

Peters, A. Student Motivation Towards Foreign Language Learning: Why do High School Students Take Two or Four Years of Spanish? (2009)

This study was designed to answer the following questions: What are high school students' motivations for taking more advanced levels of foreign language class? What other forces in their lives influence their decisions? As a Spanish teacher, I am concerned that so few students continue their Spanish studies beyond the minimum two years and therefore do not become proficient in the language. The methods used in my study include a short informal interview and four different online surveys. The participants were discontinued Spanish students and current Spanish I and IV students, their parents, and the high school counselor. The results of this study indicate that students who take only one or two years do so to meet a college recommendation and students who take four years have a desire to communicate in the language. All students demonstrated a positive attitude towards Spanish as did the parents surveyed. In addition, the counselor is supportive of foreign language learning but we need to work together to promote language as a four year program for all students.

STUDENT MOTIVATION TOWARDS FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNING: WHY
DO HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS TAKE TWO OR FOUR YEARS OF SPANISH?

by

Amy M. Peters

A Capstone submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Master of
Arts in English as a Second Language Education

Hamline University

Saint Paul, Minnesota

May 2010

Committee:

Ann Mabbott, Primary Advisor

Betsy Parrish, Secondary Advisor

Gloria Rosso-White, Peer Reviewer

Copyright by
AMY M. PETERS
2010
All rights reserved

To my family, friends, colleagues, and students who encourage and inspire me.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I owe the completion of this capstone to my committee members, my family, and my students. My committee members Ann Mabbott, Betsy Parrish, and Gloria Rosso-White were very helpful, supportive, accommodating, and discerning. Their constructive criticism, never-ending encouragement, and positive outlook were crucial to my success. I owe them a special “Thanks” for meeting my demanding and rigorous time frame for completing this capstone before the arrival of my new baby. I especially need to thank my family for their encouragement, sacrifices, and support. My husband Scott took on more household duties and child rearing responsibilities with good humor and without complaint. I couldn’t have done this without you! My children Avery and Elijah were very understanding, patient, and supportive of Mom doing her “homework,” and I can’t wait to spend all of my extra time with you! My parents and in-laws supported me emotionally, by babysitting, and financially. Finally, I need to thank my students. They were willing to help me as much as possible so that my research could be complete. I dedicate this capstone to all of the people who made it a success.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter One: Introduction	1
Background of the Researcher	1
Foreign Language Proficiency	4
Guiding Questions.....	5
Research Biases.....	6
Role of the Researcher	7
Summary	7
Chapter Overviews	8
Chapter Two: Literature Review	9
Motivation	9
Students' Reasons for Taking Foreign Language and for the Length of their study.....	11
Student Rationale for Taking a Foreign Language.....	11
Factors Influencing Length of Foreign Language Study.....	12
Student Attitude and Disposition	16
Proficiency	18

Foreign Language Standards and Requirements	19
National Foreign Language Standards	19
State Foreign Language Standards	21
Foreign Language Requirements.....	22
Foreign Language Enrollment in Public Schools in the United States	23
General Enrollment Figures	23
Enrollment by Level	24
Reasons Students Should Study a Foreign Language for More than two years	25
Cognitive Benefits	25
Advantages of Becoming Bilingual.....	27
Global Citizen and Economy.....	28
National Security.....	29
Need for Research	30
Summary	31
Chapter Three: Methodology.....	32
Overview of the Chapter	33
Mixed Methodology Research Paradigm.....	33
Data Collection Protocol	36
Participants	36

Setting.....	36
Surveys	37
Procedure.....	40
Participants	40
Pilot Study	42
Materials	42
Student Surveys	42
Parent / Guardian Surveys	44
Counselor Interview	44
Data Analysis.....	44
Verification of Data.....	45
Ethics	45
Conclusion.....	46
Chapter Four: Results	48
Results and Analysis of Student Surveys	49
Spanish I Survey.....	49
Motivation.....	50
Attitude	54
Learning Disposition.....	56

Spanish IV Survey.....	57
Motivation.....	58
Attitude	61
Learning Disposition.....	63
Discontinued Spanish Survey.....	65
Motivation.....	65
Attitude	68
Learning Disposition.....	70
Connection of the Student Surveys to the Literature Review	72
Motivation	72
Students' Rationale for Taking a Foreign Language.....	73
Factors Influencing the Length of Foreign Language Study.....	78
Attitude and Learning Disposition	81
Parental Connections.....	82
Parent Survey Results.....	82
Parent Survey Analysis.....	84
High School Counselor Connections	86
Counselor Interview	86
Analysis of Counselor Interview.....	88

The Research Question Revisited	91
Summary	92
Chapter Five: Conclusion	94
Major Findings	95
Limitations	97
Implications	98
Suggestions for Future Studies.....	99
Communicating the Results	100
Appendices.....	102
Appendix A: ACTFL Speaking Proficiency Guidelines.....	102
Appendix B: ACTFL Foreign Language Standards.....	110
Appendix C: Spanish IV Survey	113
Appendix D: Parent Survey.....	122
Appendix E: Counselor Interview Questions.....	126
References.....	128

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.1: Spanish Class Enrollment by Level and Year	3
Figure 3.1: Research Project Participation Numbers and Percentages	41
Figure 4.1: Spanish I Survey Question 6	53
Figure 4.2: Spanish IV Survey Question 6	59
Figure 4.3: Discontinued Spanish Survey Question 6	67
Figure 4.4: Spanish I: Rationale for 1-2 Years of Study.....	74
Figure 4.5: Spanish I: Rationale for 3-4 Years of Study.....	75
Figure 4.6: Spanish IV: Rationale for Years of Study	76
Figure 4.7: Discontinued Spanish: Rationale for Years of study.....	77

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

“It is not difficult to write in Spanish; the Spanish language is a gift from the gods which we Spaniards take for granted. I take comfort therefore in the belief that you wished to pay tribute to a glorious language and not to the humble writer who uses it for everything it can express: the joy and the wisdom of Mankind, since literature is an art form of all and for all, although written without deference, heeding only the voiceless, anonymous murmur of a given place and time.”

(Camilo José Cela, Spanish writer, 1989 Nobel Prize for Literature, 1916-2002)

My lifelong love of Spanish began one sunny, summer day when I was thirteen and I heard this amazing language being spoken at a restaurant. I was immediately intrigued and proceeded to borrow a Spanish language “learn Spanish on your own” tape and book set from the public library. I went on to study Spanish for three years in high school, eager for all opportunities to expand my knowledge and communicative abilities in the language. In my senior year I applied to be a Rotary Club exchange student and spent the six months following graduation in the Canary Islands, Spain. It was there that I really became confident in my speaking abilities and also became enamored with the Spanish culture. Every similarity and difference between the American and Spanish culture, and English and Spanish languages intrigued me. Next I attended college as a Spanish and education major because I wanted to be able to share my love for the language with others and offer them the opportunity to possibly become bilingual, but at

least proficient, global citizens with an appreciation for new cultures and ideas. During college, I spent two semesters in the Dominican Republic, studying at the Pontificia Universidad Católica Madre y Maestra and living with an incredible host family. I was completely immersed in the Dominican culture for over a year. The time I spent there helped me to truly become bilingual and to develop a love for Caribbean and Latin American Studies. This experience abroad also re-validated my life goal of becoming a Spanish teacher in order to share my knowledge and love of the Spanish language and Spanish-speaking cultures.

When I started teaching Spanish as a foreign language (a language not generally spoken by the people of a particular place) in 1998, I believed that I would be able to instill a love and passion for language learning in my students. My hopes were to make the language accessible, relatable, applicable, and fun for them. As I embarked on my professional career, I imagined that students would want to take as many years of Spanish as possible so they could become proficient in the language and be able to communicate with native Spanish speakers. At the first two schools in which I taught Spanish, there were good numbers of students enrolled in all levels of Spanish classes. Numbers did decrease slightly in the upper levels, but not drastically. These two first schools were suburban in nature, and much larger than the one in which I currently teach. Also, these schools both offered more than one foreign language and there seemed to be greater emphasis placed on remaining in foreign language classes beyond the basic two years. One factor that could have influenced the enrollment maintenance in these districts is that one offered university credit through a college in the schools curriculum, and the other

offered advanced placement (AP) testing, which also can result in college credit.

It was not until I began to teach at my current school six years ago that I really noticed the extreme drop in enrollment between level one and two classes and level three and four classes. As detailed in Figure 1.1, numbers in Spanish I and II have continued to increase since the 2005-2006 school year. This could be due in part to the hiring of new teachers who brought enthusiasm and innovative ideas to the program. Enrollments for levels III and IV seem to change drastically from year to year, with the highest enrollments of 22 and 29 students in Spanish III in 2005-2006 and 2008-2009, leading to the highest enrollments of eleven students in Spanish IV in 2006-2007 and 2009-2010. There is a tremendous drop in enrollment numbers between levels I/II and III/IV, with an average of only 24.7% of students enrolling in Spanish III. Student enrollment in level III clearly affects enrollment for level IV. This drastic decline in enrollment in my current school as opposed to the slight decline in other schools in which I have taught in the past is what has motivated me to embark on this research project.

Figure 1.1

Spanish Class Enrollment by Level and Year

Spanish level	2005-2006	2006-2007	2007-2008	2008-2009	2009-2010
I	101	104	107	116	124
II	56	73	96	94	102
III	22	16	16	29	22
IV	1	11	4	9	11

Foreign Language Proficiency

How long does it take for a person to become proficient in a foreign language? Is one year of high school study enough? Or would two or four years be sufficient? The American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL), the only national organization devoted to improving and increasing the learning and teaching of languages in the United States, has tracked foreign language enrollment data since 1890 (ACTFL, 2009). In its most recent publications devoted to foreign language enrollment, Draper & Hicks (1996, 2002) observe that in the upper Midwest and nationwide, the enrollment in foreign languages drastically decreases after the second year of study, which is true in my own school. For example, in 2000, total reported enrollment numbers for level one foreign languages were 1,129,336; for level two they were 796,229; 345,627 for level three; 120,063 for level four; 28,047 for level five; and they were 53,410 for level six and advanced placement combined (Draper & Hicks, 2002). Based on these numbers, by level three, 783,709 students, or 69.4%, have already dropped their foreign language studies. In my school, around 85% of students have dropped Spanish by the third level which is much worse than the national average.

At the same time, the ACTFL organization also established proficiency standards ranging from novice-low to superior, and maintains that a superior proficiency rating is only attainable after an extended foreign language study that is well articulated. In other words, one needs many years, up to thirteen, in a structured foreign language program to attain high proficiency (ACTFL 1999). This is a troubling fact for my school district since we do not offer foreign language classes until students are in the high school,

starting in their freshman year. Therefore, student retention in the four years of language that we do offer is of utmost importance if our students are to attain even a basic proficiency.

What then motivates numerous students to terminate their foreign language study after only two years? The purpose of this study is to discover why students at my school in particular tend to end their foreign language study after just two years, and also to determine why some students continue their study for four years. Our Spanish department goals are to retain as many students in the upper level (III and IV) classes as possible so that our graduating students are as proficient in the language as possible. Once the motivational factors are ascertained, my hope is to use the findings to increase student enrollment in the upper levels of foreign language classes to guarantee that our department is able to continue offering all four years of Spanish instruction and to ensure that Spanish language students leave our school with as high a proficiency level as possible.

Guiding Questions

After teaching Spanish in four different school districts, including my student teaching experience, I noticed that the enrollment numbers in upper level Spanish classes in my current district drastically decline from the lower level numbers. This leads me to my research question: What are high school students' motivations for taking more advanced levels of foreign language classes? What other forces in their lives influence their decisions? I find this worthy of study because student enrollment in foreign language classes drops drastically between the second and third year of study in high

school both nationwide and at my school. This trend of declining enrollment in upper level foreign language classes is important since research shows that students do not attain adequate levels of language proficiency in just two years of study, and foreign language programs may suffer with lower enrollments (ACTFL 1996, 1999; MDE 2004, 2008). In addition, I hope to discover the factors that influence continued language study. For example, why do students choose to take only two years or as many as four? Do students plan to just take two years of a foreign language, and if so, why? Could these students be motivated to take more years of foreign language?

Research Biases

I bring to this study four underlying biases. First of all, my language and travel experiences have influenced how I view language learning. I love the Spanish language and Spanish-speaking cultures and sometimes have a hard time believing that others would not as well. It is difficult for me to understand why students would terminate their foreign language study before being able to communicate and use the language. In addition, I hear students talk about taking only two years of foreign language to meet a college requirement and that they have no interest in pursuing their language studies any further, and I want to know if this is true. Furthermore, I also wonder if school administration is promoting foreign language courses as something that students should be taking for all four years of high school. Finally, I believe that most students do not realize the relevance of studying a foreign language with the goal of becoming proficient. In other words, I do not believe that students are aware of how many doors could be open to them if they were to become bilingual, how their lives would become culturally

enriched, they would have career benefits, and they would also develop a deeper understanding and acceptance for other cultures.

Role of the Researcher

As a classroom teacher conducting this research study, I will have daily access to the Spanish I and IV students who will complete a motivation survey. This will allow me to prepare my students for the survey, and fully explain it in advance. Being in daily contact with the participants will also allow me to do follow up interviews or a focus group if necessary. I will have limited access to the students who have discontinued Spanish after two years of study and volunteer to complete a survey as they are no longer taking Spanish classes. However, since this school is small in size, accessing the students who have dropped Spanish will not pose a problem. I will pilot the survey with the Spanish III students and will be able to prepare them in advance also.

Summary

In this chapter I have provided a context and rationale for exploring students' motivations towards learning Spanish. In the school that I now work, the numbers of students enrolled in levels three and four are significantly lower than the numbers enrolled in levels one and two. Students do not attain language proficiency in just two years of study. My goal as a language teacher is to nurture and educate learners of Spanish, and to promote learning Spanish to become proficient in negotiating everyday interactions, if not bilingual. Ascertaining the factors that motivate students to take Spanish is essential because it will help determine how our declining enrollment can be reversed. Improving our retention in upper level Spanish classes will ensure that we are

able to continue offering four years of Spanish and that our students leave our high school with higher proficiency in the language and a greater ability to communicate with native speakers of Spanish both here and in other countries.

Chapter Overviews

In Chapter One I introduced my research by establishing the purpose, significance, and need for the study. The context for the study and the role, assumptions, and biases of the researcher were briefly introduced. My background and personal connections to this study were also provided. In Chapter Two I provide a review of the literature that is relevant to this study. Some areas I explore are student motivation towards foreign language study, language proficiency, district, state, and national foreign language standards and requirements, enrollment trends and reasons why students should take foreign language. Chapter Three discusses the research design and methodology that guides this study. In Chapter Four I present and analyze the results of this study. Chapter five includes my reflections on the data collected, a revisit of the literature review, a discussion of the limitations of the study, implications for further research, recommendations for district goal setting and curricular improvement, and a plan for communicating the results of the study.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

“Why not learn at least one other language of the Americas? After all, we’re Americans, part of a hemispheric familia we should get to know. And since by the year 2050, twenty-five percent of the United States Americans will be Latinos, many of whom speak Spanish, they will be part of our family. They will be us!”
(Julia Alvarez, author)

The goal of this research is to learn about the factors that influence high school students to continue or discontinue their Spanish language study after two years. The first section presents the research that has been conducted on motivation in second language classrooms. The second section presents findings from research that has been conducted about why students take foreign languages and why they continue or discontinue their study after two years. Next, student attitude and disposition are discussed. The subsequent section provides a description of different levels of second language proficiency. Then, national, state and local foreign language standards and requirements are discussed. The next section describes national foreign language enrollment trends. Reasons why students should take foreign languages are also explored. Finally, the gap in the research is described.

Motivation

One of the main factors predicting the success of foreign language learning in

general is motivation (Gardner, 1985; McGroarty, 1996; Dörnyei, 2001a, 2001b). Motivation is a complex, abstract term that is frequently used. In simple terms, motivation can be described as the desire to achieve a goal combined with the energy used to attain that goal (Gardner, 1985; Dörnyei, 2001a, 2001b). Goals are defined as the objects or aims of one's efforts or ambitions (Merriam-Webster, 2003). Researchers in second language acquisition have long studied motivation, its definition, and relationship to foreign language learning (Gardner and Lambert 1959, 1972; Gardner 1985; Gardner and MacIntyre 1991; Dörnyei 2001a, 2001b).

Gardner and Lambert (1959, 1972) identified two socially-grounded constructs of motivation in foreign language learning. Integrative motivation is a desire to integrate into a second language group, while instrumental motivation is the desire to learn a foreign language for practical purposes such as career goals or school requirements. Integrativeness can be further explained as having a willingness or interest in interacting with members of the target language group and also may indicate a positive attitude towards members of the target language group. This implies that stressing the value of learning the language in order to become part of the target language culture would be essential for those who are integratively motivated. On the other hand, instrumental motivation is more self-orientated and utilitarian. Gardner and Macintyre (1991) conclude that both integrative and instrumental motivation lead to higher second language proficiency, but those integratively motivated students tend to learn more.

Motivation has been further delineated by both Gardner and Dörnyei. Gardner (1985) states that the phenomenon of motivation can be broken down into four elements:

having a goal, and exuding effort, conveying want and demonstrating a good attitude towards the goal or activity. Dörnyei (2001a, 2001b) asserts that motivational theories endeavor to explain three aspects of human behavior that are interrelated: the choice of an action, the persistence with the action, and the effort expended on the action. In other words, motivation is what causes one to decide to do something and it influences how long and hard one is willing to pursue it. Dörnyei and Gardner's definitions clearly show that motivation is one of the deciding factors in how long a student will continue her foreign language studies. Because motivation influences how long a student will study a foreign language, it is integral to my research, which includes discovering the reasons why students continue or discontinue their foreign language studies.

Students' Reasons for Taking Foreign Language and for the Length of their Study

Student Rationale for Taking a Foreign Language

Another factor that will influence the length of students' foreign language study is their rationale for studying the language. In some cases, a student's rationale for taking a foreign language may be what motivates them. In the United States, much research has been conducted as to why students enroll in foreign language classes (Reinert, 1970; Ramage, 1990; Moore, 1993). In the earlier study conducted by Reinert (1970), four main reasons for studying a foreign language were found: (a) interest in the language; (b) friends enrolled in the class; (c) influence from parents and/or family members; (d) a foreign language was required for high school graduation and/or college admission and/or a career. In addition, Reinert (1970) believes that most students begin their foreign language career because it is needed for a college entrance requirement or job but also

with the mindset that two years of study is sufficient. The later studies conducted by Ramage (1990) and Moore (1993) indicated that students take a foreign language for the following reasons: (a) a desire to communicate in another language for future travel; (b) a personal desire; (c) usefulness for a career or job; (d) an interest in learning to read and or write the language; (e) an interest to increase one's knowledge. These studies are similar in that students expressed an interest in the language and saw a future purpose for learning it such as graduation, college requirements or career uses. Differences can be seen in that students in Reinert's study noted more outside influences from friends or family while those in Ramage and Moore's studies cited more intrinsic influences such as personal desire and a desire to increase their own knowledge. All of these rationales will be explored in the survey conducted for this current study.

Factors Influencing Length of Foreign Language Study

Several studies have also been conducted on the factors that influence students' decisions to continue or discontinue their language studies beyond two years (Speiller, 1988; Ramage, 1990; Shedivy, 2004). Speiller and Ramage's studies involved a large number of participants, 267 and 138 students respectively, and data were collected by questionnaires and interviews. Speiller's study concluded that students had twelve main reasons for continuing their foreign language study. Ranked in order of importance they were:

- (a) college requirements;
- (b) personal interest in using the language;
- (c) career purposes;

- (d) travel to another country;
- (e) one's own level of progress in the language;
- (f) interest in the people and culture;
- (g) faculty recommendation;
- (h) level of difficulty of the next course;
- (i) family influence;
- (j) in-class activities;
- (k) student/ teacher relationship; and
- (l) influence of friends

These students demonstrated both integrative (interest in using the language and in the people and culture) and extrinsic reasons (career purposes and college requirements) for continuing their foreign language studies. The top six reasons for continuing their foreign language study illustrate an intent to use the language later in life. On the other hand, those students who decided to drop after two years had thirteen reasons, and they ranked the reasons in a distinct fashion:

- (a) conflict with other courses;
- (b) level of difficulty of the next course;
- (c) one's own level of progress in the language;
- (d) personal interest in using the language;
- (e) in-class activities;
- (f) faculty recommendation;
- (g) family influence;

- (h) interest in the people and culture;
- (i) student/teacher relationship;
- (j) travel to another country;
- (k) influence of friends;
- (l) college requirements;
- (m) career purposes

These students also had both integrative (less personal interest and less interest in the people and culture) and extrinsic reasons (family and peer influences) for discontinuing their foreign language study after only two years, but also possibly had trouble fitting foreign language study into their schedules. In addition, these students found the next level to be intimidating because of its difficulty and their own lack of progress in the language. Also important to note is that the discontinuing students demonstrated less personal interest in using the language, less interest in the target language people and culture, and also felt that foreign language study was not as important for their careers or to meet a college entrance requirement. These results indicate that the discontinuing students may not plan to go to a four year college and also may not realize how beneficial it is to know a second language.

Ramage (1990) also found that continuing students placed high importance on learning about the target culture and learning the language thoroughly to attain proficiency in all areas. In addition, the continuing students also indicated that their grade level and course grade were important considerations in their choice to continue their foreign language study. If the students were achieving high grades in the foreign

language or in upper grade levels, they tended to continue their study. Interestingly, the continuing students in Spellier's study ranked college requirements first on their list of motivations to continue in the language, while those in Ramage's study attributed college requirements low importance. Another difference between the two studies that is worthy of note is that the discontinuing students in Spellier's study ranked college requirements as the second lowest reason for ending their foreign language study. In Ramage's study, however, interest in fulfilling a college entrance requirement was students' main motive for discontinuing their study. According to Ramage, the main reason why around 50% of students drop their language studies after the second level is because the "college requirement" is met and there are no further external pressures.

Shedivy (2004) completed a study which investigated why students continued their foreign language study beyond the usual two years. Shedivy's study involved five students whom she personally knew and interviewed. This study was different from Spellier and Ramage's in that it involved only five students who participated in personal interviews of two to four hours each. Another difference from the two previous studies is that Shedivy's research centered only on why these students continued their foreign language study beyond two years in high school. The students in Shedivy's study had many motivational factors in common, most of which were integrative. All of the students had spent time in a foreign country and cited a desire to blend in with native speakers and the culture and immerse themselves in the language. The students were all also motivated by knowing another person who had become fluent in the language or by professor recommendation to continue. In addition, each student noted a utilitarian reason

for their continued language study such as college requirements or possible career opportunities.

Overall, these research studies present a fairly clear picture of why students take a foreign language and why they continue or discontinue after two years of study. Students who take a foreign language have integrative motivations such as an interest in the language and personal desires to become fluent as well as instrumental motivations like influence from others and graduation requirements or career goals. In general, students who continue in a foreign language beyond two years have both integrative and instrumental motives, but they tend to assign more importance to the integrative ones such as personal interest in the language or attaining proficiency in the target language and culture. Discontinuing students are inclined to rank instrumental motives like college entrance requirements or the level of difficulty as more important. These previous studies help us to understand students' motivations for the length of their foreign language study and provide a solid basis for this study. In this research, I will be looking to see if the students at my school express the same motivations and reasons for their length of study, or if there are different ones.

Student Attitude and Disposition

In addition to being motivated, students also must have a positive attitude and disposition in order to be successful foreign language learners. Attitudes are the feelings or emotions one has in regards to something, whereas a disposition is the tendency to act in a particular manner under certain circumstances (Merriam-Webster, 2003). While all the research agrees that a positive attitude is essential for student success (Gardner, 1985;

Lightbown & Spada, 1993; Rubin, 1975; Rubin & Thompson, 1994), not all of the research agrees on which characteristics are necessary in order to be a successful language learner.

Some researchers believe that the good language learner is uninhibited (Lalonde, Lee, & Gardner, 1987; Naiman, Fröhlich, & Stern, 1975; Rubin, 1975) while others do not believe this is a necessary characteristic (Reiss, 1985). Most researchers (Gardner, 1985; Lalonde, Lee, & Gardner, 1987; Lightbown & Spada, 1993; Naiman, Fröhlich, & Stern, 1975; Reiss, 1985; Rubin, 1975; Rubin & Thompson, 1994) agree though that the following characteristics are essential to being a good language learner. The good language learner will attempt to communicate her message even if she is unsure of the exact way to do so, uses every possible opportunity to practice the language, analyzes her own speech and that of others, makes good guesses, enjoys grammar, attends to form and meaning, knows that it is not easy to learn a foreign language, and also knows that there may be a lot of effort required. In addition, the good language learner is confident, not afraid to make mistakes, and has a relaxed attitude towards language learning. These characteristics can be broken down into two categories, that of a positive work ethic and a high comfort level in the classroom. The student who possesses both a positive work ethic and a high comfort level will be the most successful foreign language learner. I will include questions pertaining to these two categories of classroom disposition as well as questions about attitude on my student surveys. I will also include questions to determine whether a student has inhibitions or not, since there is some controversy over whether it is an important characteristic for student success.

Proficiency

Given that language proficiency is one of the main goals of teaching a foreign language, it is another aspect of foreign language study that is important to this research. According to the American Council for the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL), foreign language proficiency is “the ability to understand the essential points of a native speaker in real-life situations and respond in a fluent and coherent manner to that speaker” (as cited in Renza-Guren, 2001, p.12). ACTFL guidelines for oral and written proficiency testing range from novice-low to superior, and those for reading and listening proficiency range from novice-low to distinguished, which is a higher categorization than superior. There is a huge difference between the abilities of a novice level and a superior level speaker. For example, a novice speaker is described as being able to communicate very minimally, and only with learned material. According to ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines,

Speakers at the Novice-Low level have no real functional ability and, because of their pronunciation, they may be unintelligible. Given adequate time and familiar cues, they may be able to exchange greetings, give their identity, and name a number of familiar objects from their immediate environment. They are unable to perform functions or handle topics pertaining to the Intermediate level, and cannot therefore participate in a true conversational exchange. (1999, p. 5)

This is the lowest classification of speaking skills according to ACTFL standards. As noted, a speaker who tests at the novice-low level has such minimal abilities in the language that they really are not proficient. In contrast, speakers at the superior level are

classified as basically fluent since they

are able to communicate in the language with accuracy and fluency in order to participate fully and effectively in conversations on a variety of topics in formal and informal settings from both concrete and abstract perspectives... They demonstrate virtually no pattern of error in the use of basic structures. However, they may make sporadic errors, particularly in low-frequency structures and in some complex high-frequency structures more common to formal speech and writing. Such errors, if they do occur, do not distract the native interlocutor or interfere with communication. (1999, p. 3)

For a complete breakdown of the ACTFL Speaking Proficiency Guidelines, see Appendix A. The goal of foreign language teachers is to help their students achieve the highest proficiency possible, ideally superior. The question that remains to be answered, however, is how long does it take to attain a superior classification? It is important to note that a foreign language learner will progress from the novice to intermediate stage fairly quickly. Attaining advanced level proficiency takes much more time and then reaching the superior stage takes even longer. According to ACTFL and the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE), attaining all aspects of the superior level of language acquisition usually requires at least thirteen years in a sequential, articulated program.

Foreign Language Standards and Requirements

National Foreign Language Standards

Through funding from the government, national standards for foreign language study were produced by ACTFL in 1993 in conjunction with the American Association

of Teachers of French, American Association of Teachers of German, American Association of Teachers of Spanish and Portuguese. This was the seventh and last subject area to receive funding under the Bush Administration's America 2000 education initiative, continued as Goals 2000 under the Clinton Administration (ACTFL, 1996). The Standards for Foreign Language Learning "reflect the best instructional practice, [but] they do not describe what is being attained by the majority of foreign language students. [They] will not be achieved overnight; rather, they provide a gauge against which to measure improvement in the years to come" (ACTFL, 1996, p.2).

The ACTFL (1996) national standards are organized in five main goal areas, known as the "five c's of foreign language education:" communication, cultures, connections, comparisons, and communities. A complete list of these standards is located in Appendix B. The communication standards delineate functions that are necessary for communication such as participating in conversations, understanding written and spoken language, and presenting information in the foreign language. Cultural standards describe how students should gain knowledge and understanding of other cultures, while the connections standards advise how students can use their foreign language knowledge to enhance their learning in other disciplinary areas. The comparisons standards detail how students should compare both their first language and culture with that of their second. Finally, the communities standards are those that relate how students should use their foreign language to participate in their immediate community and in life learning experiences. Each of these goals is broken down into standards, three for communication, and two for the other goal areas. ACTFL maintains that these national standards should

be with the local and state standards to determine the most reasonable student expectations for each local district (1996).

State Foreign Language Standards

Although by 1995 40 states required school districts to offer at least two years of foreign language to all students, the other ten states only expect the classes to be offered to college-bound or honors students (Renza-Guren, 2001). In addition, most states do not have their own foreign or world language standards. In the state in which this study takes place, there are currently no standards in world languages. The state department has declared that districts are responsible for setting world language standards locally. To assist districts, the World Languages Quality Teaching Network developed *Minnesota World Languages: A Model for Use in Setting Local Standards* based on national standards (Minnesota Department of Education [MDE], 2008, 3¶) This model details the same five goal areas as ACTFL, with the same standards. One difference is that ACTFL segments their standard areas with progress indicators by grade levels four, eight and twelve, while the MDE model segments theirs into the categories beginning, developing and refining (MDE, 2004). In addition, the MDE model also indicated which goals require more than four years in a sequential, articulated foreign language program, and which may take at least thirteen. All of the standards in the refining category require at least four years of study, and to achieve all of the standards requires at least thirteen years. Examples of some of the standards found in the refining category include the ability to research and synthesize materials from a variety of sources (standard 1.2), the ability to defend one's position on an issue (standard 1.3) and the ability to correctly

utilize idiomatic expressions in the foreign language (standard 4.1) (MDE 2004). There are currently no local, district standards at the school in which this research takes place. Foreign language teachers rely on both the national and state standards when choosing and implementing their curriculum.

Foreign Language Requirements

Presently, there are no foreign language requirements on the national level, and requirements vary by state and local district. The source for state requirements is the National Council of State Supervisors for Languages (NCSSFL), which is an organization of personnel from all the states who have the responsibility of foreign/world language education at the state level. This organization has the goal of providing and overseeing leadership in the promotion and support of foreign language education, and conducts many surveys about questions pertinent to the field of world languages (NCSSFL, 2009a).

The NCSSFL (2009b) has two survey questions that are of interest to this study. The first one asks for states to disclose whether they require their schools to offer world language instruction. Of the 37 states that responded, 30 (81%) require their school districts to offer world language instruction, six (16%) do not, and one is in the process. The state in which this research occurs acknowledged that world languages are not a requirement but an elective for a high school diploma. Each district in this state can offer languages and set their own standards. In this state, there are not parameters set as to how many levels of foreign language should be offered or at which grades they should be offered (NCSSFL, 2009b). The second pertinent survey question requests that states

declare if world language study is a graduation requirement. Of the sixteen states who responded to this question, nine already have a foreign language requirement for graduation, one has it as an option, two do not have the requirement, and four have proposed a requirement. The state in which this research occurs is one that has proposed a foreign language requirement for graduation.

Foreign Language Enrollment in Public Schools in the United States

General Enrollment Figures

ACTFL is the one consistent source of enrollment figures of students in public secondary schools in the United States, and they have documented these enrollment numbers since 1890. On their webpage, in print publications such as newsletters, or in journals such as the *Foreign Language Annals*, ACTFL periodically publishes documents with public secondary school enrollment figures in foreign languages. ACTFL requests data from public education officials in each state and the District of Columbia, but discloses that the declining responses from the individual states make it difficult to ascertain the true status of foreign languages (Draper & Hicks, 2002). In this same report on public secondary enrollment, Draper and Hicks also point out that the decline in state data makes it more difficult to determine the status of foreign languages in the United States as a whole. Difficulties aside, in this most recent ACTFL report in 2002, Draper and Hicks note that foreign language enrollment increased slightly over the past few years, with total enrollment numbers increasing from a little over six million students in 1994 to almost seven million students in 2000. This number represents approximately 33.8% of the total enrollment of secondary students, which increased from 32.8% in 1994

(Draper & Hicks, 1996, 2002). In this Upper Midwest state, the enrollment numbers in 1994 were 129,408 and in 2000 they were 147,999, an increase of 12.56%. Another important observation made is that our students tend to favor studying Spanish and enrollment in this language accounts for almost 70% (68.8) of the total foreign language enrollment (Draper & Hicks, 2002, p. 1). In this particular state, the foreign language enrollment trends mimic those of the nation, with Spanish having the highest enrollment.

Enrollment by Level

Another significant aspect of enrollment that must be considered is the number of students enrolled in foreign language by level because this will indicate the length of time that students are studying a foreign language. In their 2002 enrollment report, Draper and Hicks sadly remark that “despite the advent of national standards, calls to begin study in lower grade levels, and a national climate that would tend to support more study of second languages and cultures, there remains no appreciable difference (since these events) in the numbers of students studying beyond introductory language levels” (p. 2). For example, in 2000 the total number of students enrolled in level I foreign language classes was 1,129,336, in level II there were 796,229, in III there were 345,627, in IV there were 120,063, in level V there were 28,047, and in levels VI and Advanced Placement (AP) combined there were 53,410 (Draper and Hicks, 2002, p. 20). As these numbers indicate, by level III, over 69% (69.4) of students have dropped their foreign language class, by level IV that number increases to 89.3%, and by level V only 2.5% of students remain in foreign language classes. Numbers are similar when enrollments are broken down by language. In Spanish classes, by level III, around 70% of students have

dropped Spanish, by level IV almost 91% of students have dropped and by level V only 2.2% of students remain in a Spanish language class. Numbers for level VI and AP were not calculated here because the data was grouped together and some schools offer AP in levels IV and V. The numbers of students per level at this particular school follow similar trends (see table 1.1 for enrollment by level and year from 2005-2010). By level III, between 84% and 87% of our students have dropped Spanish, and by level IV, between 89% and 98% of students have dropped.

Reasons Students Should Study a Foreign Language for More than Two Years

Cognitive Benefits

There are definite, multiple cognitive benefits of studying a foreign language. For years, second language acquisition research has shown that learning a second language helps to develop metalinguistic awareness, the understanding of how language works (Sanders, 2006). Kecskes and Papp (as cited in Sanders, 2006) agree with Sanders and assert that a students' native language capabilities improve with foreign language study. In addition, studying a foreign language may result in higher scores on native language tests because of the special attention given to sentence structure and vocabulary development in the second language classroom. In her 1998 dissertation, Perez studied the relationship between academic achievement and Spanish language proficiency. She compared students' GPAs and their scores on the National Spanish Examination (NSE) and the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS). Perez concluded that one of the key results of her study of the effects of second language proficiency (Spanish) was that students who scored the highest on the National Spanish Exam also had the highest

overall GPA's and scored the highest on state math and writing tests. Perez's study demonstrated that there is a connection between test scores and second language proficiency, although we cannot be certain of the cause-effect relationship. From this, however, she inferred that second language acquisition will help students improve in their native language skills and score better on achievement tests.

Other researchers support these claims that second language acquisition brings cognitive benefits. An article by Shankar Vedantam in the Washington Post (2004) maintains that bilinguals are better able to handle distractions than their monolingual counterparts and may also have an advantage in regards to age-related losses in several mental processes. The Post cites research conducted by Bialystok (1987) who asserts that bilinguals may have superior memories for storing and processing information. Dr. Gitit Kavé, a neuro-psychologist from the Herczeg Institute on Aging at Tel Aviv University, supports these findings with her own research that claims that elderly bilinguals perform better on cognitive function tests (Science Daily 2008). Baker (1993) asserts that the ownership of two or more languages increases a person's fluency, flexibility, originality, and elaboration in thinking. Cummins (as cited in Baker, 1993) also found that bilinguals had better fluency and flexibility than monolinguals. In addition, Bialystok (as cited in Baker, 1993) discovered that bilinguals possess an advanced awareness of what a word is, greater control of their internal language processing, and an advanced understanding of grammaticality. Sanders succinctly summarizes that "the published research indicates that foreign language study not only represents a path to the acquisition of the means of communication and expression but also fosters the cognitive development that lies at the

core of education” (2006, p. 42). These cognitive benefits are one incentive for students to continue their foreign language study for more than two years.

Advantages of Becoming Bilingual

Another motivation for students to continue their foreign language study is the potential for them to become bilingual and reap all the benefits of this ability. Even if the students in my study are not raised bilingually, one goal of our foreign language program is to start foreign language instruction earlier and retain students longer with the utopian goal of eventually producing bilingual students. If students start their foreign language study earlier and maintain it long enough to become bilingual, they will acquire multiple benefits (ACTFL, 2009). For example, the Center for Applied Linguistics lists the following effects of learning a second language at an early age:

- 1) Has a positive effect on intellectual growth.
- 2) Enriches and enhances a child’s mental growth.
- 3) Leaves students with more flexibility in thinking, greater sensitivity to language, and a better ear for listening.
- 4) Improves a child’s understanding of his/her native tongue.
- 5) Gives a child the ability to communicate with people s/he would otherwise not have the chance to know.
- 6) Opens the door to other cultures and helps a child understand and appreciate people from other countries.
- 7) Gives a student a head start in language requirements for college.
- 8) Increases job opportunities in many careers where knowing another language is

a real asset (as cited in ACTFL, 2009).

If we can extend our students' foreign language study for four years or more, they will have the potential to benefit greatly from these advantages.

Global Citizen and Economy

In addition to the above benefits of becoming bilingual, there is an increasing need for all of us to become global citizens. Our world grows smaller and closer every day, with the advances and increases in technology, we are all in closer contact through personal and business connections. Becoming proficient in a foreign language should be a priority for all American citizens (Holt, 2009; Obama, 2008; U.S. Department of State, 2006 & Landers, 2008). Even though many of the world's citizens speak English with some degree of competence, there is a certain amount of miscommunication that still occurs when not speaking one's first language. Marie-Louise Gaettens, chair of the foreign languages department at Southern Methodist University, maintains that unless you speak with someone in their native tongue, you only understand part of what is happening, and you will never understand their culture (Landers, 2008). President Obama (2008) agrees and notes that it is embarrassing that citizens from other countries speak multiple languages and when we travel abroad, we expect them to speak English to us.

Another reason to promote bilingualism to our students is to ensure our participation and success in the global economy. Most other nations produce citizens that can communicate with others in their language, while we remain largely monolingual. This monolingualism negatively affects us in the areas of business, national security, and international relations (Oleksak, 2006). As stated previously, knowing the language and

culture of the people with whom you do business is integral for success (Landers, 2008). Olesak agrees and maintains that the United States has lost the competitive edge in the global economy because our citizens lack the necessary skills in foreign languages and cultures. In addition, the Committee for Economic Development (CDE) concurs that we need to produce more foreign language speakers if we are to compete in the economic sector (as cited in Olesak, 2006).

National Security

In addition to the need for more competent foreign language speakers to ensure our economic competitiveness, we also need them to ensure our national security. In response to the 9/11 tragedy, President Bush announced the National Security Language Initiative (NSLI) in January of 2006. This initiative was based on research that found huge deficits in foreign language learning and teaching which negatively affect our national security, diplomacy, and cultural awareness. The lack of foreign language competence also prevents us from effectively communicating with foreign media, hinders our counter-terrorism efforts, and affects our ability to promote cultural understanding. Bush and his administration noted that to better our national security we need to “engage foreign governments and peoples, especially in critical regions, to encourage reform, promote understanding, convey respect for other cultures and provide an opportunity to learn more about our country and its citizens” (p.1). In his online post from September 18, 2008, U.S. Representative Rush Holt echoes these same concerns. Holt points out that we have storerooms of un-translated audio recordings which may contain information that could prevent future terrorist attacks because we lack trained translators. In addition,

Holt declares that prior to 9/11, our intelligence community was only at 30% readiness in languages such as Arabic, Chinese, Farsi, or Hindi, which could be critical to national security. Clearly, more bilingual citizens or even proficient foreign language speakers would be of great benefit to our nation.

Need for Research

Although there has already been a considerable amount of research completed on student motivation towards foreign language and why students choose to continue or discontinue their study after two years, there is still a need for more research. To improve the foreign language department and offerings at my school and to benefit this specific population, on-site research involving the students, parents, and staff is necessary. It has been well documented that students cannot attain proficiency in a foreign language in only two years (ACTFL 1996, 1999; MDE, 2004). We live in a global marketplace with a global economy, and for our students to succeed and have every advantage possible, we need to start devoting more time, energy and importance to the acquisition of foreign languages. In addition, there are definite cognitive benefits that are attained when one studies a foreign language, and even more so when one becomes bilingual. The need for further research is also personal. I teach Spanish at this school and feel very strongly that these students who discontinue their foreign language study after two years missing an important component of their education. These findings lead to the following questions: Why do students choose to take two years or four years of a foreign language? Do students start out with the intention of taking only two years of a foreign language, and if so, why? How could these students be motivated to take more years of foreign language?

What factors influence continued foreign language study? The answers to these questions should enable us to strengthen our foreign language curriculum, increase our enrollment in upper level classes, and produce students who are much more proficient in a foreign language.

Summary

This chapter reviewed the literature on student motivation in regards to second language acquisition, students' reasons for taking a foreign language and their rationale for continuing or discontinuing after two years of study. Foreign language proficiency as well as local, state and national standards and requirements were also explained. Trends in foreign language enrollment and the arguments for continuing foreign language study beyond two years were described. This literature review provides support for a study that will be site specific to determine why most of these particular students tend to discontinue their foreign language study after only two years.

The next chapter will describe the methodologies that will be used in the research study, including the rationale and description of the research design which includes a description of the mixed methodology paradigm. The data collection protocols are explained along with the procedures that will be followed. Details of the data analysis and verification of the data along with a discussion of the ethical considerations that I employed while analyzing each procedure are included.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

“Americans who travel abroad for the first time are often shocked to discover that, despite all the progress that has been made in the last 30 years, many foreign people still speak in foreign languages!” (Dave Barry, American Writer and Humorist)

In Chapter Two, I discussed studies which show that students tend to end their foreign language study after two years in high school. Other studies have shown that only two years of high school language is not enough for a student to attain proficiency in the language. This study is designed to explore students' motivations towards foreign language learning, specifically Spanish. I want to know what motivates the students at my high school to study Spanish and why the majority tend to terminate their Spanish studies after two years. I also want to know what factors cause some students at my high school to continue with their Spanish studies for four years. The intent of this study is to explore the motivations of Spanish students towards their language learning experience in order to understand why they choose to take as little as two years or as many as four years of Spanish.

In this study I gathered data through an interview and four different surveys. One survey was written for current level I Spanish students, one for level IV Spanish students, and the last one for students who chose to discontinue Spanish after their second year of

study. As part of the research, I explored the Spanish language motivations from three different perspectives: level I students who were just embarking on their foreign language journey, level IV students who were completing their high school language experience, and level II or III students who ended their studies without taking Spanish throughout all four years of high school. In addition, parents were invited to complete a fourth survey regarding their own foreign language experiences, their attitudes towards foreign languages and towards their children's foreign language studies. The last research tool was a personal interview with the high school guidance counselor intended to determine the rationale for offering only one foreign language and the beliefs/recommendations for foreign language study at this school.

Overview of the Chapter

This chapter describes the methodologies used in this research study. First, the rationale and description of the research design is presented in conjunction with a description of the mixed methodology paradigm. Second, the data collection protocols are explained. Then in the procedure section, I discuss how the data were actually collected. Next, I present the details of the data analysis and verification of the data. Finally, the chapter ends with a discussion of the ethical considerations that I employed while analyzing each procedure.

Mixed Methodology Research Paradigm

In this study, I used the mixed methodology research paradigm which is relatively new in the field of research, with the first explicit discussions occurring in the late 1950s (Dörnyei, 2003). The name "mixed methodology" implies the basic meaning of this

research paradigm: it is the combination of qualitative and quantitative research methods within one single research project. In the 1970s there was a breakthrough in mixed methodology with the introduction of the concept of triangulation. This term was borrowed from naval navigation and land surveying, and in social sciences research it “became synonymous with combining data sources to study the same social phenomenon” and is also used today to validate research (Dörnyei, 2003, p. 43). In the 1990s, the use of mixed methodology started to gain popularity and its use became more widespread. Well known researchers such as Lazaratton currently promote its use as an effective research methodology. Lazaratton (2005) believes that combining both qualitative and quantitative research methods results in a stronger research paradigm since using both methods highlights different aspects of research.

The purpose of quantitative research is to generalize and predict universal laws (Dörnyei, 2007; McKay, 2006). Quantitative research usually starts with a research question, involves a large, random number of participants, can be conducted in a reasonably short amount of time, and includes statistical analysis (McKay, 2006). Advocates of quantitative research highlight that it is “systematic, rigorous, focused, and tightly controlled...and it offers some built-in quality checks and indices (such as statistical significance) that help readers to decide on the validity of quantitative findings” (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 34.).

Qualitative research, on the other hand, does not always start with a research question; this may be arrived at inductively. Some types of qualitative research are more open-ended and exploratory and seek to understand the people upon which the inquiry is

based. The purpose of qualitative research is to give context to and interpret the research situation (McKay, 2006). There are typically a limited number of participants and the study can be quite lengthy. Data include field notes, focus groups, and interviews, and their analysis is interpretative and categorical (McKay, 2006; Merriam, 1998).

Proponents of qualitative research emphasize that it is holistic, exploratory, and flexible. They also state that qualitative research offers rich materials for research reports, can answer questions that arise from quantitative research, and that it “aims to broaden the repertoire of possible interpretations of human experience” (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 40).

There are a variety of ways that the two research methodologies can be combined, at both the research and analysis stages. The main data collection technique in this study will be the administration of three distinct surveys, which according to McKay (2008) can utilize both quantitative and qualitative features. Many of the survey questions will be highly structured to allow me to gather a large amount of information about my students’ motivations, attitudes and dispositions towards learning Spanish. These questions will be analyzed in order to make statistical generalizations about demographic information and students’ overall motivations, attitudes and dispositions towards learning Spanish. There will also be some open ended questions that will allow students to respond in much greater depth and will allow me to obtain more and richer information to evaluate (Dörnyei, 2003). These data will be examined qualitatively, by interpretation and categorization. If necessary, follow up focus groups or interviews will also be conducted, using open ended questions to elicit a greater depth of information.

Data Collection Protocol

Participants

There were 182 participants in this study. 105 of the participants were Spanish I students, ranging in age from 13-18, in grades nine to twelve. The Spanish IV group had eleven participants who ranged in age from 16-18. Three of these students were eleventh grade, native Spanish speakers and eight were twelfth grade non-native speakers. In addition, there were fourteen participants who completed Spanish II and then discontinued their foreign language study. These students ranged in age from 15-17 and were in grades ten, eleven or twelve. All Spanish I and IV students were given a consent form to return to me signed if they choose to participate. I distributed consent forms to over 100 students who had dropped Spanish after level II, and fourteen of those returned a signed form and participated in the survey. Over 200 invitations for parents to complete an online survey were sent home with current Spanish I-IV students. Thirty of those chose to complete the survey. In addition, the high school counselor was interviewed and 21 Spanish III students piloted the student survey.

Setting

This study was done in a small, outer suburban high school in the upper Midwest. The research site is a small town located about an hour south of the nearest metropolitan area. The population is 5,428 and the high school population averages around 500 students in grades 9-12. During the school year 2009-2010, there are approximately 1700 students enrolled in the district, 523 in the high school, and 261 of those students, or 49.9% are enrolled in Spanish classes. There is not a lot of racial diversity here; it is a

town in which the majority of the population, 91.1 %, is Caucasian. There is a growing Hispanic population of 6.6% and very small Asian and African American populations, comprising 3.1%. Racial diversity in the high school is lower than that of the population as a whole. In the 2009-2010 school year, there are 23 Hispanic students enrolled in the high school, or approximately 4% of the population. In addition, there are three Asian students (.5 %), seven African American students (1%) and three Native American students (.5 %) enrolled in the high school. The district-wide minority numbers are comparable. The percent of minorities has been increasing slightly each year for the past ten years, and having a minority student in your class is becoming more commonplace. In the past school year, there were eleven Hispanic students, four Asian students, two African American, and no Native American students enrolled in Spanish classes. There is a large number of the school district students that are on free or reduced lunch, about 24.7%. At the high school, this number is 21.8%. This is representative of the socioeconomic status of the population as a whole.

Surveys

A survey was used as the main data collection in this study. According to Dörnyei (2003), this is one of the most common means of data collection in second language research. Surveys may also be commonly referred to as questionnaires, and are defined as any written instrument that contains a series of questions or statements to which the respondents are to respond by writing a short answer or selecting from existing answers (Brown, 2001). Surveys ask respondents for information or opinions and do not have correct or incorrect answers, unlike tests. They are used to measure factual questions (like

demographics), behavioral questions (such as how often a respondent uses a particular language learning strategy), and attitudinal questions (to find out about the respondents' attitudes, beliefs, interests, opinions, and values) (Dörnyei, 2003). My surveys contained questions to measure factual, behavioral, attitudinal and motivational factors that influence students in their Spanish language careers.

Surveys have many advantages such as efficiency in researcher time, effort and financial resources. Surveys allow one to collect a considerable amount of data in a short time frame. With a well constructed survey, data analysis can also be fairly easy and quick. In addition, surveys can be used in a plethora of situations. Dörnyei (2003) asserts that “they can be used successfully with a variety of people in a variety of situations targeting a variety of topics. As a result, the vast majority of research projects in the behavioral and social sciences involve at one stage or another collecting some sort of questionnaire data” (p. 10). I chose to use a survey for these very reasons. My time and financial resources were limited and there was a lot of data that I want to collect. In addition, the participants of my surveys were varied.

There are, however, some potential disadvantages to using a survey. Answers may be superficial because the questions need to be simple in order for all to understand them. Since I know all of my respondents and their reading comprehension levels, I was able to adjust my questioning to best fit the group. Also, it has been noted that respondents may be unreliable or unmotivated, and their answers may be swayed by social desirability. I hoped that the respondents for this research project would be both reliable and motivated because we have a good rapport and because the survey will be a classroom activity.

Another disadvantage is that there may be little interaction between the administrator and the respondent, which can lead to misunderstandings or mistakes when responding to the survey (Dörnyei, 2003). Since this survey was completed during class time with myself acting as the administrator, any participant questions were addressed immediately. Despite these potential pitfalls, many well known second language researchers are proponents of surveys and rely on them to acquire their research data (Dörnyei 2003, 2007; Brown, 2001; Lazaraton, 2005; McKay, 2008).

There are many steps involved in constructing a good survey. Dörnyei (2003) includes some important factors to consider in survey construction, including keeping the survey short, (it should not take more than 30 minutes), avoiding single-item variables, and avoiding questions that require long answers. The structure of the survey should be neat and easy to read and the design should be professional with varying typefaces. Instructions should include the purpose and sponsors for the research at the beginning, should be clear and concise, and should include a “thank you” at the end. Questions should be written in simple language and negative, ambiguous, and loaded constructions should be avoided. Open-ended questions work best when placed at the end of the survey along with any personal information needed from the respondent. Sensitive items must be handled with care, and questions should address both positive and negative characteristics of the research question (Dörnyei, 2003, pp. 132-133). These are all factors that I considered when constructing my surveys.

For these particular surveys, I initially typed out all of the questions and reviewed them according to Dörnyei’s criteria. However, these surveys were administered via the

internet for a variety of reasons. Given students' vast experiences with technology, an internet survey would be more natural and alluring than a paper one. Also, there are many survey programs now available for purchase or for free on the internet. The program that I chose was Zoomerang. This site offered a variety of question formats to be used in each survey. The design and layout of this program were also fresh and current. Finally, this program offered instant tabulation and statistical analysis of the data, which was extremely helpful to me as I collected data from a large number of participants.

Procedure

Participants

For this study I used a sample of convenience because all students who returned a consent form were included. These students completed the survey during their respective Spanish class hours. If students were absent, they were allowed to complete the survey during class within the next two days. There were two Spanish I students who choose to complete the survey in this manner. After two days, the survey was closed due to school vacation and high occurrence of student illness. The eleven Spanish IV students also completed the survey during their class hour. All students were present to complete the survey. The fourteen students who dropped Spanish after their second year completed their survey during a study hall or before or after school, or from home. I was present when all of the Spanish I and IV surveys were completed in order to answer any potential questions. See participation figure 3.1 for a complete breakdown of the number of invitations, participants and percentage of participation.

Parents were invited to complete a survey regarding their foreign language

experiences and attitudes towards their child's foreign language study. The invitation was sent home with all of the Spanish students in levels I-IV. Parents or guardians took the survey at their own convenience from September 30th until October 12th. Computer and internet access was offered for those who did not have them at home. This was also a sample of convenience because data were analyzed from all 30 parents or guardians who chose to participate.

Figure 3.1

Research Project Participation Numbers and Percentages

	Number Invited	Number who participated	Percent who Participated
Parents	200	30	15%
Counselor	1	1	100%
Spanish I	115	105	91%
Spanish IV	11	11	100%
Spanish Discontinued	100	14	14%
Pilot Study	21	21	100%
TOTALS	448	182	41%

The high school guidance counselor was interviewed regarding her role in advising students to take foreign language. She was selected because of her role as the

main resource for students in regard to scheduling and class selection.

Pilot Study

A pilot study was conducted with the Spanish III class. I felt it was important to conduct a pilot study in order to verify that the survey would work well and provide the necessary data for this research project. In addition, I wanted to ensure that the questions were understandable and wanted to minimize any student confusion or misunderstanding. I chose the Spanish III class because I work closely with my colleague and was able to review the survey and my research goals with her.

Twenty one students completed the survey on September 20th, and I discovered that there were a couple of ambiguities. At the end of the survey there were questions which ask students to rate their Spanish teachers according to various criteria. One problem students had was that they did not recognize the term “slapdash.” I changed this term on the final survey copy to “careless or hasty.” There is also a question at the end that asks students to rate their Spanish classes in a variety of ways. One asks students to rate it as “uniform” or “varied.” Some students were unsure if “uniform” or the same was a better characteristic than “varied” or different. This question would definitely be a personal preference and the final survey results had to be carefully examined. These rating questions were then carefully explained to the Spanish I, IV and discontinued students in advance. The data from the pilot study were not included in my results.

Materials

Student Surveys There were three different surveys administered to the three distinct groups. One was written for the Spanish I students who are beginning their foreign

language journey. The purpose of this survey was to determine how many years these Spanish I students plan to study Spanish, why they are taking it, and how or if they plan to use it in the future. The objective of the Spanish IV survey was to ascertain why these students continued in Spanish classes for all four years of high school. The purpose of the survey constructed for the students who dropped Spanish after two years was to determine why they dropped after only two years, their reasons for taking Spanish in the first place, and what could have motivated them to continue their study for all four years of high school.

All three surveys had the same format and the same basic questions in regards to attitude, classroom disposition, and motivation. These surveys contained a combination of quantitative and qualitative questions and were modeled on past surveys conducted by Dörnyei (2003) and Gardner (1985). There were 41 Likert scale questions about classroom disposition, motivation, and attitude, two demographic questions, one multiple choice question about who or what influenced the student's decision to take Spanish, one open ended question about why the students chose to take Spanish for the number of years they did and two (Spanish I) or four (Spanish IV and discontinued students) semantical differential question about the Spanish teacher(s) and class(es). The Spanish IV survey can be seen in Appendix C, and the other surveys were identical with the above noted differences. The Spanish I and IV surveys were administered during class time, in a computer lab. The discontinued Spanish students chose the location of their survey, either at school or home. All students filled out their survey online, using confidential log-in number that they selected from an envelope. These log-in numbers

prevented any student from taking the survey more than once.

Parent / Guardian Survey This survey was designed to determine the value that parents or guardians place on learning another language, how supportive they are of their student's foreign language study, and to collect data on their own foreign language learning experiences. Parents or guardians were able to take the online survey at home from September 30th to October 12th or at school on October 12th if they did not have computer or internet access. This survey consisted of fifteen Likert scale questions, some demographic questions, and an open-ended question about personal foreign language experience. The complete survey can be seen in Appendix D.

Counselor Interview The counselor interview was designed to discover the attitudes and beliefs of the guidance counselor in regards to foreign language learning since she is the person who advises students as to which classes they should take and when. The seven interview questions were all open-ended. The complete set of interview questions can be seen in Appendix E.

Data Analysis

The data analysis for each survey occurred shortly after each survey was completed. First of all, I used confidential and random identification numbers for login purposes. Then, the survey program quantified all of the data, analyzed it, and presented the results in chart form. Qualitative data obtained through the open-ended question was categorized by theme and each theme will be color coded. This color coding was used to isolate key words and phrases that conveyed feelings, opinions, and values. All color coded

responses were placed on poster boards in order to establish the prominent themes. Reliability was established by the use of multi-item variables and triangulation of the data. A multi-item variable means that a question is asked in more than one way. For example, both of the following questions might be asked in a survey to ascertain that the respondents answers are similar and therefore reliable, “I enjoy language learning” and “Language learning is fun .” Multi-item variables can also be comprised of positive and negative questions with the same end results in mind, “I do not like learning languages” and “I enjoy learning languages.” I analyzed the data and then compared my results with those of the computer program and those of two outside analysts.

Verification of Data

Several strategies were used to ensure the internal validity of this study. First of all, I used samples of convenience which means that all students who returned a signed consent form and completed the survey included in the data collection. All parents or guardians who chose to complete the parent/guardian survey were also included in the data collection. Also, the data was triangulated by comparison to the computer generated results and by peer-examination and review to ascertain that the results I found were supported by two outside analysts. In addition, there was minimal use of single item variables and a sample size large enough to allow for statistically significant results (Dörnyei 2003).

Ethics

The following protective measures were employed in this study to protect the participant’s rights:

- (a) a Human Subjects Research form was submitted, reviewed and accepted by Hamline faculty and the research school administration,
- (b) the school district gave me permission to conduct the research,
- (c) students and parents were given informed consent letters and parents signed for the students who participated in the surveys (and or interviews and focus group),
- (d) the purpose and objectives of the research were explained to all of the participants,
- (d) there was no unwarranted pressure to participate in the study,
- (e) participants' identities were protected at all steps in the research process,
- (f) there were no positive or negative consequences for participating in this study,
- (g) all research materials were kept locked in a secure location at all times and will be destroyed within one year of the completion of this research study,
- (h) all interviews were transcribed verbatim

Conclusion

In this chapter, I described the methods I used to conduct this research study. The mixed methodology paradigm was explained along with the characteristics of qualitative and quantitative research paradigms. Then the data collection protocol was described, including the participants, setting, and method of data collection. Justification and rationale for utilizing surveys for this particular research study were given. Next the procedures for this study were explained, including the participants, pilot study, and

materials used. The data analysis and verification techniques utilized were then detailed. Finally, there was a discussion of the ethical considerations followed for this study. The next chapter presents the results of this study. The information and themes from all three surveys are discussed.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

“Those who know nothing of foreign languages know nothing of their own.”
(Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, German Playwright, Poet, Novelist and Dramatist. 1749-1832)

This study took place at a high school in a small, outer suburb in the upper Midwest. The school is located in a small town located about an hour south of the nearest metropolitan area. The high school population averages around 500 students in grades 9-12, about 200 of which are enrolled in Spanish classes in any given year. For this research, I surveyed all of the Spanish I and IV students and as many students as possible who had dropped Spanish after two years of study. These students were all surveyed to discover their attitudes, learning dispositions, and motivations towards learning Spanish. In addition, there were specific questions for each sub-group of students. Spanish I students were asked how long they plan to study Spanish, why they are taking it, and how or if they plan to use it in the future, while the Spanish IV students were asked why they continued in Spanish classes for all four years of high school. The students who dropped Spanish after two years were questioned to determine why they dropped after only two years, their reasons for taking Spanish in the first place, and what could have motivated them to continue their study for all four years of high school. In the subsequent sections,

some potential outside influences such as parents and the guidance counselor are explored. Parents and guardians were contacted and invited to complete a survey designed to determine the value they place on learning another language, how supportive they are of their student's foreign language study, and to collect data on their own foreign language learning experiences. Finally, the counselor interview was designed to discover her attitudes and opinions in regards to foreign language learning since she is the person who advises students as to which classes they should take and when.

Through the collection of these data, I sought to find the answer to the following question: What are high school students' motivations for taking more advanced levels of foreign language classes? In addition to my guiding question, I looked at the following sub-questions: What forces in students' lives influence their decisions? Why do students choose to take only two years or as many as four? Do students plan to just take two years of a foreign language, and if so, why? Could these students be motivated to take more years of foreign language?

Results and Analysis of Student Surveys

Spanish I Survey

The Spanish I students were surveyed to discover their motivations, attitudes, and learning dispositions towards learning Spanish. In addition, they were asked how long they plan to study Spanish, why they are taking it, and how or if they plan to use it in the future. 105 of the 124 Spanish I students returned their signed consent forms and completed the survey during one of the three days it was given.

Motivation. Most of the Spanish I students, 92, are in ninth grade and will have the

option to continue Spanish for all four years of their high school careers; eight are in tenth grade, and four are in eleventh grade. One responded that s/he is a senior, but there are no seniors enrolled in Spanish I. Amazingly, 42% of these students, 44 of the 105, plan to take Spanish for all four years of their high school career. If that actually happened, it would be a 400% increase of our current Spanish IV enrollment of 11 students. Numbers like these would ensure that our foreign language program could continue to offer four years of classes. This result is very encouraging. Ten of the students, 9%, plan to take Spanish for only one year, 40 students, or 38%, plan to take it for just two years, and eleven plan to take it for three years.

If students indicated that they plan to take Spanish for only one or two years, they were asked to explain their reasoning. Students were able to give a detailed answer to this open-ended question. 21 of the 50 students stated that they chose to study Spanish for one or two years in order to fulfill a college requirement and nineteen stated that it was for personal interests or to better themselves. For example, one student stated “So I can get into a good college when I graduate,” and another one said, “Because I want to learn a little more in Spanish and get more involved.” Eight students indicated that there were other classes they wanted to take that would prohibit them from taking four years of Spanish, and only five indicated that they were taking Spanish to better their options for the future. In general, there seem to be many scheduling conflicts with upper level classes. In addition, four students thought that two years would enable them to speak the language proficiently. “I plan on taking 2 years of Spanish because I want to minor in Spanish so if I were to take two years I would be really good,” was one student’s

comment. Speaking Spanish proficiently with only two years of study is highly unlikely and will need to be addressed with all students in case there are others who believe this. As previously discussed, there are two main types of motivation, integrative and instrumental. Integrative motivation is a desire to integrate into a second language group while instrumental motivation is the desire to learn a foreign language for practical purposes such as career goals or school requirements (Gardner & Lambert, 1959, 1972). While there was a combination of integrative and instrumental motivational factors indicated in these results, the majority were instrumental. It is interesting, though, that fewer than half of the students' decisions to take only one or two years of Spanish were influenced by college requirements.

Students who plan to take Spanish for three or four years were also asked to account for their decision. Again, this was an open-ended question and students gave detailed answers, many with more than one reason. The majority, 52 of the 55 respondents indicated that they wanted to be able to speak the language. This number is very encouraging since our goal is to have students attain proficiency in actually speaking the language. One student commented, "I plan to take 3 or 4 years of Spanish because I want to have enough knowledge about the language to be able to speak it easily, not just to be able to say certain words, but to have a conversation." Future career plans and ambitions were the rationale for 33 of the respondents, and personal betterment and interest were the reason for 24. Only fourteen of these students indicated that they were taking three or four years to fulfill a college requirement, and ten stated that they were interested because of the increasing popularity of Spanish in the United States. This

student had a variety of reasons,

I would like to be trilingual and be able to use Spanish in my daily life. When one knows Spanish, a great array of job opportunities open up. Knowing Spanish will help if one is working as a bank teller if one of the bank clients does not speak English, or as an interpreter in a school, court, disputes in property ownership or even when police question a suspect that knows only Spanish. Knowing multiple languages is also essential when one owns and runs a business. And as Spanish is the second most spoken language in the United States, it seems crucial to know the language in all communication efforts.

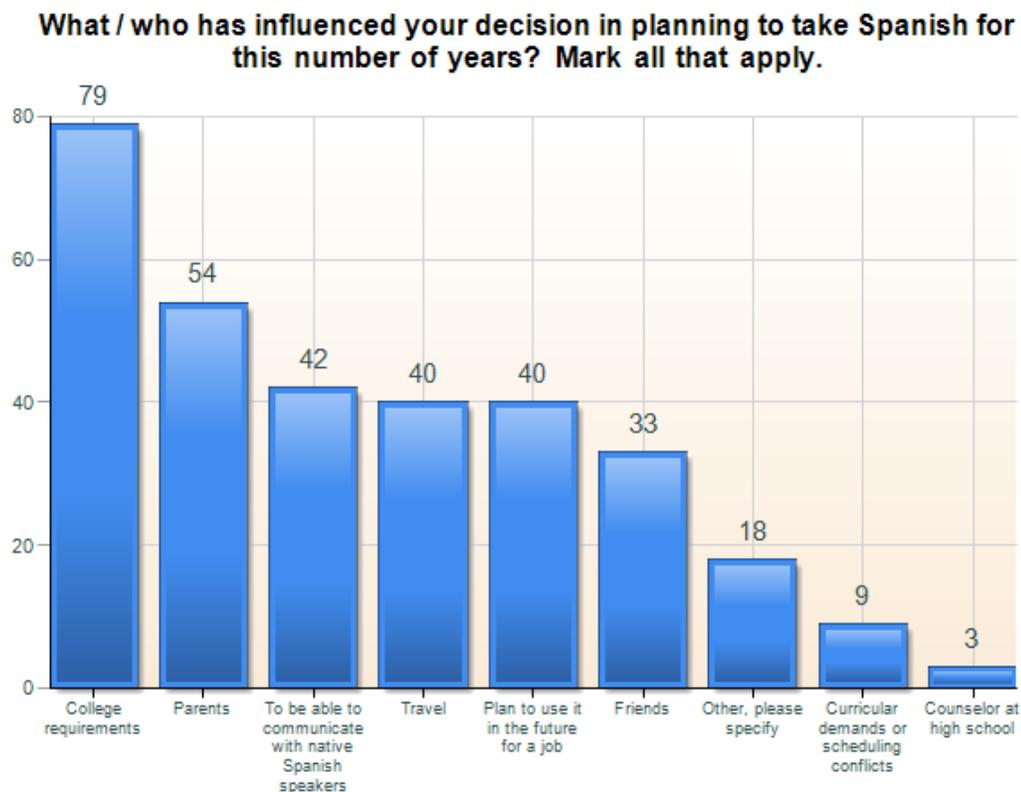
These responses show a combination of both integrative and instrumental motivational factors, with the main factor being integrative. Studies have shown that students who are largely integratively motivated have a better success rate (Gardner & Macintyre, 1991) .

Question six asked students who or what influenced their decision to take Spanish. 71%, or 79 of the 105 students stated that college requirements influenced their decision. This is a very interesting number because only 35 students claimed that college requirements influenced their length of study in the previous questions. Perhaps college requirements influence students' decisions to actually take a foreign language more than they influence the length of the study. Other influential factors included parents (54%), to be able to communicate with native Spanish speakers (40%), plans to use Spanish in the future (38%), and travel (38%). Having less influence were the high school guidance counselor (3%), and curricular demands (9%). Interestingly, seven of the students indicated that their sibling influenced their decision. See Figure 4.1 below for the

complete results of question six.

Figure 4.1

Spanish I Survey Question 6



The results of the other motivation questions clearly demonstrated that the Spanish I students see a purpose in their lives for foreign language proficiency. 66% are interested in speaking Spanish fluently with native speakers and 79% want to be able to at least speak Spanish well with native speakers. In addition, 73% agree that Spanish proficiency is important because it will allow them to become acquainted with people of various cultures. Also, only 30% of these students indicated that they took Spanish only to fulfill a college requirement. These numbers are very inspiring because our goal is to

have our students become proficient in the language and the fact that they recognize the importance and are interested in speaking with native speakers is essential to attaining that goal. Communication with native speakers is definitely a motivational factor for the majority of these students.

Most of these students clearly saw how becoming proficient in a foreign language could benefit them in the future. 84% agreed that they were learning Spanish to become more educated and 78% agreed that learning Spanish could help them achieve their future goals. Only 16% of those surveyed do not see themselves using Spanish in the future. In addition, 79% agreed that knowing Spanish could help them attain a more interesting job, 78% concurred that being able to speak Spanish would enable them to travel more in their careers, and 69% stated that being proficient in Spanish could benefit them financially. The majority of these Spanish I students evidently appreciate that becoming proficient in a foreign language would have immense benefits to them in the future. Their motivation as a whole is very positive, but does depend on how long they plan to study the language. Those who have already decided to study for three or four years are more motivated in general than the students who plan to only study for one or two years.

Attitude. Student responses to the attitude questions on the survey were varied, but indicated an overall positive attitude towards learning Spanish. These students are only in their second month of studying the language, and that must be taken into account. They may not know yet how much they like Spanish, or how easy or difficult it will be for them.

One of the themes of this portion of the survey was how taking Spanish made the

students feel. 45% feel that learning Spanish is easier for them than it is for the average learner and 28% feel that it is more difficult. When I look at the overall grades for this group of students, these percentages could correlate to the 50 students who have high A's and A+'s and the 30 who have low C's or D's. The remaining students gave conflicting answers to these two questions. Only 36% of the students agreed with the statement "I feel calm and confident in the company of Spanish speaking people" which is completely understandable since they know so little Spanish at this point.

The Spanish I students' Spanish experiences thus far have been very positive and encouraging. Three-fourths of the students enjoy studying Spanish and foreign languages in general. Learning Spanish has been a great experience for 79%, and 80% agreed that learning Spanish gave them a feeling of success. While only two-thirds claimed that learning Spanish made them happy, the same number find it to be an exciting experience. 94% of the students concurred that getting a good grade in Spanish class was important to them. These results clearly show that the Spanish I students have a very positive attitude towards Spanish at this point, which is very encouraging as we look to retain more students in upper levels of Spanish to promote proficiency.

The last section of the attitude portion of the survey explored students' feelings towards their Spanish teacher, class, and classroom. Overall, students' attitudes towards both myself and my class were very positive. Students rated me on a semantical differential scale of one to ten in ten different categories, with ten being the most positive score. For example, students rated me on whether I was unimaginative or imaginative, lazy or hardworking, boring or interesting. The average rating that I received on these

questions was an 8.8, which demonstrates that student attitudes towards me are very positive.

The other questions in this section asked students to rate my class. These questions used the same semantical differential scale and asked students to rank the class as uniform or varied, boring or interesting, useless or useful. Again, student responses were very positive. My classes had an average rate of 8.5 which indicates that students have a very positive attitude towards my class. Overall, the Spanish I students have a very positive attitude towards Spanish at this point, in spite of the short length of their study to date and their current low level of proficiency. Encouraging these students to maintain this positive attitude will be an important step to ensure they continue on in their language studies.

Learning disposition. The questions about learning disposition can be broken down into two sections, those about the students' work ethic in Spanish and those that address their comfort level in class. Responses to the work ethic questions were mainly very positive and these Spanish I students seem to have a very strong work ethic. Even though only 31% of the students indicated that they would complete an extra assignment if the teacher requested it, 89% indicated that they do not give up on their goals even if they are difficult to achieve, and 93% work hard to achieve all of their goals. Another impressive result is that 63% of the students agreed that they frequently think over what they have learned in class. Only 28% concurred that they skimp on their Spanish homework and over half stated that they put a lot of time into it. Lastly, 64% of the students do not like to do a job with less than their best effort. These results demonstrate that this group of

Spanish I students has a very strong work ethic at this point in their Spanish careers which is encouraging as we look to increase our upper level enrollments. Discovering a means to maintain this strong work ethic will be important for both the students and the foreign language program.

While these students' work ethic disposition in class was very positive, their comfort level was much lower. This is easily understandable since these students have only had Spanish class for six weeks and their proficiency level is very low. Only 39% of the students enjoy volunteering in class and about the same percent are embarrassed to do so. In addition, only about two-thirds of the students feel confident in their abilities to use the Spanish they have learned when speaking in class. Half of the respondents never feel sure of themselves when speaking Spanish in class and also get nervous and confused when doing so. From these results, it is clear that these students are not completely confident in their abilities to use Spanish in class. There were a couple of very positive and encouraging results though. 62% felt that they speak Spanish as well as the other students in their class and only 33% stated that they were afraid that others would laugh at their use of Spanish. Hopefully with time and hard work, these students will grow to be more comfortable in class.

Spanish IV Survey

The Spanish IV students were surveyed to discover their motivations, attitudes, and classroom dispositions towards learning Spanish. In addition, these students were asked why they continued in Spanish classes for all four years of high school.

Motivation. The Spanish IV students are in their last year of high school Spanish. Eight

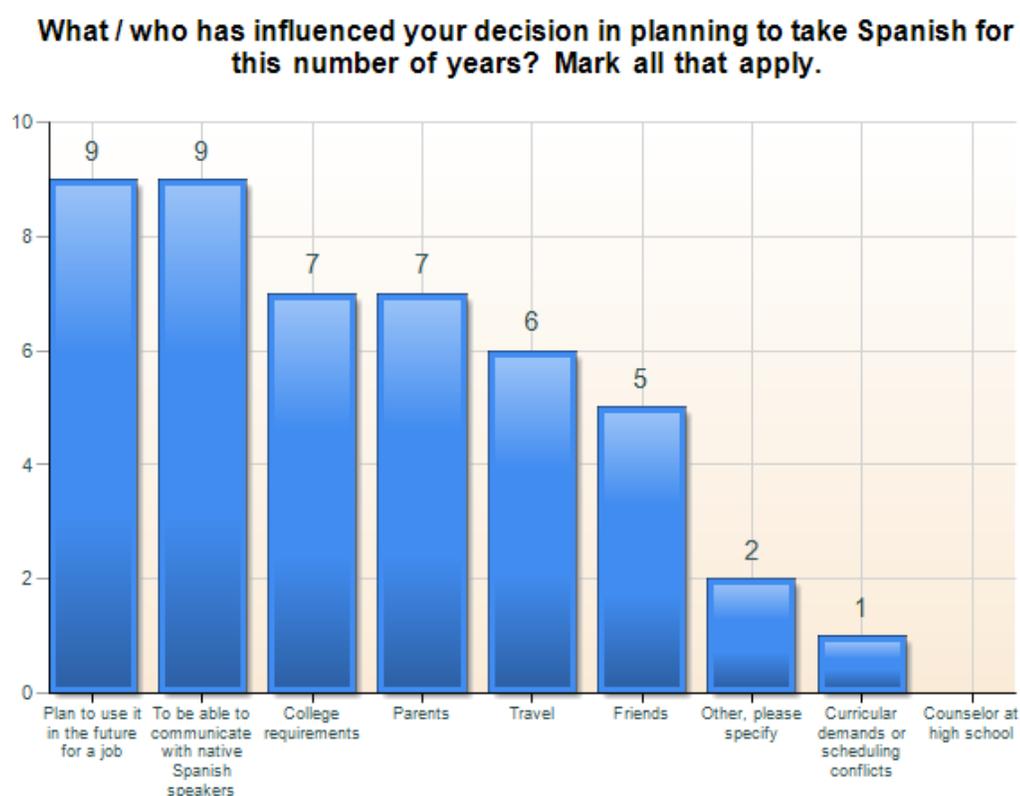
of these students are seniors, and three are juniors. The juniors are all native speakers and if we had the staffing to offer Spanish V, they could potentially take another year of the language. Responses to the open ended question, “Why did you decide to take four years of Spanish” demonstrated both integrative and instrumental factors. Students were able to give a detailed answer, and many offered various reasons. 64% of the students took four years of Spanish in order to be able to speak the language, and 55% took it to help them attain future goals. One student said, “I decided to take all four years because I wasn’t satisfied by how little I knew after the two basic years of Spanish. I want to be able to actually talk to someone in Spanish if I decide to travel to a Spanish speaking country.” Another stated that “I want to go into the health care field, and I can help a larger number and variety of patients if I can speak more than one language, like Spanish. Also, I want to major in Spanish in college. I love the language and I think that being bilingual is helpful no matter what career you choose to go into.” 45% of the students who took four years of Spanish did so for personal betterment or interests, and only two students indicated that college requirements influenced their decision. Finally, one student’s reason was, “Mainly because I speak Mexican Spanish and slang. I wanted to see and experience the Spain Spanish.” Native speakers often enroll in Spanish class even though they are proficient speakers. Usually their main focus is to learn grammar, reading skills, culture, and history. Student responses to this question were very diverse and included a number of both integrative and instrumental motivational factors.

Question four asked students who or what influenced their decision to take Spanish for only two or three years. 82% or nine of the eleven students stated that being

able to communicate with native speakers and being able to use the language in a future job influenced their decision. These results are very heartening because we want our students to believe that communication and proficiency in a foreign language is important. The complete results of this question are detailed below.

Figure 4.2

Spanish IV Survey Question 6



Other influential factors included parents and college requirements (64%), travel (55%), and friends (45%). This answer was interesting because while seven students were motivated to take a foreign language by college requirements, only two were motivated to take Spanish four years for the same reason. In other words, these students were

influenced but not motivated by the college requirement, unlike the Spanish I and discontinued students. None of these students was influenced by the high school guidance counselor. Two students had “other” reasons: siblings and the enjoyment to learn more. The main influences for these students were an integrative factor, the desire to be able to communicate with native speakers, and an instrumental factor, to use the language in a future job. The other main factors were also instrumental. The “other” factor of enjoyment to learn more was another integrative factor. Overall, these students demonstrate a healthy balance of integrative and instrumental motivators.

The results of the other motivation questions really demonstrated that these Spanish IV students see a definite purpose in their lives for foreign language proficiency. All are interested in speaking Spanish fluently with native speakers and want to speak Spanish well, which is very encouraging because this is one of our goals in the Spanish Department. In addition, they all see the value in becoming acquainted with people of various cultures. None of these students took Spanish to only fulfill a college requirement, and that was an additional advantage for them.

All of these students recognized that becoming proficient in a foreign language could benefit them in the future. 100% agreed that they were learning Spanish to become more educated and that learning Spanish could help them achieve their future goals. All of the Spanish IV students see themselves using Spanish in the future. In addition, 82% agreed that knowing Spanish could help them attain a more interesting job, 91% concurred that it could benefit them financially, and 100% thought that being able to speak Spanish would enable them to travel more in their careers.

Overall, the results of the motivation portion of the survey were very positive in regards to Spanish language proficiency. Even though one would expect positive results from students who chose to take a class that is not required, they are still very heartening. The Spanish IV students appreciate that there is a clear purpose in their lives for proficiency or bilingualism in a foreign language. These students exhibit many integrative motivators, having an inner drive to become bilingual or proficient.

Attitude. Student responses to the attitude questions on the survey were fairly consistent, and indicated an overall positive attitude towards learning Spanish. Since these students chose to take the language for four years, a positive attitude would be expected. One of the themes of this portion of the survey was how taking Spanish made the students feel. 36% feel that learning Spanish is easier for them than it is for the average learner and 27% feel that it is more difficult. These results make sense based on the population of this particular class. If I were to speculate, I would say that the four students who find Spanish to be easier are the three native speakers and the one student who goes out of her way to speak Spanish with everyone she possibly can, and the three who find Spanish to be most difficult are the ones who are most easily frustrated in class and ask for help. The same 27% of the students felt that other students know Spanish better than they do and 55% of the students disagreed with the statement “I feel calm and confident in the company of Spanish speaking people.” In addition, 45% of the students agree that learning a language is sometimes a burden. All of the students agreed that getting a good grade in Spanish was important to them, and only 27% are concerned about their grade in class. For the students who struggle to master grammatical concepts in Spanish IV and

often skimp on their homework, these statements are most likely to be true.

These Spanish IV students have had an overwhelmingly positive experience studying Spanish. 100% like studying foreign languages and Spanish in particular. They all also agree that learning Spanish has been a great experience for them and it makes them happy. This is encouraging since there are students in this class who do have difficulties with some of the more intricate grammatical concepts. All of the students also concur that learning Spanish has given them a feeling of success, another indicator of an extremely positive attitude given the fact that there are struggling students in the class. Over half of the class agreed that learning Spanish is an exciting activity. Lastly, only two students shared that they had had bad experiences in learning foreign languages, and when I spoke with the class after the survey, one volunteered that it had been at a previous school. These students have had an overwhelmingly positive experience learning Spanish and there is a definite connection between their attitude, experiences, and length of study.

The last section of the attitude portion of the survey explored students' feelings towards their two Spanish teachers and their corresponding classes and classrooms. Overall, students' attitudes towards both teachers and their classes and classrooms were very positive. Students rated both Spanish teachers on a semantical differential scale of one to ten in ten different categories, with ten being the most positive score. For example, students rated teachers on whether they were unimaginative or imaginative, lazy or hardworking, boring or interesting. The average rating that one of the teachers received on these questions was a 9.5, and the average rating for the other teacher was an 8.6.

Student attitudes towards us as teachers were very positive and could be a factor in their decision to continue in the language for four years.

The other questions in this section asked students to rate our respective classes. These questions used the same semantical differential scale and asked students to rank our classes as uniform or varied, boring or interesting, useless or useful. Again, student responses were very positive. One teacher's classes had an average rate of 9.8 and those of the other teacher had an average of 7.8. In general, then, these students had a very positive attitude towards our classes, though they found Spanish I and IV to be more useful and varied than Spanish II and III. Students also rated the classes of one teacher as harder than those of the other teacher. Such a positive attitude towards both the classes and the teachers most likely affected these students' length of Spanish study. In general, the Spanish IV students have a very positive attitude towards all facets of their Spanish class experience. While this could be expected based on the fact that they chose to take the class for four years it is still very encouraging because there are students in this class who do really struggle at times. Based on the anonymous survey results, even though students may struggle in class, they have a positive attitude, enjoy Spanish and feel successful because they are able to use the language to communicate.

Learning disposition. The questions about learning disposition can be broken down into two sections, those about the students' work ethic in Spanish and those that address their comfort level in class. Responses to the work ethic questions were very positive. For example, an overwhelming 72% of the students indicated that they would complete an extra assignment if the teacher requested they do so. This is notable because as juniors

and seniors these students all carry a very heavy workload. It is also interesting because their willingness to complete extra assignments had not been noted in class. All of the students indicated that they do not give up on their goals even if they are difficult to achieve, and 91% work hard to achieve all of their goals. Another impressive result is that all of the students do not like to do a job with less than their best effort. In addition, ten of the eleven students concurred that they do not skimp on their Spanish homework and seven of them dedicate a lot of time to it. There was one result, however, that was troubling. Only four of the eleven students stated that they frequently think over what they had learned in class. This is worrisome because daily review and practice outside of class are necessary for mastery. However, these students work ethic overall is very strong and encouraging.

As well as having a positive work ethic for Spanish class, these students also have a fairly high comfort level. 72% of the students enjoy volunteering in class and only 18%, or two students are embarrassed to do so. In addition, seven of the eleven students feel confident in their abilities to use the Spanish they have learned when speaking in class but eight students are not always sure of themselves when speaking in Spanish class. The results to these two questions seem contradictory, but after speaking with the class informally, I discovered that the students are confident in their ability to express themselves but that they are not always positive that they say things the right way. Only four of the students get nervous and confused when speaking Spanish in class and just two feel afraid that other students will laugh at them when they speak Spanish. This result is fitting as I do know the Spanish IV students very well and am aware of their comfort

level with the language. Another very positive result is that nine of the eleven students feel that they speak Spanish as well as the other students in the class, notable because there are three native speakers. Overall, the Spanish IV students demonstrated that they have a very positive learning disposition.

Discontinued Spanish Survey

I gave invitations to approximately 100 students who had discontinued Spanish. Fourteen of those students returned their signed consent form and completed the survey. These students were surveyed to discover their motivations, attitudes, and classroom dispositions towards learning Spanish. In addition, these students were questioned to determine why they dropped after only two years, their reasons for taking Spanish in the first place, and what could have motivated them to continue their study for all four years of high school.

Motivation. None of these students took Spanish for all of the years that it is offered. Twelve of the fourteen students took Spanish through level II and two took Spanish through level III. Three of the fourteen had planned to take more Spanish in high school, but were not able to due to scheduling conflicts. Responses to question three and four “Did you plan to take more years of Spanish and explain your answer” were varied. 57% did not plan to take more years of Spanish, stating that they had taken the two years of foreign language that colleges recommend and that was all they needed. For example, one student stated, “I was planning on only doing Spanish for two years because it is not my strongest subject in school, and I wanted to have the standard amount for a four year college.” 50% stated that they had schedule conflicts because there are so many upper-

level elective classes offered the same hour, or that Spanish class was too difficult for them. “Yes, I did want to speak Spanish fluently, and use it throughout my life. But it didn't fit into my schedule,” was one student’s comment. Another student was more profound,

I really enjoyed Spanish 1. The class was very well taught, but in a fun way so I could enjoy it more. The dancing was also a fun idea, as it incorporated learning Spanish Songs as well as the language...Overall it was a great class. Spanish 2 was okay, but I did not enjoy it as much as Spanish 1...It was more just like taking notes, and doing worksheets and exercises... I've always thought that Spanish was fun to learn, and it will be very useful for the future. Spanish 2 was a fun year, but there was other classes that I wanted to take, and Spanish 3 was only 7th hour, as was the class I took.

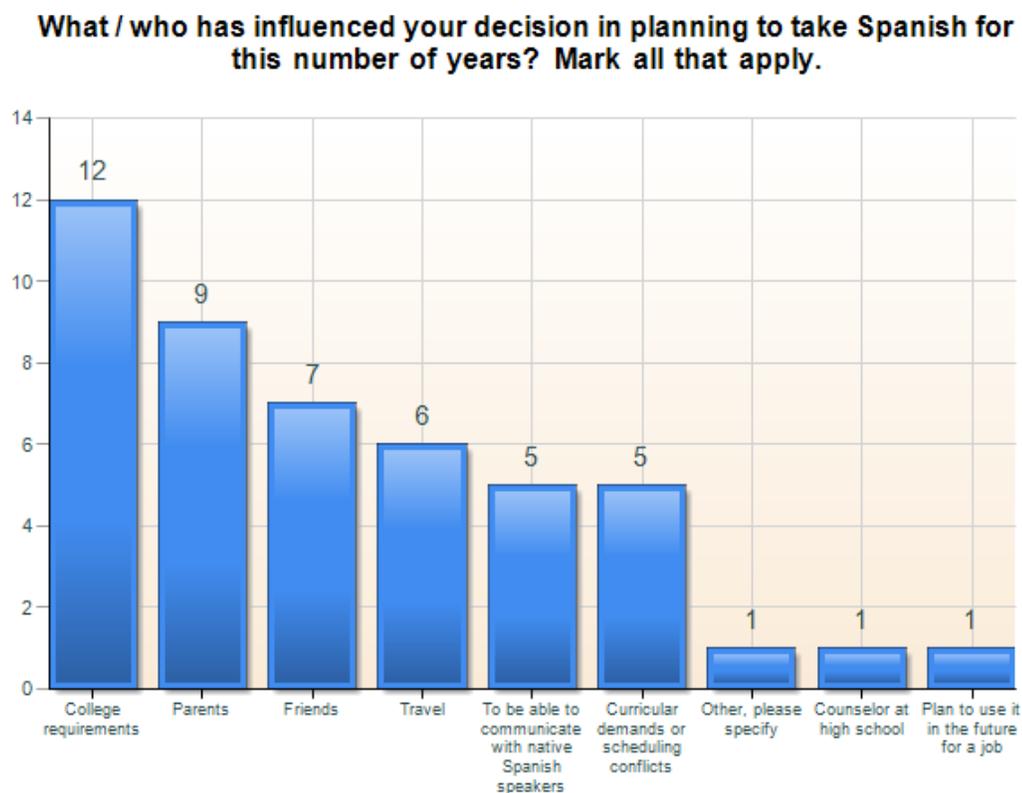
Scheduling conflicts and discovering student motivators are definitely important in regards to retaining students in levels III and IV of Spanish.

Question six asked students who or what influenced their decision to take Spanish for only two or three years. 86%, or twelve of the fourteen students stated that college requirements influenced their decision. This result fits because 86% of the students who took the survey took only two years of Spanish, the number “preferred” for college entrance. Other influential factors included parents (64%), friends (50%), and travel (43%). Plans to use Spanish in the future, the high school counselor, and having a Hispanic background only influenced one student each. These students were mostly influenced by instrumental factors, none were motivated by the desire to better herself or

become proficient in the language. See Figure 4.3 below for a detailed breakdown of the students' responses.

Figure 4.3

Discontinued Spanish Survey Question 6



The results of the other motivation questions really demonstrated that the students who discontinued Spanish do not see a purpose in their lives for foreign language proficiency. 57% are not interested in speaking Spanish fluently with native speakers and 50% do not want to even speak Spanish well. In addition, 57% do not see the value in becoming acquainted with people of various cultures and 65% only took Spanish to fulfill a college requirement. Again here it is clear that these students are motivated by

instrumental factors and not by integrative ones. This may be one reason why they discontinued their foreign language study since research shows that the most successful learners are motivated by a combination of integrative and instrumental factors.

Most of these students did not see how becoming proficient in a foreign language could benefit them in the future. 79% agreed that they were learning Spanish to become more educated but only 36% agreed that learning Spanish could help them achieve their future goals. Half of those surveyed do not see themselves using Spanish in the future. In addition, only 43% agreed that knowing Spanish could help them attain a more interesting job or could benefit them financially, and only 50% thought that being able to speak Spanish would enable them to travel more in their careers.

Overall, the results of this portion of the survey were rather negative in regards to Spanish language proficiency. Most of these students did not see a purpose in their lives for proficiency or bilingualism in a foreign. These students did not exhibit very many integrative motivators, not having an inner drive to become bilingual or proficient. The majority of these students studied only two years of Spanish because they were only motivated to fulfill a college requirement. It may be necessary to discover a technique or method that would motivate students like these to continue their foreign language studies and realize the benefits to becoming proficient.

Attitude. Student responses to the attitude questions on the survey were varied, but indicated a somewhat negative attitude towards learning Spanish. One of the themes of this portion of the survey was how taking Spanish made the students feel. 36% feel that learning Spanish is easier for them than it is for the average learner and 43% feel that it is

more difficult. The remaining students gave conflicting answers to these two questions. 79% of the students felt that other students know Spanish better than they do and 100% of the students disagreed with the statement “I feel calm and confident in the company of Spanish speaking people.” In addition, only half of the students agree that learning Spanish gives them a feeling of success and 64% agree that learning a language is sometimes a burden. Learning Spanish only made half of the students happy, and only 43% felt that learning Spanish was an exciting activity. These less favorable attitudes towards learning Spanish were expected since these students chose to discontinue their studies for some reason or another. Perhaps their less positive attitude affected their decision to discontinue their language studies.

There were also some conflicting results in this section. 43% of the students had some bad experiences learning languages, but 71% concurred that learning Spanish had been a great experience. Some of these students took exploratory language courses in their primary school years in addition to taking Spanish classes at the high school. In an informal discussion, several of the students told me that they did not enjoy Spanish II and a couple stated that they did not like the classes offered at the primary school. While 57% of the students enjoyed studying Spanish, 28% agreed that they do not like studying foreign languages. In addition, 85% of the students concurred that getting a good grade in Spanish was important to them, but 36% of the students were not concerned about their grade in Spanish class, possibly because they had earned a good grade already.

The last section of the attitude portion of the survey explored students’ feelings towards their two Spanish teachers and their corresponding classes and classrooms.

Overall, students' attitudes towards both teachers and their classes and classrooms were very positive. Students rated both Spanish teachers on a semantical differential scale of one to ten in ten different categories, with ten being the most positive score. For example, students rated teachers on whether they were unimaginative or imaginative, lazy or hardworking, boring or interesting. The average rating that I received on these questions was an 8.9 which is .1 higher than the Spanish I students and .7 less than the Spanish IV students ratings. The average rating for the other teacher was an 8.1 which was .5 lower than the rating she received from the Spanish IV students. In general, student attitudes towards us were very positive, even though they chose to discontinue their Spanish studies.

The other questions in this section asked students to rate our respective classes. These questions used the same semantical differential scale and asked students to rank our classes as uniform or varied, boring or interesting, useless or useful. Again, student responses were very positive. My classes had an average rating of 8.6 which again falls in between the ratings I received from the Spanish I and IV students. The other teacher had an average of 8.1 again, which was surprisingly higher than the rating given by the Spanish IV students. Overall though, these students had a very positive attitude towards our classes.

Learning disposition. The questions about learning disposition can be broken down into two sections, those about the students' work ethic in Spanish and those that address their comfort level in class. Responses to the work ethic questions were mainly very positive. For example, 50% of the students indicated that they would complete an extra assignment

if the teacher requested they do so. All of the students indicated that they do not give up on their goals even if they are difficult to achieve, and 93% work hard to achieve all of their goals. Another impressive result is that 93% of the students do not like to do a job with less than their best effort. There were however, a few questions which indicated that these students were not willing to put forth the effort necessary to excel in Spanish class. For example, 50% of the students revealed that they skimmed on their Spanish homework and the same number did not put a lot of time into completing their Spanish homework. Moreover, only 43% of the students agreed that they frequently thought over what they had learned in class. This reluctance to put enough time into their Spanish studies could be one reason why these students chose to discontinue taking Spanish classes. Once students get behind, they tend to feel lost and confused, and may find that dropping the class would be an easier option than catching up.

While these students' work ethic disposition in class was fairly positive, their comfort level was much less positive and was much lower than that of the Spanish IV students. Only 43% of the students enjoyed volunteering in class and the same percent were embarrassed to do so. In addition, only half of the students felt confident in their abilities to use the Spanish they had learned when speaking in class. 71% of the respondents never felt sure of themselves when speaking Spanish in class and 50% got nervous and confused when doing so. Moreover, half of the students felt afraid that other students would laugh at them when they spoke Spanish and felt that other students spoke Spanish better than they did. There is a very obvious correlation here between the students comfort level and the fact that they discontinued their Spanish classes. If a

student feels uncomfortable in class, it is not a very positive atmosphere to take part in on a daily basis. Most students would tend to drop a class if they felt so uncomfortable.

Connection of the Student Surveys to the Literature Review

Motivation

As stated earlier in the literature review, one of the main factors that will predict the success of foreign language learning is motivation (Gardner, 1985; McGroarty, 1996 & Dörnyei 2001a, 2001b). The two types of motivation that were investigated in this research were integrative motivation which is a desire to integrate into a second language group, and instrumental motivation which is the desire to learn a foreign language for practical purposes such as career goals or school requirements. Gardner and Macintyre (1991) concluded that both integrative and instrumental motivation lead to higher second language proficiency, but that integratively motivated students tend to learn more. Of all the respondents, the Spanish IV students were the most integratively motivated. All of these students saw the benefit of becoming bilingual and wanted to learn enough Spanish to be able to speak with native Spanish speakers in addition to wanting to learn about the culture. The Spanish I students who plan to take Spanish for three or four years were also very integratively motivated, with 98% wanting to learn to speak Spanish like a native speaker. On the other hand, the discontinued Spanish students were the most instrumentally motivated, with 86% taking the language to fulfill a college requirement. The Spanish I and IV students were also instrumentally motivated, but less than the discontinued Spanish students. Both sets of these students saw the value in becoming proficient in Spanish to help them fulfill career goal. To summarize, the Spanish IV and

Spanish I students who plan to take Spanish for three or four years demonstrated both integrative and instrumental motivators, but placed more value on the integrative factors. The Spanish I students who plan to take only one or two years of Spanish and the discontinued Spanish students were more influenced by instrumental factors, especially that of meeting college requirements. Therefore, it makes sense that the discontinued students terminated their language studies because they were mainly motivated by instrumental factors. It will be imperative then to explain to all the Spanish I students why it is so important to learn the language for communication purposes and not just to meet a college requirement.

Students' Rationale for Taking a Foreign Language

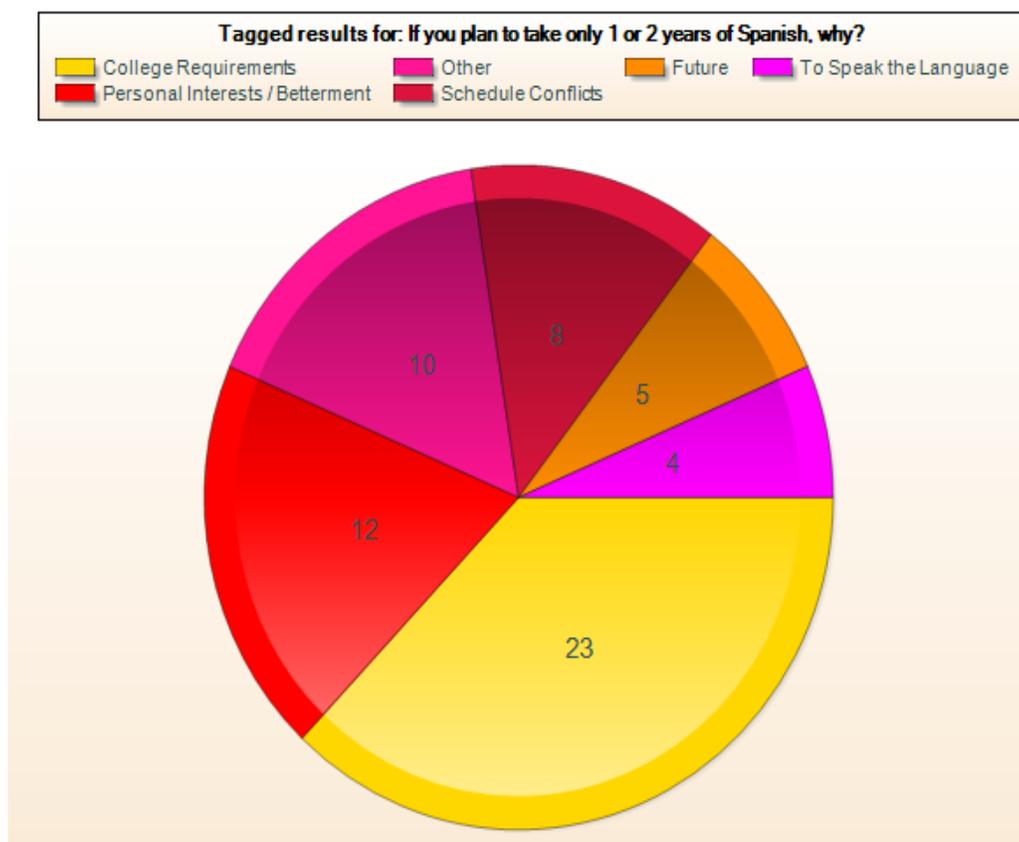
There were three studies referred to in the literature in regards to students' rationale for taking a foreign language. Reinert (1970), found that students had four main reasons for studying a foreign language: (a) interest in the language; (b) friends enrolled in the class; (c) influence from parents and/or family members; (d) a foreign language was required for high school graduation and/or college admission and/or a career. In the studies conducted by Ramage and Moore students took a foreign language for the following reasons: (a) a desire to communicate in another language for future travel; (b) a personal desire; (c) usefulness for a career or job; (d) an interest in learning to read and or write the language; (e) an interest to increase one's knowledge. These studies are similar in that students expressed an interest in the language and saw a future purpose for learning it such as graduation, college requirements or career uses. Differences can be seen in that students in Reinert's study noted more outside influences from friends or

family while those in Ramage and Moore's studies cited more integrative influences such as personal desire and a desire to increase their own knowledge.

The main reasons cited for my Spanish I students who plan to take only one or two years were: (a) college requirements; (b) personal interest; (c) desire to take other classes; (d) future plans or career goals. The exact numbers are detailed in Figure 4.4.

Figure 4.4

Spanish I: Rationale for 1-2 Years of Study



The rationale of the Spanish I students who plan to take three or four years and the Spanish IV students were: (a) desire to speak the language; (b) future plans or career goals; (c) personal interest or betterment; (d) college requirements. Exact figures for these Spanish I students are detailed in Figure 4.5 and those of the Spanish IV students are detailed in Figure 4.6.

Figure 4.5

Spanish I: Rationale for 3-4 Years of Study

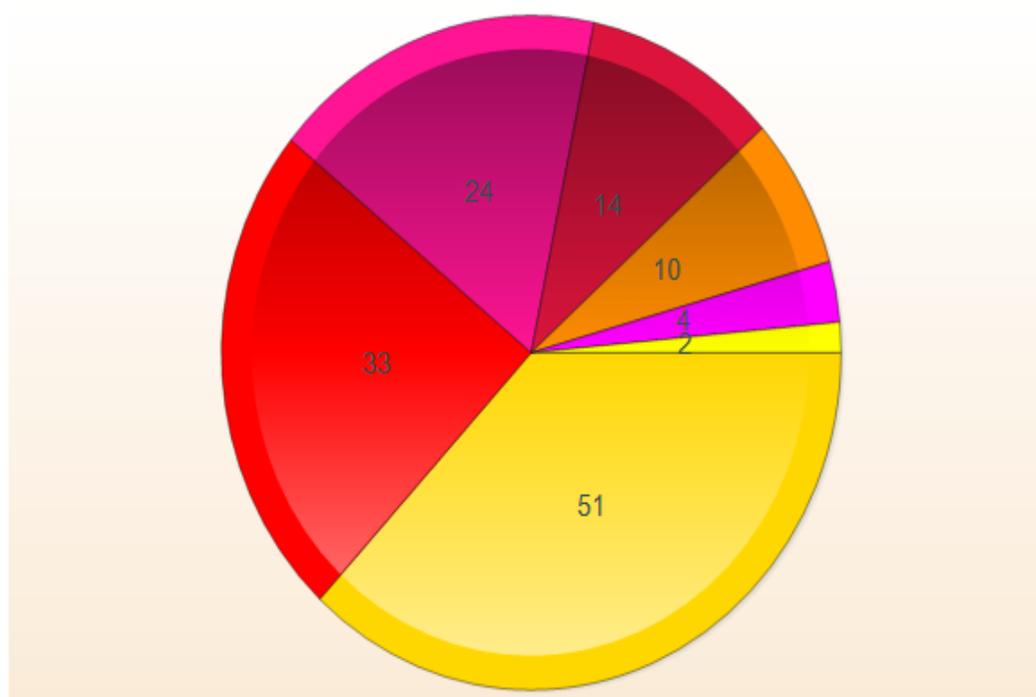
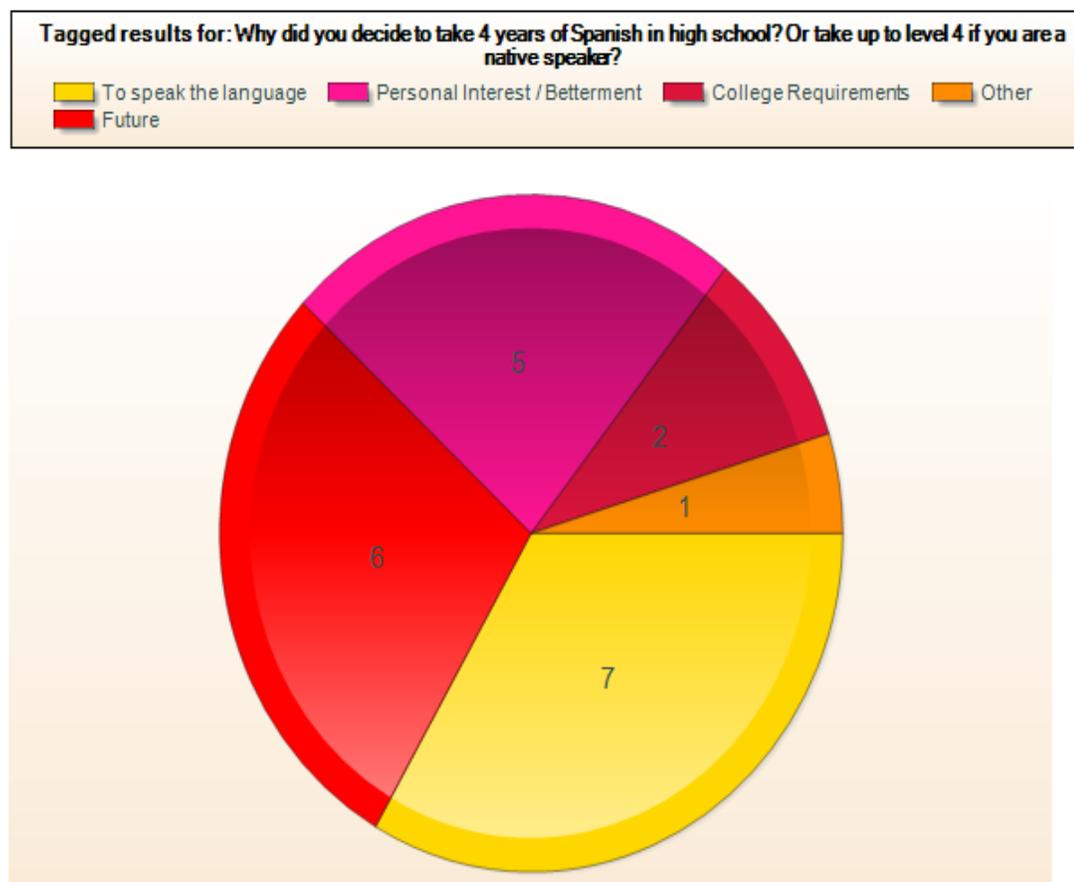


Figure 4.6

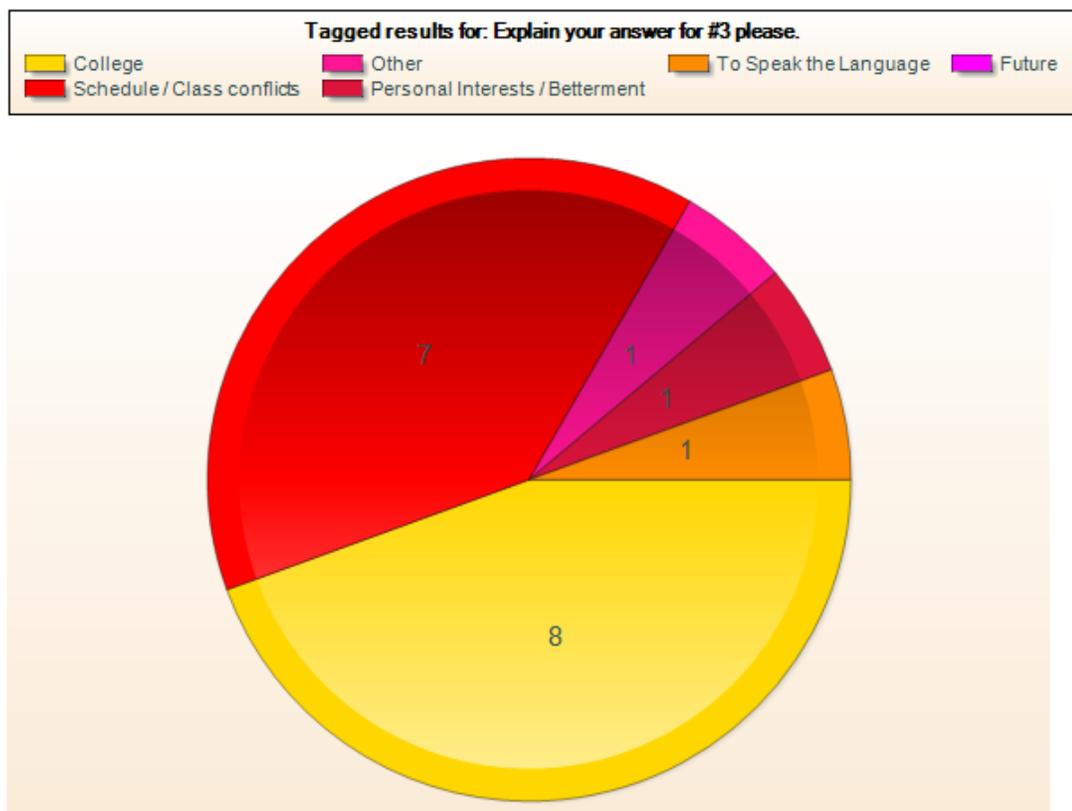
Spanish IV: Rationale for Years of Study

The students who discontinued Spanish cited the following rationale for taking Spanish:

(a) college requirements; (b) desire to take other classes; (c) future plans or career goals; (d) personal interest. The exact figures for the rationale cited by the discontinued Spanish students are detailed in Figure 4.7. The rationale cited by the Spanish I students who plan to study Spanish for three or four years and the Spanish IV students are similar to the literature review studies in that they show more integrative influences like the students in

Ramage and Moore's studies. They are dissimilar to the students in Reinert's study in Figure 4.7

Discontinued Spanish: Rationale for Years of study



that they do not demonstrate as many instrumental or outside influences, but they are similar in that the number one reason for all the groups was an interest in the language and communicating. The Spanish I students who plan to take Spanish for only one or two years and the discontinued Spanish students' rationale are comparable to the students' rationale from Reinert's study in that they are mainly instrumental. As discussed previously, students who exhibit both integrative and instrumental motivators will more

success as foreign language learners, but integratively motivated students tend to learn more (Gardner & Macintyre, 1991). Again, it will be necessary to address the Spanish I students as a whole in regards to their motivation and discover a way to encourage them to believe that learning the language for proficiency is valuable. Another option would be to complete activities that have motivation and reasons for language proficiency as their theme.

Factors Influencing the Length of Foreign Language Study

As discussed previously in the literature review, students cite many reasons for continuing or discontinuing their language studies (Speiller, 1988; Ramage, 1990; Shedivy, 2004). Spellier's study concluded that students had twelve main reasons for continuing their foreign language study. Ranked in order of importance they were:

- (a) college requirements;
- (b) personal interest in using the language;
- (c) career purposes;
- (d) travel to another country;
- (e) one's own level of progress in the language;
- (f) interest in the people and culture;
- (g) faculty recommendation;
- (h) level of difficulty of the next course;
- (i) family influence;
- (j) in-class activities;
- (k) student/ teacher relationship; and

(l) influence of friends

These students demonstrated both integrative and instrumental reasons for continuing their foreign language studies. The top six reasons for continuing their foreign language study illustrate an intent to use the language later in life. The Spanish I and Spanish IV students in this research study also demonstrated both intrinsic and extrinsic reasons for the length of their Spanish study. The Spanish IV students top two reasons were to be able to communicate with native speakers and to use the language in a future job, both of which illustrate an intent to use the language later in life. College requirements, parents, travel and friends round out their top six influences for taking Spanish for four years. The Spanish I students ranked college requirements first as did the students in Spellier's study. Parents, communication goals, travel plans, future goals, and friends were the other main influences on these students, similar as well to those in Spellier's study. In general, the students at my school who plan to continue their Spanish studies cited influences very similar to those in the previous study. The Spanish IV students who actually continued their study did rank communication and future plans higher than those in Spellier's study.

Also in Spellier's study, students who decided to drop after two years had thirteen reasons, and they ranked the reasons in a distinct fashion:

- (a) conflict with other courses;
- (b) level of difficulty of the next course;
- (c) one's own level of progress in the language;
- (d) personal interest in using the language;

- (e) in-class activities;
- (f) faculty recommendation;
- (g) family influence;
- (h) interest in the people and culture;
- (i) student/teacher relationship;
- (j) travel to another country;
- (k) influence of friends;
- (l) college requirements;
- (m) career purposes

On the other hand, the discontinued students in my research cited college requirements as the main reason they discontinued their Spanish studies. This was almost the least influential reason in Spellier's study. Scheduling which were most influential in Spellier's study ranked fifth for my students, tied with the personal interest to communicate with the language. Parents, friends, and travel were the other top reasons cited by the discontinued students in my research, and these ranked seventh, eleventh, and tenth in Spellier's study.

In both studies, the discontinuing students demonstrated less personal interest in using the language, less interest in the target language people and culture, and also felt that foreign language study was not as important for their careers. These results indicate that both sets of discontinued students may not realize how beneficial it is to know a second language. The biggest difference lies in their ranking of college entrance requirements, first in my study and second to last in Spellier's study.

Attitude and Learning Disposition

Research agrees that students need to have both a positive attitude (Gardner, 1985; Lightbown & Spada, 1993; Rubin, 1975; Rubin & Thompson, 1994) and display certain characteristics or dispositions to be a successful language learner (Gardner, 1985; Lalonde, Lee, & Gardner, 1987; Lightbown & Spada, 1993; Naiman, Fröhlich, & Stern, 1975; Reiss, 1985; Rubin, 1975; Rubin & Thompson, 1994). The characteristics can be categorized as those that pertain to having a positive work ethic and a high comfort level in the classroom.

In general the students' attitudes towards Spanish were very positive. Student attitudes towards the teachers and classes were positive across the board. However, there was some variance in attitudes towards learning Spanish. The Spanish I and IV students had very positive attitudes towards learning Spanish, but the discontinued Spanish students' attitudes were less positive. These students did not have a positive attitude about learning Spanish and this factor definitely figured in their decision to discontinue Spanish. As noted in the studies researched in the literature review, student success in learning a foreign language does depend on having a positive attitude towards the experience.

Work ethic is another important factor that contributes to student success in learning a foreign language. Students' work ethic in Spanish I and IV was generally very positive. The one exception was that only about one-third of the Spanish IV students think over what they learn in class and this could be detrimental to their retention of the language. The discontinued Spanish students' work ethic was notably less positive in that

half of them skimmed on their homework, did not put a lot of effort into Spanish, or think over what they learned. Again we can see a correlation in that students with less positive work ethic may tend to discontinue their language studies.

The last area of concern is students' comfort level in the class. The Spanish IV students had the highest comfort level which is fitting because their proficiency level is the highest. I did note that there were a couple of students whose comfort level was not as high as the others and this number may represent the students who sometimes struggle with concepts and seem unsure of themselves in class. None the less, these students have persevered in their language studies. The Spanish I students' comfort levels were understandably lower since they have only studied Spanish for about a month and their proficiency is very low at this point. With time and exposure to the language their comfort levels should rise. The discontinued Spanish students demonstrated the lowest comfort level, another factor that may have influenced their decision to drop the language.

Parental Connections

Parent Survey Results

This survey was designed to determine the value that parents or guardians place on learning another language, how supportive they are of their student's foreign language study, and to collect data on their own foreign language learning experiences. Parents or guardians were able to take the online survey at home from September 30th to October 12th or at school on October 12th if they did not have computer or internet access.

Thirty of the 200 plus parents issued an invitation completed the online survey.

Twenty-three of the respondents (77%) were female and seven (23%) were male. The parent / guardian survey invitation was sent home with the students. Overall, the response to the parent survey was very favorable towards foreign language learning in general and Spanish in particular. The first section of questions for the parents addressed their opinions on foreign language study. 90% of respondents would like to be able to speak the language of the people if they visited a foreign country, and 87% feel that it is important for everyone to learn a foreign language. In addition, 90% wish they could speak another language perfectly and 74% believe that all Americans should strive to become bilingual. 86% of those surveyed enjoy meeting and listening to people who speak other languages. On the other hand, only 67% of respondents have a strong desire to be able to read in another language. This statistic conveys the respondents desire to communicate orally in another language, and the high value that they place on this skill. In general, most parents believe that foreign language proficiency is an important and worthy goal.

The second section of the parent / guardian survey contained questions about the role that the parents / guardians play in their child's study of Spanish. Again, the majority of the responses were very positive and supportive of foreign language study. 100% of the respondents encourage their child to both study Spanish and request assistance from the Spanish teacher if there are any difficulties in class. In addition, 90% agree that they encourage their child to practice Spanish as much as possible, but only 64% believe that their child should devote more time daily to Spanish studies. 84% of the respondents both try to help their child with her homework and also show considerable interest in anything

related to their child's Spanish class. Finally, 87% of the respondents believe that their child should continue studying Spanish throughout high school and 90% agree that their child should learn as much Spanish as possible.

The last section of the survey asked respondents to detail their personal foreign language experiences. Only 21 (70%) of the respondents had studied a foreign language. Their foreign language experiences were extremely varied. Some studied a foreign language for as little as a semester or two quarters, while others studied the same foreign language for up to eight years. Nobody studied a foreign language in elementary school. Six of the respondents studied a foreign language during middle school, sixteen during high school, nine during college, and three just stated the year in which they studied the foreign language. Thirteen different respondents studied Spanish, the most frequently studied of the foreign languages. French was studied by nine of the respondents, German by five, and Latin by one. Only one of the respondents had studied three languages, Spanish, French, and German. The majority of the respondents, fifteen, had studied only one foreign language, and five studied two foreign languages.

Parent Survey Analysis

In general, the parents and / or guardians who completed the online survey were very supportive of foreign language learning. These respondents all placed a high value on learning a foreign language. The element they value most is that of oral communication skills. The ability to read in a foreign language is not as important to the parents as that of communicating. I had hoped that all respondents would believe that all Americans should work to become bilingual, but this statistic seems to be representative

of what most Americans believe in regards to bilingualism. Actually, the fact that 74% of those surveyed believe all Americans should become bilingual is a great number and is very encouraging. Hopefully the rest of the parents of our students have the same beliefs towards bilingualism.

The next portion of the survey explored the role that parents / guardians play in their child's study of Spanish. The results of this section of the survey were also very positive. It is very encouraging to me and our foreign language program that 87% of the respondents feel that their student should study Spanish throughout high school. Again I have to wonder though if this sample is representative of the population as a whole. The one troubling result was that only 64% believe that their child should devote more time to her Spanish studies. Hopefully this is because their children already dedicate enough time and energy to Spanish. In general though, the parents or guardians who completed the survey were very supportive of their child's Spanish studies. Our enrollment numbers should hopefully reflect this support and encouragement in the future.

I had hoped for a higher response rate, but fifteen percent was sufficient to complete the data collection and analysis. I do wonder how the rest of the parents feel about foreign language learning, and if this sample of convenience is representative of how all parents feel. The parent / guardian survey invitation was sent home with their students, which was probably not the best way to disperse them. In the future, I would mail it home because not all of my students were responsible enough to actually give the survey invitation to their parents.

High School Counselor Connection

Counselor Interview

The high school counselor was interviewed to discover her attitudes in regards to foreign language learning since she is the person who advises students as to which classes they should take and when. Each question and answer will be discussed here.

Question 1 asked: Do you know why Spanish is the only language offered at JHS? The counselor was not sure why Spanish is the only language offered at our high school, but did make a guess as to the answer. She stated that since we are a small school, the school board and administration felt we could only offer one foreign language. That language has been Spanish because “maybe they felt that that was the most kinda universal second language kinda around this area and around the United States, so then they just picked that one.”

Question 2 asked: When do you recommend that students start their Spanish study? The guidance counselor stated that if a student wants to study Spanish for four years she needs to start as a freshman. In addition, she shared that in the past students who have taken Spanish for only two years and completed their study as a freshman and sophomore felt that they lost their foreign language skills by the time they entered college. So if a student only wants to take two years of Spanish she recommends that they take the classes their junior and senior years.

The third question asked: How many years of Spanish do you recommend to students? The guidance counselor responded that two years was the minimum that she

recommends because that is the college preference. The counselor does believe that the more years a student can study, the better because “it makes them more marketable and the further they go along the easier the language will get for them.”

Question 4 asked: What factors do you take into consideration when advising students about foreign language study? The counselor explained how she had been taught that if a student has difficulties in English class she will also probably have them in Spanish class. If a student struggles in English class, the counselor would probably advise her to wait to take Spanish until she is older because the language may be easier if the student is more mature. She also stated that it is sometimes better for struggling students to wait until their junior year to start Spanish because there are more core classes required in the freshman and sophomore years.

The fifth question asked: What do you see as the purpose for students to study foreign languages in high school? The counselor’s answer to this question was interesting and mostly positive. She sees foreign language instruction in high school as the foundation or building blocks for foreign language study in college. In addition, she considers it to be a means for students to make themselves more marketable and as means for students to gain cultural awareness, “I do think that it helps to make a student more well rounded um and more marketable if they have some skills ... and I think it brings some of the cultural stuff and gives kids cultural understanding.” Our Spanish classes do comport a majority of the cultural knowledge, awareness and understanding that our students will acquire in their high school careers. Also, learning a foreign language will make students more marketable, but only if they learn it with the end goal of proficiency,

not just to fulfill and two year college requirement.

Question 6 asked: If there were no constraints, when would you have students start studying foreign language, anywhere from kindergarten to twelfth grade? The guidance counselor told me that she is aware that studies show that the younger you start studying a foreign language, the easier it is. She added that it would be nice if we could “offer some stuff just exploring things...when they’re younger and maybe...you know just getting a taste of it to see if it’s something they would like to do or would not like to do...Obviously the younger the better, but sometimes the constraints do make it so we can’t do that.” This answer did not fully address the question of “if there are no restraints.”

Finally, the last question asked: Do you think it’s important for all Americans to become bilingual? This question seemed to take the counselor off guard. She conveyed her belief that while bilingualism would be a good skill to have, not everybody has to have it. In addition, the counselor stated that if we started foreign language instruction at an earlier age as they do in other countries, that would be wonderful. The guidance counselor also revisited the thought that it is harder to learn a foreign language as we age. As well, she shared the following, “I think it’s hard to find a universal language throughout the world, you know. It seems like all the other countries seem to want to learn English so, so that would be nice.”

Analysis

The counselor interview was very informative. In general, her attitude towards foreign language learning was positive. There were a few areas which will need to be

addressed in the future. For example, I had hoped that the standard recommendation would be that all students should start their Spanish studies as freshmen so they could take all four years and thus have a higher proficiency in the language by the time they graduate. What if a student thinks she only wants to take two years and waits until she is a junior, per the counselor recommendation, and then loves the language? She would then only have the opportunity to take Spanish for two years and not attain the level of proficiency possible with four years of study, and would also be disappointed that she had waited. This could be happening because every year there are five to fifteen juniors who enroll in Spanish one, possibly following that recommendation. In addition, I would prefer that all students be encouraged to take all four years of Spanish because our goal is to produce students who are proficient in Spanish, not students who meet a college requirement.

Another area that needs to be addressed is the recommendation for students to wait to take Spanish if they struggle in English. When speaking with my students who have concerns about Spanish being a “hard” class, I always tell them to give it a chance. Spanish class and foreign language learning are so different from English, math or science classes. I have had students maintain an A average in my class who struggled in English class. In addition, research has shown that it is best to start learning a foreign language as young as possible. For example, the following are some of the benefits of learning a second language at an early age that CAL sites: it has a positive effect on intellectual growth; leaves students with more flexibility in thinking, greater sensitivity to language, and a better ear for listening; improves a child’s understanding of his/her

native tongue; and gives a child the ability to communicate with people s/he would otherwise not have the chance to know (as cited in ACTFL, 2009). Our school does not offer foreign languages until high school, so we need to start students as ninth graders in order for them to become as proficient as possible (ACTFL, 1999; MDE, 2004). The foreign language program and our students need the support and recommendation of the administrative staff to start their foreign language learning as soon as possible.

The last question I want to address in the analysis is that of the importance for all Americans to become bilingual. The mindset seen here is common among U.S. citizens, that English is the choice language of all other countries and therefore, why should we be required to learn a foreign language? The Spanish department will need to attend to this and perhaps do a better job of promoting the value of learning a foreign language for all people. Overall, the counselor had a positive attitude towards foreign language learning and is mainly supportive.

It is important also to note here the rationale for the counselor interview. I had originally thought that the counselor would play a large part in students' decision making process about when to take Spanish and for how long. The counselor goes to the middle school and speaks with the eighth grade students every spring about registration for high school classes, and she also speaks with the ninth grade students at the high school. She is the main resource for the eighth grade students as they plan the first year of their high school career since the high school teachers do not visit with these students at registration time. However, as indicated by the survey results, not many students feel the counselor's influence or credit it as a reason for their length of Spanish study.

The Research Question Revisited

Through the collection of these data, I sought to find the answer to the following question: What are high school students' motivations for taking more advanced levels of foreign language classes? From the data collected here, students' top three motivators for taking more advanced levels of foreign language classes were: to be able to speak the language, for future plans or career goals, and for personal betterment. College requirements influenced only a few of these students as did the increasing popularity of Spanish in the United States.

In addition, I looked at the following sub-questions: What forces in students' lives influence their decisions? College requirements were the top forces in the lives of Spanish I and discontinued Spanish student, while being able to communicate was the number one factor for the Spanish IV students. The other top influences for Spanish I students were parents and the ability to communicate. For the Spanish IV students they were parents and college requirements, and for the discontinued Spanish students the factors were parents and friends.

Another question I sought to answer was: Why do students choose to take only two years or as many as four? The discontinued Spanish students and the Spanish I students who plan to take only one or two years of Spanish both cited the two year college recommendation as their number one reason for only taking one or two years of Spanish. The other factor that influenced their decision was scheduling conflicts since there are many upper level or specialty classes offered the same hour. The Spanish I

students who plan to take Spanish for three to four years and the Spanish IV students were influenced by the same three factors: desire to communicate in the language, desire for personal betterment, and attainment of future goals.

The last questions I endeavored to answer were: Do students plan to just take two years of a foreign language, and if so, why? The answer is that yes, there are some students who plan to take just two years of a foreign language, and they do so primarily to meet a college recommendation. In addition, I hoped to discover the answer to the following: Could these students be motivated to take more years of foreign language? The answer to this question is beyond the scope of this study, but I did acquire some information regarding how to learn the answer to this question. In the future, I would interview some of the students who had discontinued Spanish to ascertain whether or not they could be motivated to take more years. In addition, when talking with students about course registration for levels II and III, I will make sure that as a department we discuss the value of taking four years of Spanish.

Summary

The three data collection tools that I used for my research gave me a wealth of information to assist me in understanding student motivations and attitudes towards foreign language learning and insight as to the parents' and counselor's attitudes towards foreign language learning. The student surveys allowed me to examine student motivation, attitude, and classroom disposition from three different perspectives, that of a Spanish I student, that of a Spanish IV student, and that of a student who discontinued Spanish after two or three years. The parent / guardian survey gave me important insights

into value that parents place on foreign language education and the support they give their students. Finally, the counselor interview allowed me to examine the attitudes of the school administrator most closely tied to class recommendations and registration. With the knowledge I gained from these data collection tools I now have a clearer vision of my role as a Spanish teacher and as an advocate for foreign language proficiency.

In the final chapter of this capstone, the conclusion, I will share my thoughts on how I will use the data that I have collected and analyzed to pursue the changes that can be implemented to improve our students' Spanish language proficiency.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

“If you know two languages, the level of your intelligence is multiplied a hundredfold in other people’s eyes.”

(Bill Cosby, 1937, comedian, actor, author, television producer, musician and activist)

There are numerous benefits that come from knowing another language. Our world is becoming increasingly more global and connected, and communication is crucial. It is only through knowing other languages that we can begin to understand other cultures and therefore strengthen our international relationships and empower ourselves for success in a global society. United States Senator Thad Cochran, Mississippi, as Co-Chair of the ACTFL Year of the Languages Honorary Council (2005) stated

The advantages of having foreign language capability range from greater opportunities for college admission to fulfilling national security needs. Foreign language proficiency is a skill essential in the global relationships of industry, diplomacy, defense, and higher education. The ability to understand one another is essential to live peacefully and prosperously in a globalized society.

The importance of foreign language proficiency is not only national and global for me, it is also local. In this study I sought to find the answer to the following question: What are

high school students' motivations for taking more advanced levels of foreign language classes? In addition to my guiding question, I looked at the following sub-questions: What forces in students' lives influence their decisions? Why do students choose to take only two years or as many as four? Do students plan to just take two years of a foreign language, and if so, why? Could these students be motivated to take more years of foreign language? This chapter examines the major findings of the study, the limitations, the implications for teachers and administrators, and suggestions for future studies.

Major Findings

This study resulted in various major findings. They are broken down and discussed by the students' Spanish level and then the parent and counselor perspectives.

Spanish I:

1. These students are very motivated, but there is a notable difference between those who plan to take Spanish for one to two years and those who plan to take three or four, with the latter being more motivated.
2. Student attitude in general is very positive.
3. Spanish I students who plan to take only one or two years do so to meet a college recommendation.
4. Over half of the Spanish I students surveyed plan to take all four years of Spanish, which would be a huge increase in the numbers in our foreign language program.
5. The Spanish department needs to find ways to motivate students and help them to see that foreign language proficiency is important for all.
6. We also need to work on creating a less restrictive environment and encourage

students to try and use the language more uninhibitedly.

Spanish IV:

1. These students all demonstrated very positive attitudes and classroom disposition, and are highly motivated to learn the language.
2. The Spanish IV students are most influenced by their desire to communicate in the language.
3. More students need to reflect on the learning that occurs daily since this review will help students improve their language proficiency.

Discontinued Spanish:

1. These students had surprisingly positive attitudes.
2. They demonstrated a lower level of motivation, comfort in the classroom, and a more lax work ethic than the continuing students.
3. There are multiple class conflicts for students who want to take the upper levels of Spanish.
4. The Spanish department needs to find ways to motivate students and help them to see that foreign language proficiency is important for all.
5. We also need to work on creating a less restrictive environment and encourage students to try and use the language more uninhibitedly.

Parents:

1. The parents who responded to the survey are very supportive of foreign language learning and believe that their children should endeavor to take Spanish throughout high school in order to become as proficient as possible.

Counselor:

1. The counselor is supportive of foreign language learning in general.
2. We need to work together to better promote foreign language learning as a four year program for all students.
3. There are misconceptions about who should or shouldn't take a foreign language or when. We need to work together to encourage all student to start as freshmen, regardless of their grades in other classes or future career goals.

Limitations

In the end, there were a few limitations to this study. First of all, I had hoped that more parents and discontinued Spanish students would have taken the surveys. There was a large enough sample that provided me with quality data, but I feel that the picture is not as complete with so few responses. It is possible that the sample was biased. For example, the parents were all very positive about foreign language learning and want their students to continue throughout high school. It is important to me and vital to our foreign language program to know if their mindset is representative of the parent population as a whole. If it is, it means that parent support is up and our numbers will increase drastically in the future.

Another limitation was the timing of the study. The Spanish I students completed their survey by October 15th, only six weeks into their foreign language studies. It was beneficial to learn about their attitudes and motivators early on so we can look for ways to encourage all of the students to complete four years of Spanish, and to have the opportunity to relate to them how imperative it is for them to strive for proficiency

instead of a college recommendation. On the other hand, it was detrimental to the study to complete it so early in their foreign language career. The Spanish I students demonstrated lower comfort levels because of their limited study, and may not even know at this point how wonderful Spanish is. Lastly, I was unable to determine if there was something else that would have motivated the discontinued Spanish students to continue their Spanish studies. However, I think that in the future, as a Spanish department, we can implement content activities or plan a lesson for each level of Spanish that focuses on why becoming proficient in Spanish is important. We could explore careers that utilize foreign language competency and possibly have guest speakers who are proficient in a foreign language speak with our students about how they use their foreign language skills on a daily basis.

Implications for Teachers and Administrators

As Spanish teachers, there are some key aspects we must attend to as a result of this study. First of all, we need to work on developing ways to increase our students comfort levels in the classroom. Making sure that students know what mistakes are okay and expected is one way to do that. We also must encourage students to be less inhibited when using the language since that is one of the best ways to learn it. Having days in which student speech is not corrected would be one manner of lowering inhibitions. Students should feel comfortable on those days to use the language to communicate and not worry about accuracy. In Spanish IV, we have weekly discussions in which all students are required to participate. Each student is assigned a week and must design the topic of conversation. On the conversation day, all of the students participate because the

themes are student-developed and there is no fear of repercussions for mistakes. In addition, we should revisit our curriculum and verify that we are incorporating daily a variety of activities that encompass the spectrum of learning styles such as visual, kinesthetic or auditory, in order to appeal to all of our students which may improve their attitudes as well as serve as a motivator.

There are also three findings that need to be addressed jointly by the teachers and administrators. First and foremost, we need to promote our foreign language program as a four-year program that is essential for all of our students, not as an elective that may be a means for some to gain entrance into a better college. At registration time for eighth grade, we will send Spanish IV students with the counselor to promote starting their Spanish studies as ninth graders. At the high school level, we will implement curriculum that addresses the rationale for taking Spanish for proficiency in our level I, II, and III classes. In addition, we need to convey our belief that foreign language proficiency is the goal of our foreign language program, and that it is important for all of our students. This will be done when the school board is addressed with the results of this research and also with the high school staff at our fall workshop. Lastly, we need to work together as a team to alleviate the dilemma that students cope with when choosing their classes. There are too many upper level electives and specialty classes that are offered the same hour. This forces students to choose between many interesting, important, and rigorous classes when they should be allowed to take as many as would fit into their schedules. This problem will be addressed with the administration before next year's registration.

Suggestions for Future Studies

There are many other opportunities for future studies in regards to students' motivations to take two or four years of Spanish. This research calls for more studies on effective techniques to use to motivate students to continue their foreign language studies for four years. Future studies could explore different techniques to discover which ones are most effective for this population in particular. There also needs to be more research on how to create the least restrictive classroom atmosphere so that students' affective filters are as low as possible and they feel comfortable using the language in class (Dörnyei, 2001a, 2001b; Gardner & Lambert, 1959; Gardner, 1985; Gardner & MacIntyre 1991) . Future research needs to explore alternate scheduling models so that students are not faced with scheduling conflicts that prevent them from enrolling in upper level Spanish classes or other electives. Lastly, there is a need for a larger scale investigation into parent's attitudes and beliefs about foreign language learning.

Communicating the Results

It is imperative that the results of this study be shared and not be forgotten or disregarded. The results of this study will be communicated in four ways. First, I will share the results with the students, parents, and counselor who participated in it by means of a concise summary letter and an in class discussion. I plan to spend a class period with students exploring careers that require bilingualism or second language proficiency. We will also discuss how much Spanish they will know after each year of study (on average) and how proficient they will be. I hope to have a Spanish IV student visit each class and describe the benefits from a student perspective also. In addition, I will discuss my findings with my colleagues and administrators as well as provide them with a copy of

the actual results chapter. I have already shared the preliminary results with my building administrator who suggested that I explore offering Spanish IV as an advanced placement (AP) class. I will be going to the AP training this winter with the intentions of offering Spanish IV as an AP class starting next year. It is our hope that more students will continue their Spanish studies if they have the possibility of earning some college credit during high school. I will also provide a copy of my capstone to the superintendent and school board. Lastly, I plan to present the results at a school board meeting this spring. My hopes are that the school board and superintendent will recognize the need to promote foreign language study in our district and support our department in its goal of producing competent Spanish speakers. Finally, I hope that the results of my study will inspire them to explore starting our foreign language curriculum in the elementary school and to make foreign language study a requirement for all students.

APPENDIX A

ACTFL Speaking Proficiency Guidelines

American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages

ACTFL PROFICIENCY GUIDELINES C SPEAKING

The ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines-Speaking (Revised 1999) may be used for non-profit, educational purposes only, provided that they are reproduced in their entirety, with no alterations, and with credit to ACTFL.

SUPERIOR

Speakers at the Superior level are able to communicate in the language with accuracy and fluency in order to participate fully and effectively in conversations on a variety of topics in formal and informal settings from both concrete and abstract perspectives. They discuss their interests and special fields of competence, explain complex matters in detail, and provide lengthy and coherent narrations, all with ease, fluency, and accuracy. They explain their opinions on a number of topics of importance to them, such as social and political issues, and provide structured argument to support their opinions. They are able to construct and develop hypotheses to explore alternative possibilities. When appropriate, they use extended discourse without unnaturally lengthy hesitation to make their point, even when engaged in abstract elaborations. Such discourse, while coherent, may still be influenced by the Superior speakers own language patterns, rather than those of the target language. Superior speakers command a variety of interactive and discourse strategies, such as turn-taking and separating main ideas from supporting information through the use of syntactic and lexical devices, as well as intonational features such as pitch, stress and tone. They demonstrate virtually no pattern of error in the use of basic structures. However, they may make sporadic errors, particularly in low-frequency structures and in some complex high-frequency structures more common to formal speech and writing. Such errors, if they do occur, do not distract the native interlocutor or interfere with communication.

ADVANCED HIGH

Speakers at the Advanced-High level perform all Advanced-level tasks with linguistic ease, confidence and competence. They are able to consistently explain in detail and narrate fully and accurately in all time frames. In addition, Advanced-High speakers

handle the tasks pertaining to the Superior level but cannot sustain performance at that level across a variety of topics. They can provide a structured argument to support their opinions, and they may construct hypotheses, but patterns of error appear. They can discuss some topics abstractly, especially those relating to their particular interests and special fields of expertise, but in general, they are more comfortable discussing a variety of topics concretely. Advanced-High speakers may demonstrate a well-developed ability to compensate for an imperfect grasp of some forms or for limitations in vocabulary by the confident use of communicative strategies, such as paraphrasing, circumlocution, and illustration. They use precise vocabulary and intonation to express meaning and often show great fluency and ease of speech. However, when called on to perform the complex tasks associated with the Superior level over a variety of topics, their language will at times break down or prove inadequate, or they may avoid the task altogether, for example, by resorting to simplification through the use of description or narration in place of argument or hypothesis.

ADVANCED MID

Speakers at the Advanced-Mid level are able to handle with ease and confidence a large number of communicative tasks. They participate actively in most informal and some formal exchanges on a variety of concrete topics relating to work, school, home, and leisure activities, as well as to events of current, public, and personal interest or individual relevance. Advanced-Mid speakers demonstrate the ability to narrate and describe in all major time frames (past, present, and future) by providing a full account, with good control of aspect, as they adapt flexibly to the demands of the conversation. Narration and description tend to be combined and interwoven to relate relevant and supporting facts in connected, paragraph-length discourse. Advanced-Mid speakers can handle successfully and with relative ease the linguistic challenges presented by a complication or unexpected turn of events that occurs within the context of a routine situation or communicative task with which they are otherwise familiar. Communicative strategies such as circumlocution or rephrasing are often employed for this purpose. The speech of Advanced-Mid speakers performing Advanced-level tasks is marked by

substantial flow. Their vocabulary is fairly extensive although primarily generic in nature, except in the case of a particular area of specialization or interest. Dominant language discourse structures tend to recede, although discourse may still reflect the oral paragraph structure of their own language rather than that of the target language.

Advanced-Mid speakers contribute to conversations on a variety of familiar topics, dealt with concretely, with much accuracy, clarity and precision, and they convey their intended message without misrepresentation or confusion. They are readily understood by native speakers

unaccustomed to dealing with non-natives. When called on to perform functions or handle topics associated with the Superior level, the quality and/or quantity of their speech will generally decline. Advanced-Mid speakers are often able to state an opinion or cite conditions; however, they lack the ability to consistently provide a structured argument in extended discourse. Advanced-Mid speakers may use a number of delaying strategies, resort to narration, description, explanation or anecdote, or simply attempt to avoid the linguistic demands of Superior-level tasks.

ADVANCED LOW

Speakers at the Advanced-Low level are able to handle a variety of communicative tasks, although somewhat haltingly at times. They participate actively in most informal and a limited number of formal conversations on activities related to school, home, and leisure activities and, to a lesser degree, those related to events of work, current, public, and personal interest or individual relevance. Advanced-Low speakers demonstrate the ability to narrate and describe in all major time frames (past, present and future) in paragraph length discourse, but control of aspect may be lacking at times. They can handle appropriately the linguistic challenges presented by a complication or unexpected turn of events that occurs within the context of a routine situation or communicative task with which they are otherwise familiar, though at times their discourse may be minimal for the level and strained. Communicative strategies such as rephrasing and circumlocution may be employed in such instances. In their narrations and descriptions, they combine and link sentences into connected discourse of paragraph length. When pressed for a fuller

account, they tend to grope and rely on minimal discourse. Their utterances are typically not longer than a single paragraph. Structure of the dominant language is still evident in the use of false cognates, literal translations, or the oral paragraph structure of the speaker's own language rather than that of the target language. While the language of Advanced-Low speakers may be marked by substantial, albeit irregular flow, it is typically somewhat strained and tentative, with noticeable self-correction and a certain grammatical roughness. The vocabulary of Advanced-Low speakers is primarily generic in nature. Advanced-Low speakers contribute to the conversation with sufficient accuracy, clarity, and precision to convey their intended message without misrepresentation or confusion, and it can be understood by native speakers unaccustomed to dealing with non-natives, even though this may be achieved through repetition and restatement. When attempting to perform functions or handle topics associated with the Superior level, the linguistic quality and quantity of their speech will deteriorate significantly.

INTERMEDIATE HIGH

Intermediate-High speakers are able to converse with ease and confidence when dealing with most routine tasks and social situations of the Intermediate level. They are able to handle successfully many uncomplicated tasks and social situations requiring an exchange of basic information related to work, school, recreation, particular interests and areas of competence, though hesitation and errors may be evident. Intermediate-High speakers handle the tasks pertaining to the Advanced level, but they are unable to sustain performance at that level over a variety of topics. With some consistency, speakers at the Intermediate High level narrate and describe in major time frames using connected discourse of paragraph length. However, their performance of these Advanced-level tasks will exhibit one or more features of breakdown, such as the failure to maintain the narration or description semantically or syntactically in the appropriate major time frame, the disintegration of connected discourse, the misuse of cohesive devices, a reduction in breadth and appropriateness of vocabulary, the failure to successfully circumlocute, or a significant amount of hesitation. Intermediate-High

speakers can generally be understood by native speakers unaccustomed to dealing with non-natives, although the dominant language is still evident (e.g. use of code-switching, false cognates, literal translations, etc.), and gaps in communication may occur.

INTERMEDIATE MID

Speakers at the Intermediate-Mid level are able to handle successfully a variety of uncomplicated communicative tasks in straightforward social situations. Conversation is generally limited to those predictable and concrete exchanges necessary for survival in the target culture; these include personal information covering self, family, home, daily activities, interests and personal preferences, as well as physical and social needs, such as food, shopping, travel and lodging. Intermediate-Mid speakers tend to function reactively, for example, by responding to direct questions or requests for information. However, they are capable of asking a variety of questions when necessary to obtain simple information to satisfy basic needs, such as directions, prices and services. When called on to perform functions or handle topics at the Advanced level, they provide some information but have difficulty linking ideas, manipulating time and aspect, and using communicative strategies, such as circumlocution. Intermediate-Mid speakers are able to express personal meaning by creating with the language, in part by combining and recombining known elements and conversational input to make utterances of sentence length and some strings of sentences. Their speech may contain pauses, reformulations and self-corrections as they search for adequate vocabulary and appropriate language forms to express themselves. Because of inaccuracies in their vocabulary and/or pronunciation and/or grammar and/or syntax, misunderstandings can occur, but Intermediate-Mid speakers are generally understood by sympathetic interlocutors accustomed to dealing with non-natives.

INTERMEDIATE LOW

Speakers at the Intermediate-Low level are able to handle successfully a limited number of uncomplicated communicative tasks by creating with the language in straightforward social situations. Conversation is restricted to some of the concrete exchanges and

predictable topics necessary for survival in the target language culture. These topics relate to basic personal information covering, for example, self and family, some daily activities and personal preferences, as well as to some immediate needs, such as ordering food and making simple purchases. At the Intermediate-Low level, speakers are primarily reactive and struggle to answer direct questions or requests for information, but they are also able to ask a few appropriate questions. Intermediate-Low speakers express personal meaning by combining and recombining into short statements what they know and what they hear from their interlocutors. Their utterances are often filled with hesitancy and inaccuracies as they search for appropriate linguistic forms and vocabulary while attempting to give form to the message. Their speech is characterized by frequent pauses, ineffective reformulations and self-corrections. Their pronunciation, vocabulary and syntax are strongly influenced by their first language but, in spite of frequent misunderstandings that require repetition or rephrasing, Intermediate-Low speakers can generally be understood by sympathetic interlocutors, particularly by those accustomed to dealing with non-natives.

NOVICE HIGH

Speakers at the Novice-High level are able to handle a variety of tasks pertaining to the Intermediate level, but are unable to sustain performance at that level. They are able to manage successfully a number of uncomplicated communicative tasks in straightforward social situations. Conversation is restricted to a few of the predictable topics necessary for survival in the target language culture, such as basic personal information, basic objects and a limited number of activities, preferences and immediate needs. Novice-High speakers respond to simple, direct questions or requests for information; they are able to ask only a very few formulaic questions when asked to do so. Novice-High speakers are able to express personal meaning by relying heavily on learned phrases or recombinations of these and what they hear from their interlocutor. Their utterances, which consist mostly of short and sometimes incomplete sentences in the present, may be hesitant or inaccurate. On the other hand, since these utterances are frequently only

expansions of learned material and stock phrases, they may sometimes appear surprisingly fluent and accurate. These speakers' first language may strongly influence their pronunciation, as well as their vocabulary and syntax when they attempt to personalize their utterances. Frequent misunderstandings may arise but, with repetition or rephrasing, Novice-High speakers can generally be understood by sympathetic interlocutors used to non-natives. When called on to handle simply a variety of topics and perform functions pertaining to the Intermediate level, a Novice-High speaker can sometimes respond in intelligible sentences, but will not be able to sustain sentence level discourse.

NOVICE MID

Speakers at the Novice-Mid level communicate minimally and with difficulty by using a number of isolated words and memorized phrases limited by the particular context in which the language has been learned. When responding to direct questions, they may utter

only two or three words at a time or an occasional stock answer. They pause frequently as they search for simple vocabulary or attempt to recycle their own and their interlocutor's words. Because of hesitations, lack of vocabulary, inaccuracy, or failure to respond appropriately, Novice-Mid speakers may be understood with great difficulty even by sympathetic interlocutors accustomed to dealing with non-natives. When called on to handle topics by performing functions associated with the Intermediate level, they frequently resort to repetition, words from their native language, or silence.

NOVICE LOW

Speakers at the Novice-Low level have no real functional ability and, because of their pronunciation, they may be unintelligible. Given adequate time and familiar cues, they may be able to exchange greetings, give their identity, and name a number of familiar objects from their immediate environment. They are unable to perform functions or handle topics pertaining to the Intermediate level, and cannot therefore participate in a true conversational exchange.

APPENDIX B

ACTFL Foreign Language Standards

NATIONAL STANDARDS FOR FOREIGN LANGUAGE EDUCATION

*A Collaborative Project of ACTFL, AATF, AATG, AATI, AATSP,
ACL, ACTR, CLASS and NCJLT-ATJ*

With the help of a three-year grant from the US Department of Education and the National Endowment for the Humanities, an eleven-member task force, representing a variety of languages, levels of instruction, program models, and geographic regions, undertook the task of defining *content standards* -- what students should know and be able to do -- in foreign language education. The final document, *Standards for Foreign Language Learning: Preparing for the 21st Century*, first published in 1996, represents an unprecedented consensus among educators, business leaders, government, and the community on the definition and role of foreign language instruction in American education. This visionary document has been used by teachers, administrators, and curriculum developers at both state and local levels to begin to improve foreign language education in our nation's schools. The NEW 3rd Edition Standards for Foreign Language Learning in the 21st Century, revised including Arabic standards, is now available.

Standards Orderereng

ACTFL continues to play a leadership role in the collaborative project that was responsible for the development of national content standards for foreign language education. The project continues to operate, focusing now on professional standards, and the development of programs and publications to assist in the implementation of standards nationwide.

Statement of Philosophy

Language and communication are at the heart of the human experience. The United States must educate students who are linguistically and culturally equipped to communicate successfully in a pluralistic American society and abroad. This imperative envisions a future in which ALL students will develop and maintain proficiency in English and at least one other language, modern or classical. Children who come to school from non-English backgrounds should also have opportunities to develop further proficiencies in their first language.

STANDARDS FOR FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNING

COMMUNICATION

Communicate in Languages Other Than English

- **Standard 1.1:** Students engage in conversations, provide and obtain information, express feelings and emotions, and exchange opinions
- **Standard 1.2:** Students understand and interpret written and spoken language on a variety of topics
- **Standard 1.3:** Students present information, concepts, and ideas to an audience of listeners or readers on a variety of topics.

CULTURES

Gain Knowledge and Understanding of Other Cultures

- **Standard 2.1:** Students demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between the practices and perspectives of the culture studied
- **Standard 2.2:** Students demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between the products and perspectives of the culture studied

CONNECTIONS**Connect with Other Disciplines and Acquire Information**

- **Standard 3.1:** Students reinforce and further their knowledge of other disciplines through the foreign language
- **Standard 3.2:** Students acquire information and recognize the distinctive viewpoints that are only available through the foreign language and its cultures

COMPARISONS**Develop Insight into the Nature of Language and Culture**

- **Standard 4.1:** Students demonstrate understanding of the nature of language through comparisons of the language studied and their own
- **Standard 4.2:** Students demonstrate understanding of the concept of culture through comparisons of the cultures studied and their own.

COMMUNITIES**Participate in Multilingual Communities at Home & Around the World**

- **Standard 5.1:** Students use the language both within and beyond the school setting
- **Standard 5.2:** Students show evidence of becoming life-long learners by using the language for personal enjoyment and enrichment.

APPENDIX C

Spanish IV Survey



Spanish 4 Survey

Created: September 20 2009, 10:24 AM
 Last Modified: September 20 2009, 10:24 AM
 Design Theme: Aquarium
 Language: English
 Button Options: Labels
 Disable Browser "Back" Button: False

Spanish 4 Questionnaire

Page 1 - Question 1 - Open Ended - One Line

Please enter your confidential login ID number below.

Page 1 - Heading

Please answer the questions on this survey honestly. Your answers will all be confidential.

Page 1 - Question 2 - Choice - One Answer (Drop Down)

What is your current grade level in high school?

- 9
- 10
- 11
- 12

Page 1 - Question 3 - Open Ended - Comments Box

Why did you decide to take 4 years of Spanish in high school? Or take up to level 4 if you are a native speaker?

Page 1 - Question 4 - Choice - Multiple Answers (Bullets)

What / who has influenced your decision in planning to take Spanish for this number of years? Mark all that apply.

- Parents
- Friends
- Counselor at high school
- Curricular demands or scheduling conflicts
- College requirements
- Plan to use it in the future for a job
- Travel
- To be able to communicate with native Spanish speakers
- Other, please specify

Page 2 - Heading

The following questions refer to your feelings and attitudes towards learning Spanish. Please indicate your level of agreement by checking the appropriate box.

Page 2 - Question 5 - Rating Scale - One Answer (Horizontal)

Speaking Spanish well with native Spanish speakers is important to me.

Strongly Disagree

Disagree

Agree

Strongly Agree

Page 2 - Question 6 - Rating Scale - One Answer (Horizontal)

I enjoy studying Spanish.

Strongly Disagree

Disagree

Agree

Strongly Agree

Page 2 - Question 7 - Rating Scale - One Answer (Horizontal)

Learning as much Spanish as I can in high school will help me attain my future goals.

Strongly Disagree

Disagree

Agree

Strongly Agree

Page 2 - Question 8 - Rating Scale - One Answer (Horizontal)

Language learning is a hobby for me.

Strongly Disagree

Disagree

Agree

Strongly Agree

Page 2 - Question 9 - Rating Scale - One Answer (Horizontal)

Learning Spanish is an exciting activity.

Strongly Disagree

Disagree

Agree

Strongly Agree

Page 3 - Question 10 - Rating Scale - One Answer (Horizontal)

I am not interested in speaking Spanish fluently with native speakers.

Strongly Disagree

Disagree

Agree

Strongly Agree

Page 3 - Question 11 - Rating Scale - One Answer (Horizontal)

I do not like studying foreign languages.

Strongly Disagree

Disagree

Agree

Strongly Agree

Page 3 - Question 12 - Rating Scale - One Answer (Horizontal)

I do not see myself using Spanish in the future.

Strongly Disagree

Disagree

Agree

Strongly Agree

Page 3 - Question 13 - Rating Scale - One Answer (Horizontal)

Sometimes language learning is a burden for me.

Strongly Disagree

Disagree

Agree

Strongly Agree

Page 3 - Question 14 - Rating Scale - One Answer (Horizontal)

I don't really like the process of learning Spanish and I do it only because I need the language to fulfill a college requirement.

Strongly Disagree

Disagree

Agree

Strongly Agree

Page 4 - Question 15 - Rating Scale - One Answer (Horizontal)

Learning Spanish often gives me a feeling of success.

Strongly Disagree

Disagree

Agree

Strongly Agree

Page 4 - Question 16 - Rating Scale - One Answer (Horizontal)

I am learning Spanish to become more educated.

Strongly Disagree

Disagree

Agree

Strongly Agree

Page 4 - Question 17 - Rating Scale - One Answer (Horizontal)

If I spoke Spanish I could travel more in my career.

Strongly Disagree

Disagree

Agree

Strongly Agree

Page 4 - Question 18 - Rating Scale - One Answer (Horizontal)

I think that learning Spanish is more difficult for me than for the average learner.

Strongly Disagree

Disagree

Agree

Strongly Agree

Page 4 - Question 19 - Rating Scale - One Answer (Horizontal)

Spanish proficiency is important to me because it will allow me to get to know various cultures and peoples.

Strongly Disagree

Disagree

Agree

Strongly Agree

Page 5 - Question 20 - Rating Scale - One Answer (Horizontal)

Learning Spanish often makes me happy.

Strongly Disagree

Disagree

Agree

Strongly Agree

Page 5 - Question 21 - Rating Scale - One Answer (Horizontal)

If I spoke Spanish I could hold a more interesting job.

Strongly Disagree

Disagree

Agree

Strongly Agree

Page 5 - Question 22 - Rating Scale - One Answer (Horizontal)

Spanish proficiency would have financial benefits for me.

Strongly Disagree

Disagree

Agree

Strongly Agree

Page 5 - Question 23 - Rating Scale - One Answer (Horizontal)

I have had some bad experiences with learning languages.

Strongly Disagree

Disagree

Agree

Strongly Agree

Page 5 - Question 24 - Rating Scale - One Answer (Horizontal)

Studying Spanish is important to me because it offers a new challenge in my life.

Strongly Disagree

Disagree

Agree

Strongly Agree

Page 6 - Question 25 - Rating Scale - One Answer (Horizontal)

I enjoy difficult work.

Strongly Disagree

Disagree

Agree

Strongly Agree

Page 6 - Question 26 - Rating Scale - One Answer (Horizontal)

I hate to do a job with less than my best effort.

Strongly Disagree**Disagree****Agree****Strongly Agree**

Page 6 - Question 27 - Rating Scale - One Answer (Horizontal)

[Mandatory]

If my teacher wanted someone to do an extra Spanish assignment, I would certainly volunteer.

Strongly Disagree**Disagree****Agree****Strongly Agree**

Page 6 - Question 28 - Rating Scale - One Answer (Horizontal)

To be honest, I often skimp on my Spanish homework.

Strongly Disagree**Disagree****Agree****Strongly Agree**

Page 6 - Question 29 - Rating Scale - One Answer (Horizontal)

I always feel that the other students know Spanish better than I do.

Strongly Disagree**Disagree****Agree****Strongly Agree**

Page 7 - Question 30 - Rating Scale - One Answer (Horizontal)

I easily give up goals which prove hard to reach.

Strongly Disagree**Disagree****Agree****Strongly Agree**

Page 7 - Question 31 - Rating Scale - One Answer (Horizontal)

[Mandatory]

In my work I seldom do less than is necessary.

Strongly Disagree**Disagree****Agree****Strongly Agree**

Page 7 - Question 32 - Rating Scale - One Answer (Horizontal)

I frequently think over what we have learned in my Spanish class.

Strongly Disagree**Disagree****Agree****Strongly Agree**

Page 7 - Question 33 - Rating Scale - One Answer (Horizontal)

I get nervous and confused when speaking Spanish in Spanish class.

Strongly Disagree**Disagree****Agree****Strongly Agree**

Page 7 - Question 34 - Rating Scale - One Answer (Horizontal)

I am embarrassed to volunteer in Spanish class.			
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Page 8 - Question 35 - Rating Scale - One Answer (Horizontal)

I never feel quite sure of myself when speaking Spanish in Spanish class.			
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Page 8 - Question 36 - Rating Scale - One Answer (Horizontal)

I feel calm and confident in the company of Spanish speaking people.			
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Page 8 - Question 37 - Rating Scale - One Answer (Horizontal)

I feel that I speak Spanish as well as the other students in my class.			
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Page 8 - Question 38 - Rating Scale - One Answer (Horizontal)

I work hard to reach all the goals that I set.			
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree

Page 8 - Question 39 - Rating Scale - One Answer (Horizontal) [Mandatory]

Getting a good grade in Spanish class is important to me.			
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Page 9 - Question 40 - Rating Scale - One Answer (Horizontal)

I am afraid that other students will laugh at me when I speak Spanish.			
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Page 9 - Question 41 - Rating Scale - One Answer (Horizontal)

I enjoy volunteering in Spanish class.			
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

APPENDIX D

Parent Questionnaire



Parent Questionnaire

Created: September 20 2009, 11:15 AM

Please enter your confidential login ID number below.
 These questions are about your opinions on foreign language study. Please choose the answer that corresponds to how true the statement is in your case.

Page 1 - Question 2 - Rating Scale - One Answer (Horizontal)[Mandatory]

If I were to visit a foreign country, I would like to be able to speak the language of the people.

Strongly disagree **Disagree** **Agree** **Strongly Agree**

Page 1 - Question 3 - Rating Scale - One Answer (Horizontal)[Mandatory]

It is important for everyone to learn a foreign language.

Strongly disagree **Disagree** **Agree** **Strongly Agree**

Page 1 - Question 4 - Rating Scale - One Answer (Horizontal)[Mandatory]

I wish I could speak another language perfectly

Strongly disagree **Disagree** **Agree** **Strongly Agree**

Page 1 - Question 5 - Rating Scale - One Answer (Horizontal)[Mandatory]

I wish I could read newspapers and magazines in another language.

Strongly disagree **Disagree** **Agree** **Strongly Agree**

Page 1 - Question 6 - Rating Scale - One Answer (Horizontal)[Mandatory]

I enjoy meeting and listening to people who speak other languages.

Strongly disagree **Disagree** **Agree** **Strongly Agree**

Page 1 - Question 7 - Rating Scale - One Answer (Horizontal)[Mandatory]

Becoming bilingual is important for all Americans.

Strongly disagree **Disagree** **Agree** **Strongly Agree**

Page 2 - Heading

These questions have to do with the role you might play in your daughter/son's study of Spanish. Please choose the answer that corresponds to how true the statement is in your case.

Page 2 - Question 8 - Rating Scale - One Answer (Horizontal)[Mandatory]

I really encourage my child to study Spanish.

Strongly disagree

Disagree

Agree

Strongly Agree

Page 2 - Question 9 - Rating Scale - One Answer (Horizontal)[Mandatory]

I try to help my child with her/his homework.

Strongly disagree

Disagree

Agree

Strongly Agree

Page 2 - Question 10 - Rating Scale - One Answer (Horizontal)[Mandatory]

I feel that my child should continue studying Spanish all through high school.

Strongly disagree

Disagree

Agree

Strongly Agree

Page 2 - Question 11 - Rating Scale - One Answer (Horizontal)[Mandatory]

I think my child should devote more time to her/his Spanish studies.

Strongly disagree

Disagree

Agree

Strongly Agree

Page 2 - Question 12 - Rating Scale - One Answer (Horizontal)[Mandatory]

I show considerable interest in anything that has to do with my child's Spanish class.

Strongly disagree

Disagree

Agree

Strongly Agree

Page 2 - Question 13 - Rating Scale - One Answer (Horizontal)[Mandatory]

I encourage my child to practice her/his Spanish as much as possible.

Strongly disagree

Disagree

Agree

Strongly Agree

Page 2 - Question 14 - Rating Scale - One Answer (Horizontal)[Mandatory]

I feel that my child should learn as much Spanish as possible..

Strongly disagree

Disagree

Agree

Strongly Agree

Page 2 - Question 15 - Rating Scale - One Answer (Horizontal)[Mandatory]

I encourage my child to get help from her/his Spanish teacher if s/he is having problems in Spanish class.

Strongly disagree

Disagree

Agree

Strongly Agree

Please answer the following questions as honestly as possible.

Page 3 - Question 16 - Choice - One Answer (Drop Down)[Mandatory]

What is your gender?

Female

Male

Page 3 - Question 17 - Yes or No[Mandatory]

Did you study a foreign language at anytime during school?

Yes

No

Page 3 - Question 18 - Open Ended - One or More Lines with Prompt

If you studied a foreign language in school, please indicate which language you studied, when (elementary school, middle school, high school, college), and for how long.

APPENDIX E

Counselor Interview

Counselor Interview

1. Do you know why Spanish is the only language offered at JHS?
2. When do you recommend that students start their Spanish study?
3. How many years of Spanish do you recommend to students?
4. What factors do you take into consideration when advising students about foreign language study?
5. What do you see as the purpose for students to study foreign languages in high school?
6. If there were no constraints, when would you have students start studying foreign language, anywhere from kindergarten to twelfth grade?
7. Do you think it's important for all Americans to become bilingual?

Do you have any other comments that you would like to add or questions you would like to ask me?

.

REFERENCES

- American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Language (ACTFL). (1996). *Standards for foreign language learning: Preparing for the 21st century*. Retrieved July 10, 2009, from http://www.actfl.org/files/public/StandardsforFLLexecsumm_rev.pdf
- American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Language (ACTFL). (1999). *ACTFL proficiency guidelines c speaking*. Retrieved July 1, 2009, from <http://www.actfl.org/files/public/Guidelinesspeak.pdf>
- American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Language (ACTFL). (2005) *ACTFL Events for 2005: The Year of Languages*. Retrieved October 10, 2009, from <http://www.actfl.org/i4a/pages/index.cfm?pageid=3631>
- American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Language (ACTFL). (2009) *ACTFL website*. Retrieved July 1, 2009, from <http://www.actfl.org>
- Baker, C. (1993). *Foundations of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*. Philadelphia: Multilingual Matters Ltd.
- Bialystok, E. (1987). Influences of bilingual on met linguistic development. *Second Language Research* 3 (2), 154-166.
- Brown, J. D. (2001). *Using surveys in language programs*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Dörnyei, Z. (2001a). *Motivational strategies in the language classroom*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Dörnyei, Z. (2001b). *Teaching and researching motivation*. Essex, England: Pearson

Education Limited.

- Dörnyei, Z. (2003). *Questionnaires in second language research: Construction, administration, and processing*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.
- Dörnyei, Z. (2007). *Research methods in applied linguistics: Quantitative, qualitative and mixed methodologies*. USA: Oxford University Press.
- Draper, J. B., & Hicks, J. H. (1996). Foreign language enrollments in public secondary schools, fall 1994 summary report. *Foreign Language Annals*, 303-305.
- Draper, J. B., & Hicks, J. H. (2002). *Foreign language enrollments in public secondary schools, fall 2000*. Retrieved July 23, 2009, from <http://www.actfl.org/files/public/Enroll2000.pdf>
- Gardner, R.C. (1985). *Social psychology and second language learning: The role of attitudes and motivation*. London: Edward Arnold.
- Gardner, R.C. & Lambert, W.E. (1959). Motivational variables in second language acquisition. *Canadian Journal of Psychology*, 13, 266-272.
- Gardner, R.C. & Lambert, W.E. (1972). *Attitudes and motivation in second language learning*. Rowley, MA: Newbury House Publishers.
- Gardner, R.C. & MacIntyre, P.D. (1991). An instrumental motivation in language study: Who says it isn't effective? *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, 13(1), 57-72.
- Holt, R. (2008). *Why foreign language education matters*. The Huffington Post. Retrieved from http://www.huffingtonpost.com/rep-rush-holt/why-foreign-language-educ_b_1
- Hopkins, W. (1992). The acquisition of foreign language as a national priority for America. *Foreign Language Annals*, 25(2), 147-154.

- Lalonde, R.N., Lee, P.A., & Gardner, R.C. (1987). The common view of the good language learner: An investigation of teachers' beliefs. *The Canadian Modern Language Review*, 44(1), 16-34.
- Landers, J. (2008). In business English is necessary but not always sufficient. Dallas News. Retrieved July 18, 2009 from <http://www.dallasnews.com/sharedcontent/dws/Bus/columnists/jlanders>
- Lazaraton, A. (2005). Quantitative research methods. In E. Hinkel (Ed.), *Handbook of research in second language teaching and learning* (pp. 209-229). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Lightbown, P. & Spada, N. (1993). *How languages are learned*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- McGroarty, M. (1996). Language attitudes, motivation and standards. In S.L. McKay & N.H. Hornberger (Eds.), *Sociolinguistics and language teaching* (pp. 3-46). New York: Cambridge University Press.
- McKay, S.L. (2006). *Researching second language classrooms*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Earlbaum.
- Merriam, S.B. (1998). *Qualitative research and case study applications in education*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Merriam -Webster's collegiate dictionary* (11th Ed.). (2003). Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster.
- Minnesota Department of Education. (2004). *World languages standards: A model for use in setting local standards*. Retrieved July 1, 2009, from http://education.state.mn.us/MDE/Academic_Excellence/Academic_Standards/World_Languages/index.html
- Minnesota Department of Education. (2008). *World languages*. Retrieved July 1, 2009, from http://education.state.mn.us/MDE/Academic_Excellence/Academic_Standards/World_Languages/index.html

- Moore, B. J. (1993). *Reasons high school students choose Spanish as a foreign language*. Norwalk City Schools. ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 360858.
- Naiman, N.M., Fröhlich, M., & Stern, H.H. (1975). *The good language learner*. Toronto: Ontario Institute for Studies in Education.
- National Council of State Supervisors for Languages(NCSSFL). (2009). *About the national council of state supervisors for languages*. Retrieved July 28, 2009, from http://www.ncssf.org/about/index.php?about_index
- National Council of State Supervisors for Languages(NCSSFL). (2009). *NCSSFL state reports*. Retrieved July 28, 2009, from http://www.ncssf.org/reports2/index.php?reports_index
- Obama, B. (2008). *Barack Obama on bilingualism in the United States*. Video Podcast of speech given July 10, 2008. Retrieved on October 14, 2009 from <http://www.pagef30.com/2008/07/barack-obama-on-bilingualism-barack.html>
- Oleksak, R. (2007). *Ensuring America's place in the global economy by building language capacity in the schools*. ACTFL President Testifies Before Senate Subcommittee On Jan. 25 ACTFL President, Rita Oleksak, testifies before the Senate Subcommittee on Oversight of Government Management, the Federal Workforce and the District of Columbia. Retrieved August 1, 2009 from <http://nnell.org/documents/resources/testimonyoleksak.pdf>
- Perez, M. (1998). *The relationship between Spanish language proficiency and academic achievement among graduates of a small high school in south Texas*. Kingsville, Texas: A & M University
- Ramage, K. (1990). Motivational factors and persistence in foreign language study. *Language Learning*, 40, 189-219.
- Reinert, H. (1970). Student attitudes toward foreign language - no sale! *Modern Language Journal*, 54, 107-112.

- Reiss, M.A. (1985). The good language learner: Another look. *The Canadian Modern Language Review*, 41, 511-523.
- Renza-Guren, C. (2001). Reasons why high school foreign language students choose to continue or discontinue beyond the two-year minimum requirement for college. *Dissertation Abstracts International, A: The Humanities and Social Sciences*, 62 (1), 105-A. (Available from UMI, Ann Arbor, MI. Order No. DA3002709.) Retrieved from CSA Linguistics and Language Behavior Abstracts database.
- Rubin, J. (1975). What the good language learner can teach us. *TESOL Quarterly*, 9, 41-51.
- Rubin, J. & Thompson, I. (1994). *How to be a more successful language learner*. Boston: Heinle & Heinle.
- Sanders, R. (2006). Focus on form: Foreign language study and cognitive development. *The Association of Departments of Foreign Languages*, 38 (1).
- Science Daily. (2008). *Speaking more than one language may slow the aging process in the mind*. Retrieved July 18, 2009 from <http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2008/05/080507152419.htm>
- Shedivy, S. L. (2004). Factors that lead some students to continue the study of foreign language past the usual 2 years in high school. *System* 32, 103-119.
- Speiller, J. (1988). Factors that influence high school students' decisions to continue or discontinue the study of French and Spanish after levels II, III, and IV. *Foreign Language Annals*, 21(6), 535-543.
- United States Department of State. (2006). *National security language initiative*. Retrieved July 18, 2009 from www.actfl.org/i4a/pages/index/cfm?pageid=4249
- Vedantam, S. (2004). Bilingualism's brain benefits. *The Washington Post*, pp. A07.

Retrieved July 18, 2009 from <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A39338-2004Jun13.html>