THE SOCIAL AND ACADEMIC BENEFITS OF SECOND-LANGUAGE LEARNING AT THE ELEMENTARY LEVEL
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Abstract

In response to global events and economies, the United States government has passed several initiatives for boosting world language instruction. Despite the push, world language instruction remains absent from most U. S. schools. The purpose of this review is to examine the effects of second-language learning at the elementary level. This review compares pedagogical approaches to foreign-language instruction and then summarizes research findings on the academic, social, and attitudinal benefits of second-language learning. Foreign language instruction at the elementary level fosters academic excellence, social advantage, and ethnic acceptance. Based on the presented findings, the reviewer advocates for elementary foreign language programs.
Chapter I: Introduction

At the beginning of the twentieth century, common thought was bilingualism handicapped academic success (Hakuta & Garcia, 1989). Then, in 1957, the Soviet Union successfully launched Sputnik, and the United States heightened efforts to keep pace in the space race. One measure was the passing of the National Defense Education Act of 1958, from which Foreign Language in the Elementary Schools (FLES) programs emerged. Foreign language (FL) instruction was perceived as a ticket to international enterprise and the safety and advancement of the United States (Naserdeen, 2001; Taylor & Lafayette, 2010). Recently, the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 designated foreign languages as core curricular subject areas. Despite that establishment, foreign language instruction is not a high priority for most districts because proficiency is not yet a part of state assessments and the money tied to achievement scores (Taylor & Lafayette, 2010). Furthermore, societal resistance spurs heated debate regarding the promotion of any language other than English in the American school system (Hakuta & Garcia, 1989). For these reasons, the importance of world language instruction remains questionable.

The defendant in the argument is the growing amount of research that suggests students learning foreign languages have an academic edge over their non-FL learning peers (Lazaruk, 2007; Naserdeen, 2001; Schuster, 2005; Taylor & Lafayette, 2010).

Early elementary is an opportune time for learning a second language because the human brain is twice as active at the age of four as during adulthood. High activity levels enable enumerable connections between neurons in the brain, affording enhanced proficiency. Children who learn a second-language prior to age 10 are more likely to speak with native fluency than are those who learn at later ages (Naserdeen, 2001). Furthermore, students who learn second-languages in elementary school have increased long-term proficiency, given the continuation of
A long-held belief is second language (L2) instruction interferes with the brain’s ability to acquire adequately a native language (Hakuta & Garcia, 1989). In contrast, the additive bilingual theory suggests learning a second language does not hinder academic potential. Students who receive L2 instruction have scored at or above their non-L2 peers on achievement tests while still possessing the skills to communicate in another language, indicating a causal relationship might exist (Hakuta & Garcia, 1989; Schuster, 2005; Taylor & Lafayette, 2010).

Other benefits of second-language learning include increased appreciation for diversity and enhanced creativity, mental flexibility, cognitive maturity, and strong communication skills. Long-term proficiency has also been linked to higher high school and college achievement scores as well as increased career opportunities (Lazaruk, 2007; Naserdeen, 2001; Schuster, 2005).

**Background**

In 2000, the U.S. population of foreign-born immigrants increased 11.1%, the largest increase for this demographic since 1930 (Gibson & Jung, 2004, as cited in Gingerich, 2007). Immigrant children attend American schools where the children receive English-language instruction to ensure continued academic success and progress. The U.S. educational system attempts to turn immigrant children into monolingual students while at the same time laments the absence of foreign language proficiency among its students (Simon, 1980, as cited in Hakuta & Garcia, 1989). Recent efforts aim to improve U.S. students’ competencies. For example, the Michigan Merit Curriculum requires all students beginning with the class of 2016 to earn two credits in a foreign language program. The State will recognize equivalent experience in elementary school as fulfilling the requirement. Such measures acknowledge that students who
receive instruction in foreign languages likely gain advantages over their non-FL-learning peers. For instance, students with four or more years of foreign language study scored higher on the verbal and mathematical portions of the Scholastic Achievement Test than did students without four years of study (Marcos, 1998, as cited in Naserdeen, 2001). Economically, certain job markets pay premiums to employees who speak foreign languages, especially for minority languages (Saiz & Zoido, 2005).

Statement of Problem

In response to global events and economies, the United States government has passed several initiatives for boosting world language instruction (Pope, 2008; Tardy, 2009; Taylor & Lafayette, 2010). Despite the push, world language instruction remains absent from most U.S. schools. In a survey sent to all 50 states and the District of Columbia in which 48 states responded, only 14.7 percent of junior high school students are enrolled in foreign language courses. A mere five percent of elementary students in 24 responding states receive non-exploratory world language instruction (Draper & Hicks, 2002). Low enrollment casts doubt on the importance of foreign language programs. The questionable necessity contrasts with research emphasizing the immediate and long-term benefits of L2 instruction. Bilingual education typically suggests assimilation of the English language, and although such programs are worthy of study, the scope of this review is limited to world language instruction as a second language. Therefore, bilingual will be understood as the ability “to use two languages” (Bilingual, 2010). The purpose of this review is to examine the academic and social effects of second-language learning at the elementary level.

Theoretical Framework

During the early school age years, higher order cognitive functions lead in developmental processing. The main features of higher intellectual functions are reflective awareness and
deliberate control, both of which are enhanced by second language study (Vygotsky, 1986). In the development of native language, primitive aspects of speech develop before complex aspects while the reverse is true of second language development. For instance, in one’s native language, development of concepts begins with the introduction of new terms. Foreign language study, however, does not repeat these original linguistic developments because L2 learners employ already established word meanings to bridge primitive aspects of language to complex aspects (Vygotsky, 1986). Additionally, some cognitive abilities, such as phonological awareness, transfer from L1 to L2 (Comeau, Cormier, Grandmaison, & Lacroix, 1999; Durgunoğlu, Nagy, & Hancin-Bhatt, 1993).

Vygotsky’s (1986) view parallels Diaz’s (1989) explanatory hypotheses for how the process of L2 learning affects cognition in young children. One hypothesis, “two worlds of experience,” suggests L2 instruction gives students another lens with which to view the world. Having two perspectives interferes with children’s natural egocentrism; thus, second-language learners decenter earlier than do monolingual peers (Diaz, 1989, p. 75). The second hypothesis implies cognitive flexibility as the result of code-switching, the ability to switch from one language to another. Diaz’s (1989) third hypothesis focuses on objectification. Certain aspects of one’s native language develop unintentionally, but when studying a second language, learners make a conscious effort to understand those same aspects. Objectification, then, creates awareness of not only the second language but of one’s native language as well.

Cummins proposes the existence of Common Underlying Proficiency (CUP). CUP is a set of skills and prerequisite knowledge that is the foundation for all language acquisition. A gain in CUP is a foundational gain and, therefore, developmentally beneficial to progress in both native and foreign languages. For this reason, learning languages becomes easier the more
languages one acquires (Shoebottum, n.d.). This phenomenon is also the basis of the additive bilingual hypothesis, which suggests a second language builds, or is added to, one’s native language. Instruction in L2 does not detract from learning L1; rather, both languages develop simultaneously (Diaz, 1985; Hakuta & Garcia, 1989).

All of these theoretical explanations rest on the belief second language proficiency depends on command of native language. Yet, native language is enhanced by L2 study because as Vygotsky wrote, “He who knows no foreign language does not truly know his own” (Vygotsky, 1986, p. 160).

**Research Questions**

This review presents research findings in response to many relative questions. (1) What are the pedagogical approaches to foreign language education? (2) How does learning a second language benefit the learners’ academic capabilities? (3) What are the social benefits of second-language learning? (4) What are students’ attitudes toward second-language learning?

**Definition of Terms**

Research on bilingualism and multilingualism frequently refers to L1, L2, and the methods of FL acquisition: FLES, FLEX, and immersion.

**Bilingual.** Bilingual is using or able to use two languages especially with equal frequency (Bilingual, 2010).

**Multilingual.** Multilingual is using or able to use several languages especially with equal frequency (Multilingual, 2010).

**FL.** The abbreviation for “foreign language” is FL (Sung & Padilla, 1998).

**Foreign Language in the Elementary Schools (FLES).** FLES is the most common foreign language instructional program in elementary schools. The goals of the program are
language achievement, appreciation for the people and culture of the language, and personal growth (Naserdeen, 2001).

**Foreign Language Experience or Foreign Language Exploratory (FLEX).** FLEX is an instructional program in which students are introduced to several foreign languages and cultures, each language and culture for a set amount of time (Naserdeen, 2001).

**Immersion.** Immersion is an instructional program in which L2 is the primary language of instruction (Lazaruk, 2007).

**L1.** Native language is abbreviated as L1 (Sung & Padilla, 1998).

**L2.** Second language is abbreviated as L2 (Sung & Padilla, 1998).

**Summary**

This review will highlight research regarding the educational effect of second-language instruction for elementary-age students. Since the turn of the twentieth century, bilingual education has experienced cyclical positive and negative attention. With a recent push in favor of foreign language education and an understanding of cognitive development, the academic and social benefits of second-language acquisition become more understood.
Chapter II: Literature Review

This chapter will address the research questions. First, methods for teaching foreign languages will be explained and compared. Then, research on the academic and social benefits of second-language learning will be reviewed.

Pedagogical Approaches to Language Instruction

School districts implement and build foreign language curriculums by taking into account the districts’ goals and student expectations. Then, schools choose an instructional program based on those considerations. The program options include Foreign Language Experience/Exploratory (FLEX), Foreign Language in the Elementary Schools (FLES), and immersion. The three programs have differing onsets, intents, and durations.

FLEX. FLEX programs consist of short-term exposure courses. Students study one or more languages and cultures for a determined amount of time. For example, during a nine-week grading period, students enrolled in the FLEX program study French for three weeks, Spanish for the next three weeks, and German for the remaining three weeks. L2 proficiency is not the goal of FLEX programs; rather, the aims are foundation and motivation. FLEX introduces students to language learning and cultural awareness, establishing a base for future language learning (Met & Rhodes, 1990; Naserdeen, 2001).

FLES. FLES, the most common foreign language instructional program, considers foreign language a distinct subject (Schuster, 2005). The optimal age for students to enter a FLES program is 8 or 9 years old (Naserdeen, 2001) although some schools start as early as kindergarten. Students receive 15 or more minutes of instruction one or more times per week. Language study focuses on listening and speaking proficiencies (Met & Rhodes, 1990). The goals of FLES are L2 achievement, acceptance of native speakers of the target language, and
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individual growth (Naserdeen, 2001).

**Immersion.** In an immersion program, the target language is not the content of instruction; the L2 is the means of instruction (Naserdeen, 2001). Immersion programs are classified as either total immersion or partial immersion (Comeau et al., 1999). Students in total immersion programs receive instruction for all subject areas in the target language. Total immersion programs in elementary school, known as early immersion, begin in kindergarten. For the first few years, L2 is used almost exclusively. Starting in second grade, instruction time in the native language increases each year until the sixth grade when students are proficient in both L1 and L2 (Naserdeen, 2001). In partial immersion programs, 50% of instruction is given in each L1 and L2 (Comeau et al., 1999). Another form of immersion program is two-way immersion, in which two groups of students, each with a different native language, are taught in both languages. The goals for all immersion programs are complete proficiency in first and second languages and mastery of grade level content according to district curriculums (Met & Rhodes, 1990).

**Review of Pedagogical Approaches**

In 1983, Campbell, Gray, Rhodes, and Snow (1985) compared the effectiveness of immersion, partial immersion, and FLES programs at the elementary level. Partial immersion programs typically teach 50% of school content in a foreign language. The partial immersion program participant in this study taught at least 70 minutes of FL per day.

A total of 382 elementary students from 15 public and private school districts participated in the study. Four school districts offered FLES programs ($n = 105$), three districts offered immersion programs ($n = 179$), and one district offered partial immersion ($n = 98$). At the time of the study, the district participating in the study was the only district in the United States known
to offer partial immersion. All participants studied either French or Spanish for four or more years.

All participants took the Modern Language Association Cooperative Test (MLA Test), an assessment of FL skill in reading, writing, listening, and speaking. Students took either the Spanish MLA Test or the French MLA Test. Results from this test were reported in terms of mean percentiles. In addition, students completed a student information and self-assessment form, a tool for gathering demographic data and perceptions of self.

Immersion students significantly outperformed FLES students in all four subtests. French immersion students scored in the 80th percentile on the listening portion, 99th percentile on the speaking subtest, 77th percentile on the reading portion, and 40th percentile on the writing subtest. French FLES students scored in the 14th percentile, 43rd percentile, 22nd percentile, and the 9th percentile, respectively. Spanish immersion students’ scores and Spanish FLES students’ scores showed similar disparities. Spanish immersion students scored in the 88th percentile on the listening portion whereas Spanish FLES students scored in the 22nd percentile on the same subtest. On the speaking subtest, Spanish immersion students scored in the 99th percentile; Spanish FLES students scored in the 65th percentile. Spanish immersion students placed in the 75th percentile on the reading subtest and 69th percentile on the writing test. Comparatively, Spanish FLES students scored in the 14th percentile and the 16th percentile, respectively.

Spanish partial immersion students outperformed Spanish FLES students, but earned significantly lower scores than did full immersion students on three of the four subtests. Spanish partial immersion students scored in the following percentiles: listening, 39th; reading, 27th; and writing, 21st. Spanish partial immersion students scored in the same percentile rank as did Spanish immersion students on the speaking subtest.
The normal distribution established for the *MLA Tests* was set by high school students. Consequently, the percentile rankings were not age-equivalent comparisons. Nonetheless, participants’ mean percentile scores indicated FL success at the elementary level. Further, the scores suggested a positive correlation between instructional hours and foreign language mastery (Campbell et al., 1985).

The Campbell et al. (1985) study demonstrated a need for further investigations among foreign language programs. Thus, in 1988, Rhodes, Thompson, and Snow (1989) conducted a qualitative and quantitative study of 325 students enrolled in language programs in nine public school districts. Three of the nine districts had immersion programs from which 85 students participated in the study. Three districts had FLEX programs from which 265 students participated, and three districts offered FLES programs from which 75 students participated. The sites were located in four regions: Midwest \((n = 3)\), Northeast \((n = 3)\), Southeast \((n = 1)\), and West \((n = 2)\). Socioeconomic status and minority populations varied by school.

Participating sites had to meet several criteria. Immersion programs had to have started in or prior to 1984 thereby offering Spanish immersion for at least four years. In addition, preference was given to sites that participated in the Campbell et al. study (1985). Two immersion sites participated in both studies. FLES sites had to have established programs and be involved in the National Network for Early Language Learning. FLEX sites only had one requirement: to be known for having “exemplary” (Rhodes et al., 1989, p. 17) programs.

Data collection included four instruments. The CLEAR Oral Proficiency Exam (COPE) measured four areas of Spanish proficiency: (a) fluency, (b) vocabulary, (c) comprehension, and (d) grammar. COPE was designed for assessing achievement in immersion programs at grades 5 and 6. Two students participated in the test at one time. Pairs of students engaged in 17 short
conversations based on prompts. For example, pairs discussed fire drill procedures, greetings and proceedings at a Mexican restaurant, and bus schedules. FLES students took a modified version of COPE. Immersion and FLES participants also took the FLES Spanish test, an achievement test comprised of multiple choice and true/false questions. The FLES Spanish test assessed listening and reading mastery of 11 units of study commonly taught in FLES programs. All participants responded to the third instrument, a language and cultural questionnaire. The 52-item survey measured six areas related to students’ motivations, attitudes, and parental involvement. Finally, school principals, FL coordinators, and teachers completed informational forms to provide background data for all schools. In addition, the research team recorded anecdotal notes during the course of the study.

Fifth and sixth grade students at all immersion and FLES sites took the COPE. Students could earn a maximum of 36 total points on the COPE. Immersion students’ total mean scores ranged from 21.42 to 27.11. FLES students’ total mean scores ranged from 2.88 to 4.58. The difference between the two groups was statistically significant. Significant differences existed among all subcategories as well; the greatest appeared on the comprehension subtest. The maximum mean score was 9 points. Immersion students scored between 6.84 and 7.78 points whereas FLES students scored 1.27 to 1.6 points. One important limitation was the design of COPE, which was designed to measure the proficiency of grade 5 and 6 immersion students.

Differences also existed among the immersion programs. Immersion Site 1 (I1) scored significantly higher than both Immersion Site 2 (I2) and Immersion Site 3 (I3). The success of I1 might be attributed to a number of distinct characteristics of the site’s Spanish programs. The district’s long-standing immersion program encompasses a fully articulated K-12 curriculum. Students in grade 5 receive 70-80 percent of daily instruction in Spanish. Further, the program
receives high parental support. At I2, the immersion program has undergone many changes. Immersion students are mainstreamed with non-immersion students for part of the instructional day. Thus, I2 students receive only 25-30 percent of daily instruction in Spanish. I3, like I1, has many positive characteristics. The long-standing program at I3 receives great parental support through an organized parent group. Additionally, the site has an exchange program with an elementary school in Mexico. Researchers could not speculate an explanation for the significant difference between I1 students’ scores and I3 students’ scores.

Students at all immersion and FLES sites also took the FLES test. Mean total scores were high for both groups; yet, once again, immersion students outscored FLES students. Out of 73 total points, immersion students’ total mean scores ranged from 67.65 to 69.82. FLES students’ total mean scores ranged from 56.25 to 59.8. Factor analysis showed girls outscored boys on the FLES test. Female immersion students earned a total mean score of 69.42 whereas male immersion students earned a total mean score of 68.60. Female FLES students’ mean total scores outscored male FLES students’ mean total scores by 5.93 points. Factor analysis also revealed a significant difference between scores from students learning through intensive FLES ($m = 60.82$) and scores from students in regular FLES ($m = 57.31$). Students in intensive FLES programs receive Spanish instruction five days per week for 30 minutes each day. Students in regular FLES programs receive Spanish instruction for, at most, two hours per week. Interestingly, one FLES site, identified as F3, offers both intensive FLES and regular FLES. One teacher teaches Spanish for both FLES tracks. F3 students in the intensive FLES program outscored F3 students in the regular FLES program by 10.4 points. In this study, a relationship existed between instructional hours and FL success.

Students at all participating sites took the language and culture questionnaire. The
questionnaire surveyed six areas: (a) need to achieve, (b) attitudes toward Spanish-speaking people, (c) interest in FL, (d) parental encouragement, (e) attitudes toward Spanish learning, and (f) anxiety in Spanish class (p. 49). Students responded to several statements for each category using a rating of 1 (disagree a lot) to 5 (agree a lot). Higher scores indicated attitudes that are more positive. The only exception was the category for FL class anxiety for which the opposite was true. Students in all programs reported positively toward Spanish speakers and culture. In regards to students’ attitudes toward Spanish-speaking people, immersion students scored the highest \( (m = 3.65) \) followed by FLEX students \( (m = 3.54) \) and then FLES students \( (m = 3.48) \). FLES students reported the most interest in FL \( (m = 4.04) \) and the most positive attitudes toward learning Spanish \( (m = 4.28) \). Differences among the programs were not significant except in the category of parental encouragement. Immersion students felt the most parental encouragement \( (m = 4.18) \), a significant difference over the mean total of 3.75 for FLES students and the 3.12 for FLEX students.

This study allowed for comparisons among immersion, FLES, and FLEX programs. Results indicated higher levels of proficiency among immersion students compared with students from the other two programs. Intensive FLES students showed greater mastery of FLES content than did regular FLES students. Command of the FL appears to be linked to the amount of contact time students spend learning the language. Schools may find it advantageous to begin programs in elementary school thereby allowing students the most available FL instruction.

Furthermore, students in all programs reported positive attitudes toward Spanish language and culture. Thus, all programs succeeded at fostering willingness to learn and cultural tolerance (Rhodes et al., 1989).
Foreign Language Education in the United States

In 2008, researchers from the Center for Applied Linguistics conducted a follow-up study of a 1997 study (see Branaman & Rhodes, 1998) on foreign language instruction in elementary and secondary schools in the United States (Pufahl & Rhodes, 2011). The findings indicated an overall decline in foreign language instruction opportunities.

The Center sent surveys to more than 5,000 schools, chosen through stratified sampling. Strata included distinctions among levels of instruction, school type, metro status, geographic region, socioeconomic status, and minority enrollment. Seventy-two percent of selected schools submitted completed questionnaires (N = 3,670). In 2008, 25% of surveyed elementary schools taught foreign language classes, a statistically significant decrease from the 31% reported in 1997. The diminution was attributed to the significant decrease in foreign language offerings in public elementary schools. In 1997, 24% of public elementary schools taught foreign languages whereas only 15% did so in 2008. Meanwhile, middle school foreign language instruction declined 17%, from 75% in 1997 to 58% in 2008. No significant increases or decreases were reported at the high school level. Despite the decline in the total number of public elementary students taking foreign language courses, within public schools offering programs, student enrollment in foreign language courses increased from 50% in 1997 to 67% in 2008.

Moreover, the study indicated pedagogical trends among public and private schools. Public elementary schools were more likely than private elementary schools to offer exploratory programs. Conversely, private elementary schools were more likely to offer FLES programs. More public schools than private schools offered immersion programs.

Schools not offering foreign language programs offered many reasons for not doing so. One reason was lack of funding, a reason more prominent following the passage of NCLB.
Public schools cut foreign language classes in order to offer more extensive instruction in reading and math, subjects for which funding is tied to achievement. Likewise, programs were cut because teachers did not meet the highly qualified status required by NCLB. Schools cited teacher shortages as another factor hindering foreign language programs. In fact, even schools with foreign language programs (25% of elementary schools) reported difficulties due to lack of qualified teachers. To alleviate the search for highly qualified teachers, 10% of elementary schools have used alternative means in order to provide foreign language instruction. Remedies included contracting with commercial language schools, hiring college instructors, using international agencies, and hiring shared-time teachers. Still, some elementary schools claimed non-responsibility for foreign language instruction as reason for not offering programs (Pufahl & Rhodes, 2011).

**Benefits of Second-Language Instruction**

Second-language instruction promotes individual achievement. Students who learn a second language show positive academic gains, enhanced creativity, and strong interpersonal skills. Moreover, bilingual students continue to meet success in the adult world because bilingualism is a valuable skill in many career fields.

**Academic.** The Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) is a norm-referenced multiple-choice test with standardized instructions used to measure academic achievement. In the area of literacy, ITBS levels 5-8 assess vocabulary, word analysis, reading comprehension, listening, and language. Levels 9-14 assess vocabulary, reading comprehension, spelling, capitalization, punctuation, and usage and expression. One of the purposes of the ITBS is to monitor individuals’ year-to-year growth. Further information about the ITBS can be found at the University of Iowa’s College of Education website (www.education.uiowa.edu). The ITBS has
been used in studies to determine the academic impact of elementary foreign language programs (see Schuster, 2005; Taylor and Lafayette, 2010).

Analyses of sixth grade students’ ITBS scores at a Kansas school district with FLES schools and non-FLES schools indicated no statistical significance ($p = 0.02$) in the scores between the FLES and non-FLES students (Schuster, 2005). However, Schuster’s (2005) findings support the additive bilingualism theory, for despite the decrease in English instruction time, the FLES students’ scores did not reflect a reduction in English literacy achievement.

FL programs can provide participating students an academic boost over their non-FL learning peers (Taylor & Lafayette, 2001). In Louisiana, the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) is administered every spring in grades 3, 5, 6, and 7, and the criterion-referenced Louisiana Educational Assessment Program for the 21st Century (LEAP 21) is administered every spring to all students in grades 4 and 8. LEAP 21 includes multiple-choice and constructive response items. Taylor and Lafayette (2010) compared test performances of the treatment group (FLES students) and the control group (non-FLES students) as well as the assessments of individual groups over time. On the third grade ITBS, the treatment group’s scores were insignificantly higher than were those of the control group. The control group outscored the students in the treatment group in only one area: the grade 3 ITBS science subtest ($p < .05$). Analyses of the grade 4 LEAP 21 subtests reveal the treatment group scored significantly higher than the control group in all subject areas. The language subtest shows the most significant difference with 84% of the treatment group receiving passing scores whereas only 76% of the control group passed. After adjusting for prior Grade 4 LEAP scores, fifth grades students from the treatment group scored significantly higher on the Grade 5 ITBS language subtest ($p = .0002$). In fact, higher performances from the treatment group on language subtests occurred at all grade levels.
The long-term effects of FL instruction have also been considered. Students in fourth grade, having received two years of FL instruction, achieved higher scores in all subject areas except mathematics, which showed insignificantly lower scores. Statistical analyses of academic gains indicated significant achievement gains for students in their third year of FLES programs compared to the gains of their non-FL peers. Thus, Taylor and Lafayette (2010) claimed no significant differences in academic achievement after one year of FL instruction, but multiple years in a FLES program gives students a significant edge over their lower-scoring non-FL peers. Because the LEAP 21 requires the application of background knowledge and problem solving in constructive response questions, the FL students’ edge could be related to second-language learners’ divergent thinking skills (Taylor & Lafayette, 2010).

A comparison of L2 learners and monolingual students indicated heightened divergent thinking skills among the L2 students (Landry, 1974). The participants included 64 first grade students, 80 fourth grade students, and 80 sixth grade students randomly chosen from pairs of randomly matched and selected elementary schools in Manchester, New Hampshire. All participants scored less than 1.0 on the Hoffman Bilingual Schedule, a measure of bilingual background knowledge for which 1.0 indicates slight exposure and 6.0 is the maximum attainable knowledge. Each pair of schools included one FLES school and one non-FLES school. Further, pairs of schools were demographically similar. All schools were represented equally in number and gender, and all fourth and fifth grade students had attended the same school since first grade. The dependent variables in the analyses included six measures of divergent thinking: verbal fluency, verbal flexibility, verbal originality, figural fluency, figural flexibility, and figural originality. Multivariate analysis indicated no significant differences between the first grade students at FLES schools and first graders at non-FLES schools, expected results given the
Hoffman Bilingual Schedule results requirements. At the fourth grade level, no significant differences existed between the FLES students and the non-FLES students on any of the six dependent variables. However, when the means for the variables were combined, FLES students scored higher than their non-FLES counterparts did slightly more than 83% of the time. The same occurred at the sixth grade level; when the means were combined, FLES students scored higher on all measures. Results suggest a positive relationship between second-language learning and divergent thinking. Likewise, results suggest a continuum of the relationship dependent upon the amount of L2 instruction. Limitations of this study are due to the organizational objectives of the FLES programs at the participating schools, which may or may not have been the scope and sequence at other FLES schools. At the participating FLES schools, students in grades 1 through 3 received instruction in speaking. In grades 4 through 6, instruction included reading and writing, concentrations that require use of divergent thinking tasks (Landry, 1974).

Russian immigrant students (n = 103) and native English-speaking students (n = 47) took a standard divergent thinking test, the Abbreviated Torrance Test for Adults (ATTA), to measure creative abilities between the two groups (Kharkhurin, 2010). Prior to ATTA administration, participants’ commands of both English and Russian were assessed using the picture-naming test (PNT). Russian immigrants scored significantly lower on either Russian or English (p < .001) on the PNT than did monolinguals. Despite the declaration of Russian as L1, only 51% of the immigrants scored higher on the Russian PNT than on the English PNT. The PNT showing the highest performance was deemed the dominant language. When comparing the immigrants’ dominant language PNT scores to the PNT of the monolinguals, monolinguals still outperformed the immigrants (p < .001). The findings suggest the Russian immigrants’ linguistic abilities were weak in both L1 and L2.
The ATTA consisted of three tasks: (a) problem identification, (b) picture completion, and (c) picture construction. Participants chose either the English version or the Russian version of the test. Due to choice, some participants did not test in their dominant language. The bilingual Russian students scored significantly lower \((p < 0.01)\) on tests of verbal creativity while scoring significantly higher \((p < 0.001)\) on non-verbal creativity measures (Kharkhurin, 2010). Higher performances on tests of non-verbal creativity could have been attributed to the creative qualities of flexibility and problem solving adopted by the immigrants upon entering a new culture. The lower scores on the verbal components could have been reflective of lower linguist abilities as determined by the PNT. The study indicates a negative correlation of age at the onset of L2 learning and schooling in L1. Thus, the study participants were not “bilingual” as defined by the parameters of this review.

Additional study findings suggest cross-language transfer of phonological skills (Durgunoğlu et al., 1993). The participants included a small sample \((n = 27)\) of Spanish-speaking students, who were identified as beginning readers. Two tests were used to assess the degree to which students’ Spanish word recognition skills transfer to English word recognition abilities. Phonological awareness scores highly correlated with performance on both transfer tests \((r = .51\) and \(r = .68)\). The correlation suggests phonological awareness in L1 was a significant predictor of scores on word recognition tests in both L1 and L2 (Durgunoğlu et al., 1993).

Medical analyses investigating the ability of the human brain to continuously alter itself in response to experience indicated increased grey matter in the inferior parietal cortex area of the brain in bilinguals. Not only did bilinguals show greater grey density than did monolinguals, differences existed among bilinguals. Bilinguals who learned L2 prior to age five had significantly greater density \((p < 0.001)\) than did bilinguals who acquired L2 between the ages of
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10 and 15 (Mechelli et al., 2004).

Yet, results of other studies suggest proficiency in native language can predict second-language proficiency (Comeau et al., 1999; Cunningham & Graham, 2000; Durgunoğlu et al., 1993).

More research is needed to help identify the age at which elementary students will benefit the most from second-language instruction. The Russian immigrants acquired English at varying ages (Kharkhurin, 2010). Brain research reveals strong evidence for early L2 exposure (Mechelli et al., 2004), but if proficiency in L1 promotes proficiency in L2, would introducing L2 in later elementary when L1 is more advanced be more beneficial?

Results of another study suggest the answer is no. Results from a quantitative study of high school students emphasized the academic benefits from early L2 instruction (Shultz & Willard-Holt, 2004). The participants, 84 students in grade 12, attended school in suburban Pennsylvania. Half of the students were enrolled in a world language course, and half had never studied a foreign language. In this district, students chose to start L2 courses in the seventh grade and continue in eighth or wait until high school to begin foreign language classes. Of the 42 seniors who had taken foreign language classes, 27 started in middle school and the remaining 15 began FL studies in high school.

Researchers analyzed students’ scores on two standardized tests: the SAT and the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA). In eighth grade, FL students scored significantly lower than non-FL students (students who did not take a FL at all during their school careers) scored on both the PSSA reading ($p = .04$) and math ($p = .01$). Conversely, in eleventh grade, FL students scored significantly higher than non-FL students did on both the PSSA reading ($p = .001$) and math ($p = .002$). What is more, non-FL students’ math and reading
scores saw statistically significant declines from eighth grade to eleventh grade. Differences among the L2-learning group existed as well. In eighth grade, students who were currently taking a language course scored significantly higher in reading ($p = .0001$) and math ($p = .003$) than did students who waited until high school to begin FL courses. The same occurred in eleventh grade; students who started FL learning in middle school outperformed students who started FL learning in high school.

Likewise, SAT scores favored the early-learning group over the later-learning group. Students who started FL in middle school earned a mean verbal score of 574 and a mean math score of 588. The students who started FL in high school earned a mean verbal score of 479 and mean math score of 480. Both differences were statistically significant.

None of the 42 students who did not take a foreign language class in middle school or in high school took the SAT. This fact is a limiting factor of this study because some demographic aspect not accounted for in this study affects whether students choose to study a world language at all. Additionally, the differences in language-learning scores could be attributed to the number of years spent studying a language rather than the year learning began. Data were not provided regarding the years of study among the participants in the FL-learning group. Finally, the small sample was drawn from an isolated location. Findings of this study may not generalize to the larger population. Nonetheless, the results suggested strong evidence for the continuation of early foreign language courses within this school. Further, the study indicated students who do begin learning L2 in middle school see continuous gains in math and reading throughout high school. Early exposure to foreign language may be the academic advantage college-bound students need to boost SAT scores (Shultz & Willard-Holt, 2004).

**Social.** Proficiency in more than one language is also an asset for employers. The Federal
Responses to a survey of Thunderbird graduates suggested long-term social benefits of second-language learning (Grosse, 2004). Thunderbird is the oldest school of international business (http://www.thunderbird.edu/) in the world. Grosse (2004) contacted 2,500 Thunderbird alumni who had graduated between 1970 and 2002. Of those contacted, 581 agreed to participate in an electronic survey of the business advantages of L2 competency. The participant pool included alumni from each graduating class with 71% male respondents and 29% female respondents. The survey sought demographic data as well as information regarding personal perceptions of the usefulness and benefits of second-language knowledge. Eighty-two percent of respondents reported a competitive advantage as a result of foreign language abilities. Chi-square analysis found a relationship between reported proficiency level and reported degree of competitive advantage. Alumni who indicated the highest levels of foreign language proficiency, like native and fluent in most business situations also reported significant competitive advantage due to language skills (Grosse, 2004).

Moreover, 89% specified competitive advantage as a result of cultural knowledge. The majority of this group, 48%, reported a significant competitive edge. Again, a chi-square analysis found an interesting relationship. Cultural competency and wages were closely associated. Respondents who self-reported earnings in the highest pay scales ($150,000-$200,000+) also reported significant competitive edge due to cultural competency. What is more, the majority of respondents indicated using L2 skills for social interactions, such as conversations (81%).

Participants in this study obtained language and cultural instruction through collegiate experiences. Nonetheless, some respondents self-reported the ability to communicate as fairly
well, basic, or only a few words or phrases (Grosse, 2004). Many causes could explain the reason 26% of Thunderbird respondents did not achieve L2 fluency. One reason could be motivation. Likewise, the reason could be the amount of time required to become proficient. The American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) labels the most proficient FL speaker as “superior” (Omaggio-Hadley, 1993, p.12). Below the superior level are advanced, intermediate, and novice with high, medium, and low tiers within each. Omaggio-Hadley (1993) noted adults with high aptitudes for learning foreign languages require a minimum of 720 hours of intense language instruction to become proficient at the superior level. Four years of high school classes or undergraduate course work in 4-credit hour FL courses do not meet the minimal instructional requirement (p. 27). Thus, a strong argument can be made for exposure to FL during early education.

Attitudinal. A study conducted by a research team from the University of Idaho suggested students in FLES programs are more positive toward school, academic success, other cultures, and learning a foreign language than are students who do not study world languages (Kennedy, Nelson, Odell, & Austin, 2000). Two rural schools from northern Idaho participated in the study. One school offered FLES while the other did not offer any language programs. All third grade students (N = 49) from both schools completed the FLES Attitudinal Inventory, a 22-question survey assessing five areas of attitudinal concern: (a) school, (b) difficulty in language acquisition, (c) desirability of language acquisition, (d) culture, and (5) self-efficacy. Students responded by choosing yes, no, or maybe to each given statement. Positive responses were given a value of 2. Neutral responses were given a value of 1, and negative responses were given a value of 0. Researchers analyzed the results of the entire sample and compared mean scores from the treatment group (FLES school) with those from the control group (non-FLES school). In
addition, researchers analyzed data by gender. Researchers administered the inventory three times throughout the academic year.

Five inventory questions targeted students’ attitudes toward school in general. The experimental group reported more positively ($M = 4.7$) than the control group ($M = 4.2$) did on all test administrations. What is more, the experimental group saw a continuous increase in positivity whereas the control group experienced a decrease in the time span between the second test and the third.

Likewise, analysis of students’ attitudes toward learning indicated FLES students ($M = 4.0$) are confident learners who view learning more positively than do non-FLES students ($M = 3.5$). FLES students reported significantly more positivity over the three test administrations. The mean score for FLES students’ attitudes toward learning was 3.4 on Test 1 and soared to 4.6 on Test 3. Conversely, the control group’s mean differed by only 0.2 from Test 1 to Test 3. FLES students ($M = 4.6$) had a significantly more positive view of L2 learning than did non-FLES students ($M = 3.6$) at the third test administration.

The inventory also solicited data concerning students’ attitudes toward second-language acquisition and foreign people and cultures. FLES students ($M = 5.7$) became increasingly positive toward second-language learning over time whereas non-FLES students ($M = 4.9$) reported little change in perspective. Similar analyses existed in regards to attitudes toward foreign people and cultures. The experimental group expressed an increase in positivity from a mean of 2.8 at the time of Test 1 to a mean of 4.9 at Test 3. The control group, although statistically the same as the experimental group at Test 1, reported only a minimal increase in positivity at Test 3 ($M = 3.3$).

Finally, the inventory sought data on students’ perspectives of themselves. Questions
focused on students’ perceived confidence and self-esteem. FLES students’ mean scores increased significantly from Test 2 ($M = 8.0$) to Test 3 ($M = 9.2$). In contrast, non-FLES students’ mean scores decreased from Test 2 ($M = 7.3$) to Test 3 ($M = 6.9$).

Limitations of this study include many factors that often influence students’ views of education. Factors include family demographics, teacher preferences, and academic classifications. Nonetheless, the study indicated a general attitudinal trend. FLES students reported more positively than did non-FLES students on questions concerning attitudes toward school, learning, L2, foreign peoples and cultures, and self-concept (Kennedy et al., 2000).

Attitudinal differences exist among students in language programs as well. Elementary students reported heightened motivation toward learning a foreign language and more parental involvement than did high school language students (Sung & Padilla, 1998). The study included 451 public high school students from six high schools and 140 students from three public elementary programs in California. Students ranged in age from fourth to twelfth grade and had taken or were currently enrolled in an Asian language program. Fifty percent of the student participants reported Asian ethnicity. The assessment instrument was a three-part questionnaire in which students responded to statements using a 7-point Likert scale. Part 1 measured instrumental and integrative motivation. Part 2 sought to uncover other reasons students study Asian languages. Part 3 regarded parental involvement. Factor analysis indicated questionnaire items loaded onto three factors: ethnic heritage-related motivation, school-related motivation, and personal interests-related motivation. Elementary students ($M = 3.54$) were significantly more likely to be motivated by heritage than were high school students ($M = 1.74$). Additionally, elementary language learners ($M = 2.98$) reported greater school-related motivation than did high school learners ($M = 2.26$). Elementary and high school students also differed in perceptions of
parental involvement. Elementary students ($M = 3.84$) perceived significantly greater parental involvement in FL studies than high school students ($M = 2.68$) perceived of respective parents.

Sung and Padilla (1998) extended this study to include parental attitudes toward children’s FL studies. Parents came from the same pool of language programs as the student study. Parents had children in all grade levels kindergarten through grade 12. Participants included 388 parents of high school students and 459 elementary parents. Again, the results favored the elementary programs. Elementary parents ($M = 5.28$) reported more positivity toward foreign language programs than did high school parents ($M = 4.95$). Elementary parents ($M = 5.12$) also felt more involved in their children’s FL learning than did parents of high school students ($M = 4.66$). The difference was significant ($p = .02$).

Limitations of this study include the confinement of the state of California as well as the ethnic demographics of the area. Parental involvement in children’s educations may vary by ethnicity. Likewise, school-related motivation may differ due to teaching quality or methodology. Students from diverse communities may be more motivated by personal interests than are students from less diverse areas because the former may want to learn to speak with friends.

The study did show students’ attitudes toward FL learning are not based on one factor. Many aspects of FL learning, from practicality to parental involvement, influence students’ perceptions. Based on this study’s findings, schools should offer courses in heritage languages at the elementary level and solicit strong parental support (Sung & Padilla, 1998).

Conceivably then, an argument in favor of early exposure to foreign languages is students view language learning more positively at younger ages. In a four-year study of FLES students’ attitudes toward FL learning, students reported less positivity in fifth grade than reported in
second or third grade (Heining-Boynton & Haitema, 2007). The quantitative study involved two school districts in North Carolina. District A ($N \geq 13,000$) was divided into three cohorts, and District B ($N \leq 1,800$) was divided into two cohorts. Students responded yes or no to questions regarding interest and use of FL. In Cohort 1, District A, students participated in the study in second grade and each year following to fifth grade. Over this time, both genders showed a 17% decline in fondness for foreign language class. Similar drops existed in all cohorts; the differences between the means of the initial surveying year and the final year were significant at the alpha 0.5 level. Heining-Boynton and Haitema (2007) cited previous studies indicating students show a general decline in positively toward school in general as students age (Davis & Brember, 1994, 2001; Haldyna & Thomas, 1979, as cited in, Heining-Boynton & Haitema, 2007).

As follow up, 13 of the elementary participants took part in a qualitative study in high school. The 13 participants included five males and eight females, all juniors or seniors. Students answered questions regarding perceptions of FL speakers, foreign cultures, and personal FL education as a result of FLES experiences. Nine of the 13 students felt FLES experiences established positive attitudes toward speakers of foreign languages; the remaining four reported neutral attitudes. None of the participants reported negative feelings toward foreign cultures; rather, nine credited FLES with providing broadened perspectives of the world while four felt FLES was practical given the changing demographics of the United States. Further, more than half of the participants ($n = 7$) valued FL instruction while six participants felt proficiency in foreign language offered a competitive edge for the future. Eleven of the thirteen recall enjoying FLES. Of the dissenting two students, one reported feeling FLES was not as important as other subjects were because the school did not provide daily instruction in FL (Heining-Boynton &
Limitations of this study include the students’ overall academic standings. Students who felt positively about foreign language instruction and the perspectives FL courses garnered might have been academically inclined students in general. These students valued all educational opportunities and succeeded in school. Additionally, students’ opinions of FL classes might have stemmed from the students’ opinions regarding the workloads, teacher pedagogies, and class demographics. Nonetheless, school leaders should consider the results of this study when planning world language curriculums. First, schools should consider the perceived importance of courses offered less than daily. Further, as students aged, students lost interest and willingness to learn FL languages. Nevertheless, students who participated in elementary FL programs valued their linguistic and cultural experiences throughout high school.

Summary

This chapter presented the results of studies related to the research questions posed by this review. Pedagogical approaches to second-language study include immersion, FLES, and FLEX. Each method has distinct goals and expectations. Students who study foreign languages realize academic and social benefits. Students who study foreign languages in elementary school experience heightened academic success, social rewards, positivity toward education, and ethnic acceptance.
Chapter III: Results and Analysis Relative to the Problem

The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 designated foreign languages as core curricular subject areas, and recently, the Michigan Merit Curriculum established a two-year credit minimum for all Michigan students, starting with the class of 2016, for graduation. Educational mandates such as these reflect the changing demographics of the U.S. population. Despite these acknowledgements, the number of public schools offering world language programs has declined in recent years (Pufahl & Rhodes, 2011). Fewer schools with foreign language programs mean fewer students will attain the benefits of L2 education. Are the academic, social, and attitudinal benefits of L2 instruction worth the time and money schools must spend to offer FL programs? Review of the studies in this paper suggests the affirmative. Students realize many advantages from L2 proficiency and instruction. What is more, the advantages escalate over time and with increased proficiency. Thus, students maximize their academic and social benefits through early FL exposure.

Proficiency Comparisons of Foreign Language Programs

Schools adopt language programs based on district goals. FLEX programs introduce students to foreign languages and cultures. FLES, a program specifically designed for elementary schools, focuses on L2 speaking and listening. In immersion programs, the foreign language is the language of instruction. Schools also decide the degree to which these three programs are implemented. Schools with FLES programs opt for standard FLES instruction or intense FLES instruction. Schools with immersion programs offer partial immersion or full immersion (Comeau et al., 1999; Met & Rhodes, 1990; Naserdeen, 2011; Rhodes et al., 1989; Schuster, 2005).

Students in immersion programs demonstrated higher levels of FL proficiency than did
students in other FL programs (Campbell et al., 1985; Rhodes et al., 1989). This tendency seems reasonable; the program with the most ambitious goals reaps the most proficient students. Partial immersion students scored below full immersion students but higher than FLES students did (Campbell et al., 1985). Intensive FLES students exhibited higher proficiencies than did regular FLES students (Rhodes et al., 1989). Proficiency rankings for FLEX students were not applicable because FLEX programs do not intend to foster command of any one foreign language.

Proficiency comparisons and program details are important considerations because findings from other studies linked L2 instruction time and L2 proficiency to academic achievement.

**Academic Benefits**

Students who receive FL instruction demonstrated continuous academic gains for the duration of their FL learning. FL students did not show significant academic advantages at the onset of their L2 studies, but after several years of continuous FL study, FL students scored significantly higher on standardized assessments than non-FL students did (Shultz & Willard-Holt, 2004; Taylor & Lafayette, 2010). Heightened academic performance could be the result of heightened divergent thinking skills in FL-learning students. Foreign language students exhibited higher divergent thinking abilities than did non-FL students. Divergent thinking skills include abilities of verbal fluency, verbal flexibility, verbal originality, figural fluency, figural flexibility, and figural originality (Landry, 1974). Reasonably, students with strong commands of these skills will have advantages on any standardized tests. Many schools in the United States choose not to offer foreign language courses in order to offer more extensive instruction in reading and math, subjects for which funding is tied to achievement (Pufahl & Rhodes, 2011). However,
given FL students’ high aptitudes for standardized test achievement, these schools may find FL classes advantageous for their schools’ standardized report cards. Furthermore, considering the findings from previously mentioned studies (see Shultz & Willard-Holt, 2004; Taylor & Lafayette, 2010), schools may see greater gains by offering foreign languages at the elementary levels, thereby granting students years of continuous study. Medical analyses confirmed the benefits of early foreign language instruction. Bilinguals who learned L2 prior to age five had significantly greater grey density in their brains than did bilinguals who acquired L2 between the ages of 10 and 15 (Mechelli et al., 2004; Naserdeen, 2001).

Academic achievement and proficiency in more than one language expand students’ future opportunities.

Social and Attitudinal Influences

Students who study foreign languages reported more positivity toward school in general than did non-FL students. Furthermore, students who study foreign languages experienced continuous increases in self-esteem and confidence over time in FL education (Kennedy et al., 2000). The implications of positive self-esteem and confidence are many, for both could be contributing factors in the academic benefits discussed previously. Students who are confident in their abilities are likely to approach standardized tests more positively and with more conviction than do students who are unsure of their abilities. Likewise, students with high academic self-esteem and confidence take more risks in their educations, as these students are likely fueled by previous successes. Reasonably, confident students will promote their achievements, which will lead to long-term career and social benefits, such as competitive career advantages and positive worldviews (Grosse, 2004; Kennedy et al., 2000; Saiz & Zoido, 2005).

Positive worldviews include attitudes toward foreign people and cultures. Students who
study foreign languages became increasingly positive toward foreign peoples and cultures over time. Positivity escalated with FL exposure (Kennedy et al., 2000; Rhodes et al., 1989). For this reason, early exposure to foreign languages and cultures could be seen as proactive approaches for fostering ethnic acceptance and appreciation.

Summary

Schools and students benefit from foreign language instruction. Students who receive prolonged exposure to FL studies demonstrate heightened academic aptitude. FL students’ academic strengths stem from the enhanced self-esteem and confidence afforded by experience in foreign language programs. Schools profit from students’ success. Likewise, FL students report positive attitudes toward foreign cultures and peoples that intensify through continued FL exposure.

Schools have several options when choosing to adopt world language programs. No matter which program schools offer, elementary school is the opportune level for implementation because the advantages of FL education grow with continued language instruction and L2 proficiency. Students in elementary programs have the time and exposure needed to reap academic and social benefits and become proficient L2 speakers.
Chapter IV: Conclusion

This review presented the findings of many researchers on the topic of world language education. Specifically, this review presented research on the benefits of second-language instruction at the elementary level.

Recommendation

Today’s schools face remarkable pressure to succeed on standardized testing. Reading and mathematics scores determine funding, and most schools do not want to risk losing crucial allowances. Thus, schools cut non-essential programs in favor of extensive reading and mathematics instruction. Perhaps the key to high achievement is not more of any specific subjects; rather the key could be the addition. Foreign language programs offer students numerous benefits, including academic returns. Foreign language students scored higher on state assessments and college entrance examinations and viewed school more positively than did their non-FL peers (Kennedy et al., 2000; Shultz & Willard-Holt, 2004; Taylor & Lafayette, 2010). Given these findings, elementary foreign language programs seem the most reasonable because schools and students could then capitalize on such benefits for students’ full academic careers.

Based on research findings in this review, foreign language programs should be offered at the elementary level. Schools should offer both heritage and other world languages and promote the importance of FL courses by providing FL instruction more than once per week. Furthermore, schools must seek parental support and devise well-articulated curriculums.

Areas for Further Research

Additional research on this topic could help to validate the reviewer’s recommendations. Researchers would compare proficiency levels, general academic achievement, and attitudes of elementary students with those of high school students.
First, researchers would locate a district that has not offered FL programs previously and is willing to participate in a four-year study. Researchers would use stratified sampling to produce two groups: kindergarten students and freshmen. Strata include gender, socio-economic status, ethnicity, and heritage language. Researchers will need lawful approval for study participation. Students will take baseline assessments to measure students’ current academic standings; attitudes toward school; attitudes toward foreign peoples and cultures; and L2 proficiency. Then, all students in each group will be placed in immersion programs for four years. The immersion program instruction must adhere to controls for amount of instruction in both L1 and L2 and amount of time spent in each of the four areas of language proficiency, speaking, reading, writing, and listening. Each year of the program, students will take the academic, attitudinal, and proficiency assessments. Assessments will measure the same components, but the tests will be adjusted for grade-level appropriateness. Researchers can then compare and contrast the elementary students’ test results with those of the high school students. Researchers will replicate the study with a FLES program. A similar study of FLEX programs could also be tested. The FLEX study would not include proficiency assessments.

Summary

This review presented research data from various studies on the academic and social benefits of second-language learning at the elementary level. Foreign language instruction at the elementary level fosters academic excellence, social advantage, and ethnic acceptance. Based on the findings of these studies, the reviewer advocates for elementary foreign language programs. Further research will elucidate the validity of this recommendation.
References


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