Figure 4.6 provide a visual representation of this process. Figure 4.5 contains information regarding the responses from the teachers to the survey. Figure 4.6 contains information from the students, from the survey, small group interview, and focus group interview. In both figures, the column on the left contains the raw data, which are quotes from the small-group interview, focus-group interview, or individual

interviews or are numbers from the survey. The next column to the right is the list of the common categories that were determined after open coding, with more specific themes in the axial coding. The far right and last column is the final statement identified in the selective coding.

Figure 4.5

Coding Process for Teacher Survey Data

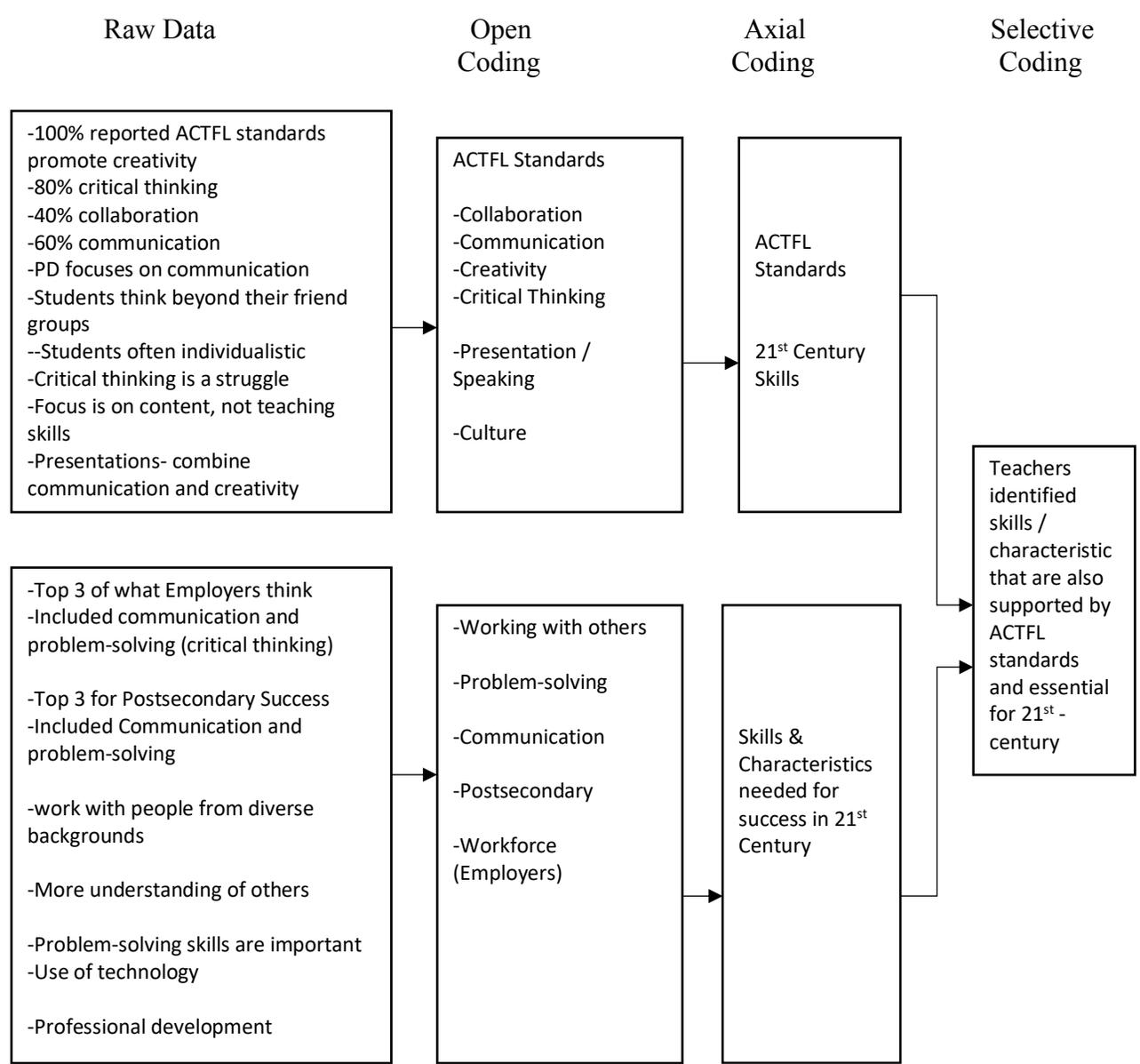
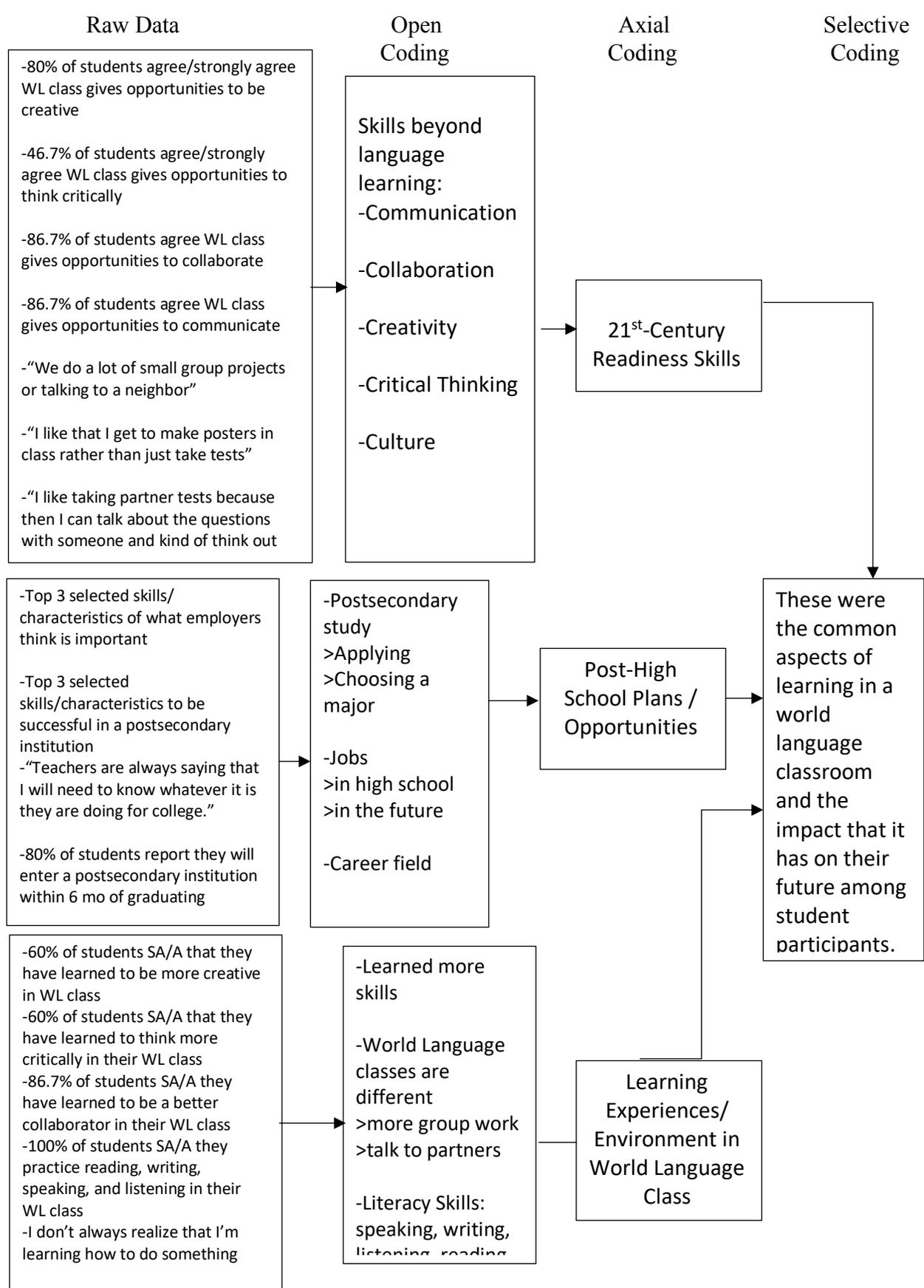


Figure 4.5

Coding Process for Student Data



Analyzing Data: Teacher Results

The survey given to teachers was to gain insight to the research question: What are educators' perceptions of their impact on students' development of 21st-century readiness skills, such as communication, collaboration, critical thinking, and creativity? Ultimately, coding revealed the themes of 21st-century readiness skills within ACTFL standards, what was perceived as being important for students in their future employment or postsecondary education, and the areas of 21st-century readiness they felt they had the most impact in terms of improving students' skills through their instruction.

ACTFL Standards. The survey questions with a targeted focus on the ACTFL standards provided an overview of how the teachers perceived the standards as supporting the 21st-century readiness skills. The individual interviews revealed additional information that provided insight into the teachers' perceptions of the impact their instruction has on students' overall readiness. The teachers also identified in the survey that their students' skills in communication and creativity were most improved through their instruction, but in the individual interviews, the variation of the Likert ratings was made more clear, Teacher A and B had differing experiences when it came to the incorporation of these skills in their instruction. Teacher A commented, "The professional development at the district level has frequently focused on skills because our World Language coordinator is pushing educators to adapt ACTFL standards and we are encouraged to develop communicative strategies to use in our classrooms." Teacher A continued, "I think my students are really good with communication because I encourage them to practice presentational and interpersonal production of language constantly. They have to create their presentation, so it helps with those creativity skills too." Teacher B responded that they did not feel they were as supported in knowing how to teach the skills saying, "You just have to try things sometimes and

then change it for the next year if it doesn't work." Teacher B felt that the communication and creativity skills are often connected to the ACTFL standard strands within culture, but that it is "so hard to teach culture because it is one of those things they just have to experience. It doesn't make sense that you can order a plate of cheese unless they have been there, and I can't always recreate that to make it real for them."

In addition to communication and creativity, teachers ranked statements about collaboration and critical thinking. These rankings were overall lower than the rankings they gave creativity and communication. This is true for their perception of the ACTFL standards providing opportunities for students to use those skills and their impact on improving these skills within their students. During the individual interviews, both teachers commented on collaboration and critical thinking. Teacher A said, "I think students struggle with collaboration because at this age they tend to be pretty individualistic." Teacher B commented, "My students struggle with critical thinking because they just don't know how to plan things and where to get started with something." Teacher A also commented on critical thinking, "I see my students using problem-solving when addressing interpretive tasks because my use of authentic materials is deeply linked to this idea of having students having to make inferences and construct their own interpretation of the text." The final statement from Teacher B during the individual interview was, "I don't feel like professional development focuses enough on how to do things. You just have to learn how to do things in your class with your students on that day because there may be interruptions, like an announcement, or sports, or something else that happens." These statements indicated that teachers had a varied understanding of critical thinking, how it is incorporated in instruction, and how students are being presented these various skills within instruction, which indicates an affirmation of the lower rankings of their levels of agreement with the survey

statements.

Skills/ Characteristics Students Need. The second theme that was developed during coding was the emphasis teachers put on the various skills they perceived as important for success in a postsecondary institution or within the workplace. The survey results indicated that teachers felt a variety of skills were important for both postsecondary education and the workforce, may come from the teachers' personal experiences in both postsecondary education and the workforce. When asked during the individual interviews about their inclusion of the skills they ranked as being important, Teacher A and B focused mostly on the communication and collaboration skills. They perceived these skills as not only being the focus of their professional development, but also were the most practical to incorporate in their daily instructional practices. In response to the inclusion of explicitly teaching the students 21st-century skills, Teacher B replied, "There's so much to cover, I don't put much thought into teaching how to do something for the activity, I just do the activity to teach the content." Teacher A reported, "In the end, I hope they will be able to understand people from diverse backgrounds better having been exposed to the difficulty of engaging in conversations in a foreign language."

Analyzing Data: Student Results

The survey given to students was to gain insight to the research question: What are students' perceptions of the impact their world language class has on their development of the 21st-century readiness skills, such as communication, collaboration, critical thinking, and creativity? Coding revealed the themes of 21st-century readiness skills as being essential to their future, whether it be in a postsecondary classroom or in the workforce, and that these skills were being taught and used in their world language classes.

21st-Century Readiness. Student responses to the survey showed overall agreement or

strong agreement that their world language classes were providing opportunities to use the 21st-century skills of creativity, critical thinking, collaboration, and communication. Just as the teachers reported higher overall rankings in communication and creativity, the students did as well. Therefore, students also ranked collaboration and critical thinking overall lower than the other skills. In the small-group interview, Student A reported, “We do a lot of small-group projects or talking to a neighbor.” Student B also added, “I like taking partner tests because then I can talk about the questions with someone and kind of think out loud. I feel like I get a better answer that way.” These statements revealed they were participating in learning opportunities that were allowing them to think critically, collaborate, be creative, and communicate ideas with peers. During individual interviews, the students often mentioned culture as being an important part of their learning. Student F felt, “learning a world language can help you when you are traveling gives a better understanding of certain cultures.” Student H reported that they perceived it to be important to themselves and peers to “take foreign language classes due to the fact that Spanish is becoming increasingly more widely spoken in the United States, and this may be a selling factor as the current generation of students is known for being drawn to practicality.”

When asked an open-question about what they have learned in their world language class, Student F said, “I have learned about different cultures, history, fun idioms, and the struggles of a language barrier.” Student H replied, “I have learned how to work through communicative barriers, how to find creativity and inspiration in projects, and how to appreciate people of other backgrounds more so than before.” Lastly, Student G replied, “I have learned a lot about the culture and way of life. So hopefully if I ever visit again, I will have good background knowledge. I have also learned a good background in the language.” The individual interviews, the small-group interviews, and the focus-group interviews revealed that the students were able

to identify the skills they were learning that were in addition to the content and language acquisition, which confirmed the survey results.

Post-High School Plans/opportunities. Another area that was identified during coding was what students would be doing following graduation. Eighty percent of students reported they would be going to a postsecondary institution. During the focus-group interview, Student C indicated they were going to college because they felt it was what they were supposed to do. Student E reported, “Most teachers don’t talk about getting a job after high school, just going to college.” Student G added, “It was really hard to figure out where to apply to because I don’t know what I want to do after. Business, maybe?” Within the survey students identified academics or GPA, background or education, and problem-solving as the essential skills for being successful at a postsecondary institution. This question was investigated further during the small-group interview when the participants were asked what they based their selections on since they did not have any experience in postsecondary education. Several students reported that teachers, some as early as middle school, would often make comments or justify assignments by saying that it would be something they would have to know for college or something they would do when they were in college. A couple of students also commented that parents would tell them various versions of school being important to prepare them for college. During the individual interviews, two of the students made comments about a world language class being an asset on a college application or something they would mention in a college admission essay.

In terms of thinking about entering workforce the survey results showed that only twenty-percent of students planned on doing so within six months of their high school graduation, rather than enrolling in a postsecondary institution. None of the students that participated in the small-group interview, focus group, or individual interviews planned to enter the workforce after high

school graduation. One of the questions on the survey asked students to give their perception of what would be most important to a future employer. In order to better understand if students had any experience with employment during high school, the students were also asked if they had had a part-time or summer job during high school. Seventy-five percent of the students reported having a job during high school. During the small-group interview the discussion among the students led to comments about having jobs while in high school. During this discussion a few students said that their high school jobs had been helpful to them because in addition to making money they also were forced to make decisions about how they would use their time because they would have to make plans around their work schedule. The students also commented on how they had to plan ahead and make arrangements with other co-workers if they needed to make any changes to their schedules. While this part of the discussion was not originally planned, the researcher felt it was relevant because it demonstrated that some of the students did have first-hand experience of being in the workforce. Keeping this in mind, it provided some insight as to why students may have identified background or education, experience, and communication skills as being most essential to employers.

Learning Experiences/Environment in World Language Class. The third area that was identified during open coding was the learning experiences and environment students had experienced in their world language classes. Over half of the students strongly agreed or agreed they have learned to be more creative in their world language classes and over eighty-five percent of them felt they became a better collaborator because of their world language class. All of the students reported their world language class provided opportunities for them to communicate, and over eight-five percent of the students reported their world language class made them a better communicator. Student D reported, “I feel like my German teacher makes us

work with people we wouldn't choose sometimes so that we have to talk to people we don't know. I don't always like it, but I get why we should do that." Student E added, "I don't always realize that I'm learning how to do something, but when I think about it now, I guess we do learn how to do a lot of stuff."

Summary

The data in this qualitative study was collected from a group of fifteen 12th grade students and five teachers. Teacher participants answered ranked statements in a five-point Likert scale survey and answered multiple choice questions in an online survey. In addition to the survey two teachers were individually interviewed. Through coding, it was determined that the teachers perceived a connection between the ACTFL standards and the P21 standards and felt their instruction had a positive impact on their students' improvement of these skills. The fifteen student participants also took an online survey and five students participated in a small-group interview, three participated in a focus group, and three students participated in individual interviews. Through coding, it was determined that students perceived a connection between their world language classes and improving their 21st-century skills of creativity, critical thinking, collaboration, and communication.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

Summary of the Study

This qualitative study examines teacher and student perspectives of the impact world language instruction has on 21st-century readiness. Using the Partnership for 21st-Century Learning (P21) standards, the 4 Cs of creativity, critical thinking, collaboration, and communication have been identified as essential skills for students to have in order to be successful in the workforce or in postsecondary study in the 21st-century. The American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) standards are followed by world language teachers and include five main areas: 1) Communities, 2) Communication, 3) Cultures, 4) Connections, and 5) Comparisons (Kansas Curricular Standards for World Languages, 2017). Having examined the literature and dissecting the information from both sets of standards, the overlapping of ideas and concepts provides an opportunity for world language teachers to address the P21 standards through their world language instruction. The purpose of this study was to better understand if teachers and students were perceiving this to be happening in the classroom and what impact the world language instruction had on the students' 21st-century readiness. Data for this survey were collected through anonymous surveys, a small-group interview, a focus group, and individual interviews. To ensure the fidelity of the triangulated data and collection methods, member checking and peer debriefing were used by the researcher throughout the process. The data collected was then coded using open, axial, and selective coding to determine commonalities and essential themes on which to focus the analysis. The goal of the study was to add to the general knowledge regarding student readiness for the 21st-century and to use this insight to work with professionals to develop better professional development to help support teachers in learning how to implement effective teaching methods in the areas that

teachers and students find challenging. While learning content is important, it is equally important that students are learning how to use skills that are essential to success in both the workforce and postsecondary studies. High schools across the country have found ways to improve graduation rates, so study adds to the knowledge of how to improve the skills and characteristics graduates will have to help them have successful futures.

Research Questions

The questions that were essential to this research are as follows:

1. What are educators' perceptions of their impact on students' development of 21st-century readiness skills, such as communication, collaboration, critical thinking, and creativity?
2. What are students' perceptions of the impact their world language class have on the development of the 21st-century readiness skills, such as communication, collaboration, critical thinking, and creativity?

Discussion

The research questions for this study were investigated through the collection of data from surveys of both teachers and students, a small-group interview with students, a focus group with students, and individual interviews with both teachers and students. The analysis of the data (see Chapter 4) showed that overall teachers perceive their instruction as having a positive impact on the development of students' 21st-century readiness skills. The analysis of the data from the students also indicated students also found their world language classes had a positive impact on their 21st-century readiness skills. The following discussion will examine the teachers' perceptions of the impact their instruction has had on the students and the students' perceptions of the impact their world language classes have had on their 21st-readiness.

Teacher Perceptions. As stated above, the first research question focuses on teachers' perceptions of their impact on the development of 21st-century skills within their students. To investigate this question, the data from the survey was coded to determine the common themes within the data. Because of the formation of the questions and the use of the five-point Likert scale, the themes that were easily identifiable in coding were ACTFL standards, as well as the 21st-century skills of communication, collaboration, creativity, and critical thinking. The other major theme that emerged was the focus on the future of students after high school graduation.

ACTFL standards. The research of both P21 and ACTFL standards revealed that the language used in both sets of standards complemented one another in a way that if a teacher were using the ACTFL standards to inform their instruction, they would address the P21 standards. According to the teachers' reporting and the students' responses to the survey and interview questions, the teachers are using the ACTFL standards in their classes. Interestingly enough, both teachers and students ranked the areas of communication and creativity higher than they did critical thinking and collaboration. The teacher interview responded revealed that a majority of the professional development teachers within this district receive focuses on students communicating with one another using various forms of communication, such as presentational or interpersonal that were discussed in Chapter 2. Because the teachers feel most comfortable with these types of in-class methods, it is not surprising the students ranked this area higher since they are exposed to this type of skill the most. Critical thinking was the skill that students and teachers ranked lower than the other skills, although a majority of participants responded that they believed the world language instruction or class had a positive impact on their development of the skill. Teacher interviews illustrated that the inclusion of critical thinking is less explicit than the other skills because the students consistently have to use critical thinking when working

with authentic texts, which they often do in class. This was also supported by the students' responses to the statements in their survey that were related to critical thinking. Students identified they could use technology to help solve problems and they are able to use the words they can interpret to help determine the meaning of a whole text. These skills are critical thinking skills but the students did not seem to be able to make that connection when providing a ranking for the more generalized statement. Because of the differing of responses, it can be inferred that the teachers are in fact helping to build these skills, even if students are unable to identify that they are critical thinking skills.

Postsecondary education or workforce. The teachers also reported on whether they thought a majority of their students would enter postsecondary studies, the workforce, or the military after high school. When asked what they thought half or more of their students would be doing, eighty percent reported they thought their students would be entering postsecondary studies, and twenty percent thought half or more of their students would be going into the workforce. This number was the same as what the students themselves reported, which demonstrated to the researcher that the teachers are aware of what their students' intentions after high school. The researcher could also conclude these teachers are more likely to be able to identify the specific needs of their students as well. The survey results revealed the teachers understood that the 21st-century skills were among those that were essential to both employers and to be successful in postsecondary education because they chose these skills at significant rates. If they see these skills as important, they are more likely to include them in their instruction, even if they are doing so without making the conscious decision to. Since they have demonstrated they are attuned to their students' situations and needs, the teachers help students

by adapting their instructional practices to better serve the areas that are challenging to the students. This approach seems to be effective as students rated the skills generally very high.

Student Perceptions. The amount of data collected from and about the students was much larger than the data collected from teachers because the students participated in a survey, a small-group interview, a focus group, and individual student interviews. During this coding process of data, three main themes of learning skills beyond the language, what to do after high school graduation, and the learning environment or experience in a world language class were revealed.

Learning skills beyond the language. Students presented their perceptions of how their world language class provides opportunities to use various skills and whether or not they have improved those skills because of their world language class in all of the forms of data collection. The coding process revealed many students were able to identify the skills they were learning and using in their world language classes, and they were able to identify activities or ways their world language class supports those skills. Many of the students, however, had not made the connection of improving their skills through those activities in their world language class, which was most evident in the survey data. Students ranked the general statements about each skill slightly lower than the statements that used the more specific details from the P21 standards. Further questioning in the small-group interview and focus group helped to provide more data and insight to this discrepancy. When observing the students during the small-group interview, focus group, and individual interviews, the researcher observed that the students did know what the language from the P21 standards meant and that they felt their world language classes were supporting those skills, but they would not have initially identified those skills as being part of critical thinking or collaboration, for example. This indicated to the researcher that students may

simply not be as aware of the actual terms, and this may be an area to explore further or focus on when developing materials for teachers or students.

Plans after high school. Eighty percent of students reported they would be entering postsecondary studies, meaning a college or university, junior college, community college, training program, or some other higher learning institution. The students in the small-group interview and focus group also spent a significant amount of time talking about this topic, nearly a third of the time for each discussion. The researcher took notes that several of the students shifted in their seats or hesitated when the topic of postsecondary studies was brought up in the discussion and that most students referred to and postsecondary education as college, regardless of where they were intending to study. Overall it was clear that the students perceived this avenue as what they were supposed to do or what they should do after high school, some of them even seeing it as the default option, even if they had no plan of what they wanted to study or what career they wanted to pursue later in their future.

Although none of the students in the small-group interview, focus group, or individual interviews indicated they planned on entering the workforce after graduating high school, the researcher still asked questions about this part of the theme. The students in the focus group shared thoughts of being surprised that the responses of what employers found important, and what researchers say is important for postsecondary study success was very different than the overall choices selected by themselves and their 12th-grade peers. This only pointed out that the students, although many of them reported having had a part-time job while in high school, were still not in-touch with what it was that would be needed to be successful in the workplace. The information collected about the students' thoughts and plans for the future signaled while students have been able to build the skills and characteristics that are needed for their chosen

paths, mainly postsecondary education, they require additional mentorship to guide them through the decision-making process of determining what they will pursue in the future to be able to make choices about what they will study and possibly what they will choose as a future career.

Environment and experiences in the world language classroom. The last theme that was revealed by the coding of the student data was the learning environment and experiences within world language classes. Students reported through their surveys and interviews they felt they were able to learn skills in their world language class, especially skills that are related to literacy. The literacy skills included reading, writing, listening, and speaking. All of the students reported they strongly agreed or agreed with the statement about this theme. In addition, throughout the small-group interview and focus group, the students discussed these skills while talking about activities, projects, assignments, tasks, and work they had done in their world language class. Several students made comments about not realizing they were not only learning the world language content but the literacy skills as well. While the inclusion of literacy skills was not a research question, its prevalence in the responses from the students marked this theme as being important to the study as well. In a similar conclusion about the need to be more explicit about the teaching of the 21st-century skills, the researcher also concluded that the students may benefit from teachers being more explicit about the literacy skills that they are learning through the world language content. In addition to the frequency of students discussing the literacy skills, many of the students expressed they found their world language classes to be enjoyable and the students had overall positive attitudes and comments about the instruction in their world language class. Even if a student were commenting on something they did not like, such as a particular test or assignment, they were still able to identify that it was to help them learn or that they perhaps had not prepared on their own or used the time they were given well. This overall

positive attitude about their classes gave the impression that the students enjoyed their experience in the world language classes, allowing the researcher to infer that the instruction, which was based on the ACTFL standards, was accessible and enjoyable to a variety of students with different interests, personalities, and learning styles.

Conclusions

As previously stated, the purpose of this study was to investigate teacher and student perceptions of the impact world language instruction had on the 21st-century readiness skills of creativity, critical thinking, collaboration, and communication. Through the use of surveys, a small-group interview, a focus group, and individual interviews, along with collected artifacts, the researcher was able to collect data from the fifteen student participants and five teacher participants in order to analyze it and draw the following conclusions:

- World language teachers incorporate 21st-century skills in their lessons when following ACTFL standards;
- The ACTFL standards support students learning skills beyond the language content;
- More work can be done to improve the strategies that teachers use in their instruction to help students develop critical thinking and collaboration skills in world language instruction;
- Students would benefit from metacognition strategies to identify learning strategies that include creativity, critical thinking, collaboration, and communication;
- World language classes support literacy skills as well as 21st-century skills;
- Students think world language classes are beneficial to their learning and for their future;
- A majority of students plan to enter a postsecondary institution yet are unable to identify skills that are most needed to be successful;

- Students need mentorship in order to help identify possible study or career fields of interest;
- Further research needs to be done in world language pedagogy to better understand the instructional practices that can be used to best support students.

In order for students to graduate high school with the skills and characteristics needed for success in a postsecondary classroom or in the workforce, it is important that world language teachers understand the impact their instruction can have on their acquisition of skills that are important for their future success. Teachers would benefit from having professional development in the areas of collaboration and critical thinking, and students need to become and made more aware of strategies they are using within their world language classes. With improved instructional practices and students that are more aware of the acquisition of skills, students will graduate high school more prepared with skills they can use in the 21st-century.

Implications

The results from this study indicate that world language classes have an overall positive effect on development of 21st-century readiness skills and that students benefit from the inclusion of these skills within the instructional practices of their teachers. This study indicated that students and world language teachers are able to identify that the learning environment within a world language classroom incorporates the 21st-century skills of creativity, critical thinking, collaboration, and communication. Teachers are able to use the ACTFL standards to inform their instruction, and these standards help to provide opportunities for students to use 21st-century skills while learning the content that is essential to language learning. If focusing on high school students, in order for more students to benefit from this instruction, enrollment in world language classes should increase. School counselors and other adult mentors should encourage students to

pursue at least two years of a world language. Along with increasing enrollment, world language teachers would need to be professionally supported by increasing professional development opportunities to remain current with pedagogical practices. Another important factor is to maintain reasonable class sizes so that teachers can continue to incorporate in-class instruction that involves students working authentic materials, and provides students opportunities to be creative, collaborative, problem solve, and communicate with one another. Another implication of this study is that if students reported benefiting from having two or more years of exposure to the ACTFL standards at the high school, it is possible that the inclusion of world language instruction in younger grades would increase the development of the 21st-century skills even more because the ACTFL standards are the same for each proficiency level regardless of the learners' age. Community stakeholders would need to advocate for the inclusion of world language programs in middle and elementary schools in order to make it a reality.

In short, many school districts are looking to improve the quality of graduates that their schools are producing. Rather than attempting to implement something that is new that does not have a lot data to support its effectiveness, districts can turn to something that is already available to them and is shown to be working: their world language departments.

Limitations

The major limitation for this study was the period of time in which the data was collected. The amount of time the researcher had with the students was limited due to a change in schedule to accommodate testing and many students were absent the day the researcher was with the students due to several field trips and sporting events. Had more time been available, more surveys, small-group interviews, focus groups, and individual interviews could have been conducted. A second imitation was the location of the study. This study was conducted in one

high school in eastern Kansas. Although the student population is diverse, a more in-depth understanding of this topic and research may be achieved by conducting the survey, small-group interviews, focus groups, and individual interviews in several different high schools with a variety of population demographics.

Recommendations for Further Study

The conclusions of this study indicated that more research can be done to better understand both teacher and student perceptions of the impact of world language classes and the relationship of 21st-century readiness. One recommendation is to gather data from a larger sample of students, some of whom have not taken any world language class and others who are in Level 2 or above, and compare their perceptions of their 21st-century skill abilities. A comparative study with this data would provide information as to whether or not world language classes have an overall positive impact on the improvement of 21st-century skills development. This study could also include student achievement data, such as standardized test scores or diagnostic assessments given to participants of the research. Another recommendation would be to examine the perceptions and experiences of teachers in world language classrooms that use the ACTFL standards to inform their teaching and compare those perceptions and experiences to world language teachers that do not follow the ACTFL standards. By better understanding teacher knowledge and practices, better professional development could be created to be prepare incoming novice teachers and to further the pedagogical education of experienced teachers. Further studies could help inform teachers, students, administration, as well as interested stakeholders within the postsecondary learning institutions and employers about the benefits of world language instruction, which may lead to an increased level of support in world language programs.

Summary

According to the data its analysis in this study, world language teachers using ACTFL standards to inform their instruction practices address the needs of the 21st-century by providing learning opportunities for students to incorporate their creativity, critical thinking, collaboration, and communication skills while learning content in a target language. Overall, the data from this study shows that world language classes have a positive impact on student's readiness for the 21st-century and that students enjoy learning in the world language classroom environment. Further research can be done to better understand the impact has on student achievement and 21st-century readiness. Additionally, programs and teachers can be more supported in order to expand programs and provide more students with the opportunity to learn a world language and the skills that are essential for the future success.

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Appendix A: Survey and Interview Questions

Appendix A: Survey and Interview Questions

Survey for Teachers

On a scale of 1-5, rate your feelings about the following statements.

- 1- Strongly Disagree
- 2- Disagree
- 3- Undecided
- 4- Agree
- 5- Strongly Agree

I do not want to answer this question.

1. The ACTFL standards allow for the opportunity for students to be creative.
2. I feel that my instruction has helped to improve my students' ability to be creative.
3. The ACTFL standards allow for the opportunity to challenge students to problem solve and/or think critically.
4. I feel that my instruction has helped my students to improve their problem-solving or critical thinking skills.
5. The ACTFL standards allow for the opportunity to create lessons where students collaborate with others.
6. I feel that my instruction has helped my students to improve their collaborative skills.
7. The ACTFL standards allow for the opportunity for students to communicate with others.
8. I feel that my instruction has helped my students to improve their communication skills.

What do you think a majority of your 12th grade students (roughly 50% or more) plan to do within 6 months of graduating high school? Choose 1.

Enter the workforce. (They will get a job.)

Enter postsecondary education. (They will go to college, junior or community college, or other technical training.)

They will enter the military.

Other, please describe.

What 3 things from the following list do you believe current employers "look for" in applicants applying for entry-level positions? Select 3.

Ability to communicate in spoken language

Academics / GPA

Background/Education

Basic math skills

Basic reading skills

Basic writing skills

Collaboration Skills

Communication Skills
Creativity Skills
Experience
Problem-Solving Skills

Punctuality
Reference responses
Resume
Technology use/abilities

What 3 things from the following list do you believe is important for being successful at a postsecondary institution (a college/university, junior/community college, technical program, etc.)? Select 3.

Ability to communicate in spoken language

Academics / GPA
Background/Education
Basic math skills
Basic reading skills
Basic writing skills
Collaboration Skills

Communication Skills
Creativity Skills
Experience
Problem-Solving Skills
Punctuality
Reference responses
Resume
Technology use/abilities

Survey for Students

- 1- Strongly Disagree (*I very much feel that I do not agree with the statement.*)
 - 2- Disagree (*I do not agree with the statement.*)
 - 3- Undecided (*I am not sure. I don't disagree with it but I also don't agree.*)
 - 4- Agree (*I agree with the statement.*)
 - 5- Strongly Agree (*I very much feel that I agree with the statement.*)
- I do not want to answer this question.

On a scale of 1-5 (using the descriptions above), rate your feelings about the following statements.

1. My world language class has given me an opportunity to be creative.
2. I have had opportunities to think about ways I can improve the quality of my work in my world language class.
3. In my world language class I have learned new things by creating something, such as a project or presentation.
4. I have used technology (such as a computer or cell phone) in my world language class.
5. I have learned to be more creative in my world language class.
6. My world language class has given me the opportunity to problem solve and/or think critically.
7. When reading something that is difficult in the target language, I am able to identify words or phrases that I know to help me understand the passage as a whole.
8. I am able to compare my experiences with those from another culture while respecting a different point of view.
9. I am able to use technology to help me solve problems in my world language class.

10. I have learned to think more critically in my world language class.
11. My world language class has given me the opportunity to collaborate with others.
12. I have learned how to collaborate better in my world language class.
13. I work with others that have different points of view than me in my world language class.
14. My world language class has given me the opportunity to communicate with others.
15. I am able to ask questions to help clarify the meaning of a word/phrase/sentences.
16. I have learned how to be a better communicator in my world language class.
17. I am able to express an idea in the target language when speaking.
18. I am able to express an idea in the target language when writing.
19. I practice reading, writing, listening, and speaking in my world language class.

What do you plan on doing within 6 months of graduating high school?

Entering the workforce. (I will get a job.)

Entering a postsecondary education. (I will go to college, junior or community college, or other technical training.)

I will enter the military.

Other, please describe.

Have you had a job while in high school?

Yes

No

If yes, describe:

What 3 things from the following list do you believe employers “look for” in applicants applying for entry-level positions? Select 3.

Ability to communicate in spoken language

Academics / GPA

Background/Education

Basic math skills

Basic reading skills

Basic writing skills

Collaboration Skills

Communication Skills

Creativity Skills

Experience

Problem-Solving Skills

Punctuality

Reference responses

Resume

Technology use/abilities

What 3 things from the following list do you believe is important for being successful at a postsecondary institution (a college, junior/community college, university, technical program, etc.)? Select 3.

Ability to communicate in spoken language

Academics / GPA

Background/Education

Basic math skills

Basic reading skills

Basic writing skills

Collaboration Skills

Communication Skills
Creativity Skills
Experience
Problem-Solving Skills

Punctuality
Reference responses
Resume
Technology use/abilities

Which 5 things from the following list do you believe your world language classes have helped you learn or become better at? Select 5.

Ability to communicate in spoken
language

Academics / GPA
Background/Education
Basic math skills
Basic reading skills
Basic writing skills
Collaboration Skills

Communication Skills
Creativity Skills
Experience
Problem-Solving Skills
Punctuality
Reference responses
Resume
Technology use/abilities

Small Group Interview Guiding Questions

1. Looking at the survey results, only about half of the students reported they felt that their world language class gave them opportunities to problem solve or think critically. Do you feel this is true in your experience?
 - a. *How have your world language classes challenged you to think in new or different ways?*
2. What kind of technology do you use in your world language class?
 - a. *Does your current teacher use Google Classroom, OneDrive, Schoology, or anything similar?*
 - b. *What does your teacher say or do if a student doesn't have their laptop in class?*
3. Do you think being in a world language class has overall helped you prepare for whatever you are going to do after high school?
4. When choosing what skills you thought employers were looking for, what did you base that on?
5. When choosing what skills you thought would be most helpful to be successful at a postsecondary institution, what did you base that on?

Focus Group Guiding Questions

1. One of the questions on the survey was about what you thought was most important to employers. On the board is the top five from the list that I found based on my research

and the top five answers that were given by the students that responded to the survey.

What are your thoughts about the two lists?

2. How do you feel your world language classes have been beneficial for reasons other than learning the target language?

Individual Student Interview Questions

1. If you were talking to an 8th grader that was trying to decide if they were going to take a World Language class or not (Spanish, French, German, ASL), what would you tell them? (In this case, you are not trying to persuade them what language to take, just that they should take a language class.)
2. What have you learned in your World Language class that you will use in your future?
3. Should more Seniors be in a world language class? Why or why not?

Individual Teacher Interview Questions

1. Has any professional development that you have participated in focus on skills rather than content? If so, what skills?
2. In what ways do you see students problem-solving in a typical lesson?
3. What advice would you give a brand new (to the profession) world language teacher?
4. Of the four skills (communication, creativity, collaboration, and critical thinking), which do you think struggle with the most? Which is their strongest?
5. How do you think students will use what they have learned in your class in their future?
 - a. What do you think students will use that they have learned in your class in their future?