

Introduction

Problem/Issue to be Addressed

This project investigates language teacher candidates' transition from theories in language teacher education programs to real K-12 teaching.

Literature Review

1. Despite its rapid development, K-12 Chinese language education in the U.S. has been facing tremendous challenges (e.g., Wang, 2009).
2. the gap between theory and practice has been recognized in second/foreign language teacher education (e.g., Freeman, 2007; Lantolf & Johnson, 2007).
3. Chinese teacher candidates often lack a comprehensive understanding of cultural differences between the U.S. and China (Arnoldy, 2007).

Purpose Statement/Research Questions

This study investigates how a three-week STARTALK program prepared student teachers of the Chinese language for their K-12 teaching in the U.S.:

1. What was their teacher's knowledge before the program?
2. What did they learn from the program?
3. How did their learning influence their teaching in K-12 schools?

Method

Theoretical Framework

Theories on teacher knowledge by Shulman (1987) and Freeman (2002).

1. Teacher knowledge is comprehensive, which integrates knowledge of pedagogy, content, students, curriculum, and context.
2. Second/foreign language teachers' knowledge is more complicated because their medium and target of instruction are the same

Research Method

Mixed method: Both quantitative and qualitative research methods are used

Data Collection and Analysis

Data collection:

1. pre-, mid-, and post-program surveys
2. teacher candidates' unit and lesson plans, written reflections, teaching videos, and self-assessments
3. program directors' written feedback and observation notes
4. group interviews with the candidates
5. mentor and program directors' evaluations

Data analysis:

NVivo 8 : Qualitative data
SPSS: Quantitative data

Findings and Conclusions

Findings

Complicated findings about Chinese teacher candidates' learning and transition to K-12 schools:

1. A gap between claimed teacher knowledge and actual performance in the program at the beginning
2. Improved performance because of learning and practice in the program, slightly lower confidence of teacher knowledge
3. Challenges in real K-12 teaching, especially in classroom management

Discussions

1. Apprentice of observation leads to teacher candidates' incomplete understandings.
2. Teacher candidates need guidance and practice to connect theory to practice.
3. Second/foreign language teachers face similar but also different challenges during their transition.

Conclusions and implications

1. The program helped teacher candidates improve their actual teaching skills, but only one program was not sufficient because of the nature of the program and complexity of teaching
2. Sustained assistance and mentoring should be provided for Chinese language teacher candidates.

