

A CASE STUDY OF A SPANISH LANGUAGE IMMERSION SCHOOL

A Dissertation

Presented to

The Faculty of the Education Department

Carson-Newman University

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the

Requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Education

By

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March 2017

 **CARSON-NEWMAN**
UNIVERSITY

Dissertation Approval

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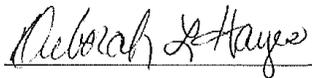
A Case Study of a Spanish Language Immersion School

This dissertation has been approved and accepted by the faculty of the Education Department, Carson-Newman University, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree, Doctor of Education.

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Date: April 6, 2017

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Dedication

This is dedicated to my wife, my children, and my parents. Mom, you raised me to see the best in others, to love my neighbor, and to strive to help others. Dad, you taught me to never give up.

You also taught me that sometimes life can be absurd and you have to find the humor in that and be able to adapt. Brooke, I find strength in you. You are beautiful, funny, and you're the love of my life. Thank you for always being there. John, you are my little man, and I will always strive to be an example and model for you to follow as you grow. I see greatness in you. Annabelle, you are the funniest big kid I know. You are so smart and the potential for you in life is endless. Olivia Grey, never stop smiling at me. I love you all.

Acknowledgements

First, I would like to acknowledge and thank Dr. Deborah Hayes. She has kindly and patiently helped me through this arduous process. Without her help, I would not be where I am right now. I would also like to acknowledge Dr. Laura Lee Moring who has worked with me throughout much of this process including the coursework. She also has mentored me in the workplace and has been a perfect example of professionalism and compassion for students. Dr. Christopher Shon has also helped guide this dissertation, and I would like to acknowledge and thank him. And finally, thank you to my wife who has supported me every step of the way. She is the glue of my household and has been putting in overtime for the past three years. Without her support, this journey would have ended long ago.

Abstract

Foreign language study is not often a priority in education in the United States. Students from the U.S. lag behind many students on the global stage when it comes to knowing more than one language. This puts them at a disadvantage in the marketplace once they are competing for jobs against bilingual or multilingual individuals. There are many cognitive benefits of being bilingual, especially if bilingualism was achieved at an early age. Foreign language immersion schools are growing in popularity in the U.S. One such elementary school was studied to identify what makes foreign language immersion unique and how it does or does not benefit the students that attend the school. The qualitative case study of the school examined end of the year test scores and compared them with the state average for the same tests. Interviews were conducted with faculty members and a walkthrough observation of the school was conducted. Four main themes emerged from the study: 1. An exposure to different cultures for the students; 2. Strong parent involvement with the school; 3. Professional development and attendance at foreign language immersion conferences; and 4. The need for a strong bilingual teaching staff. These themes have been noted in other previous studies (Floyd, 2011; Detwiler, 2016), and more research is recommended on foreign language immersion and student achievement.

Keywords: bilingualism, foreign language immersion, foreign language in elementary school (FLES), parent involvement, culture, professional development, bilingual teachers

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Chapter 1

Introduction

The Common Core State Standards were introduced in 2010 and have been adopted in forty-two states, the District of Colombia, four territories, and the Department of Defense Education Activity (www.corestandards.org/standards-in-your-state/). The standards focus on Literacy and Mathematics. An intention of the standards is to have students ready for either college or a post-secondary career by the time they graduate high school. The literacy aspect of these standards asks much of students in regard to reading comprehension, language structure and communication, and writing. Second language study reinforces knowledge in areas of English and literacy (Curtain & Dahlberg, 2004). It can be an essential tool in reaching many of the literacy standards of Common Core.

In the context of career readiness, recently graduated mono-lingual students are at a disadvantage. The changing population of the United States is one reason that second language study is important to United States students. Students native to the U.S. are going to school more often with immigrant students or students that are in children of immigrants. Commonly, these first or second generation immigrant students are bilingual, or even multilingual. According to the U.S. Census (2010), over 60.5 million people in the United States speak a language other than English at home. Over half (58.2%) of those people spoke English very well. That means that over 35 million people in the U.S. know how to speak more than one language. These people are at an advantage in the job market and are more apt to academic success (Armstrong and Rogers, 1997).

There have been numerous studies on the benefits of second language acquisition (NEA Research, 2007). The benefits discussed in this study are relevant to academic progress. When

learning a second language, students have to learn certain academic vocabulary as well as the grammatical structure of the language being studied. Learning the vocabulary and grammar structure reinforces knowledge of the student's first language. Second language study helps students in the United States learn more about the English language and its structure (Curtain & Dahlberg, 2004).

Statement of the Problem

Foreign language study is not a priority in public education in the United States. Only ten states have a foreign language requirement for graduation (The Education Commission of the United States, 2016). Eight of those states require a student to have two units of a foreign language to graduate. It is difficult to learn a second language taking only two classes in high school. According to the U.S. Census (2010), only 21% of Americans can speak more than one language. That number in Europe, in 2005, was 56% (Directorate General Press and Communication, 2006). Serious second language study will keep students in the United States competitive academically and in the global job market.

Goldenberg and Wagner (2015) wrote of the stigma of bilingual education in the United States. People tend to equate bilingual education with immigration and the opinion that all children need to be taught in English since that is the official language of the country. If there are clear academic benefits to bilingualism, then policy makers need to rethink the importance of second language study in public schools at an early age. Goldenberg and Wagner state it best when they say, "Whatever the reasons for the opposition, it's time to move the discussion away from bilingual education – which in the United States is invariably about *those kids* – and focus instead on bilingualism and its benefits for *our kids* – all of our kids – and the adults they will become" (p. 30).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine what the characteristics are of an elementary foreign language immersion school. The study was designed to investigate if there were benefits for students that enrolled in language immersion schools, as evidenced by the faculty within the school. If the people closest to the school and to the students that attend the school believed that foreign language immersion had apparent benefits for the students, then foreign language immersion may need to be studied further. Perhaps foreign language in elementary school (FLES) programs and foreign language immersion schools should be implemented more in the United States.

Focus of Inquiry

Determining what makes foreign language immersion elementary schools unique and beneficial to students was the essence of the study. The inverse may be true. For this reason, the focus of inquiry of this research was as follows:

As evidenced by interviews and observations, what are the characteristics of an elementary foreign language immersion school?

Rationale for the Study

The benefits of this study were to gain insight into an often overlooked type of school: the foreign language immersion school. Of more than 80 elementary schools in the district of the school being studied, there is only one foreign language immersion school. This data is a bit dated, but according to the Center for Applied Linguistics (2011), there are 337 elementary foreign language immersion schools in the United States. The Department of Education (2016) reported that there were 129,189 elementary schools in the U.S. that year. Elementary foreign language immersion schools represent barely a quarter of a percent of the elementary schools in

the country. This study added to the body of knowledge surrounding language immersion schools. With more knowledge out there, maybe more language immersion schools will come into existence.

The Researcher

The researcher in this study was a foreign language teacher at a high school in the same district of the school to be studied. He grew up monolingual and learned a second language in his 20s. He believes that knowing more than one language is important. The researcher saw the struggles that high school students have when they begin foreign language learning in the 10th grade. They often see foreign language as something that is unattainable. If students began learning a second language at a younger age, then it would not seem as such an impossible and daunting task.

Limitations and Delimitations

This study only focused on one foreign language partial immersion elementary school and its faculty. While in a diverse urban school district, the school studied is over 85% Caucasian and has 11% of students on free or reduced price lunch. This school is not representative of all the elementary schools in the district, of which there are many (over 80). Also, this study only examined one foreign language immersion school. It did not compare or investigate any other immersion schools. This study focused on this school and the perceptions of its faculty.

Definition of Terms

50/50 Immersion. A method of foreign language immersion where half of the instruction is taught in the target language and the other half of instruction is taught in the students' native language.

90/10 Immersion. A method of foreign language immersion where 90% of the instruction is taught in the target language and 10% is taught in the students' native language. Usually, as students progress, the amount of instruction in the target language lessons.

Achievement gap. There is a disparity in academic performance between groups of students (<http://www.edweek.org/ew/issues/achievement-gap/>), where grouping is most often based on race or socio-economic status.

Bilingual/bilingualism. Bilingualism is the ability to speak two languages.

College Readiness Score – This data reveals the percentage of students in a high school that scored a composite 21 or higher on the ACT test based on the school's TVAAS score. The percentages for elementary schools are estimates of how many students will score a composite 21 or higher on the ACT when they take it.

Dual immersion. See two-way immersion.

Foreign language. A foreign language is a language not native to the student being taught.

Foreign language in elementary school (FLES). FLES is different from an immersion school in that students take a foreign language class instead of taking classes that are taught in the target language.

Partial immersion program. Partial immersion programs are programs in which up to 50% of subjects are taught in the foreign language; some materials taught in the foreign language will be reinforced in English (Directory of Foreign Language Programs in U.S. Schools, 2011)

Second language acquisition. This is the process in which someone learns a second language, also called second language learning or abbreviated to L2.

Target language. The target language is the foreign language being learned by the student.

Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program (TCAP) – The TCAP is a series of tests that are administered to public school students in Tennessee. They are used to measure if students are meeting the Tennessee state standards for education.

Total immersion program. These immersion programs are programs in which all or almost all subjects taught in the lower grades (K-2) are taught in the foreign language; instruction in English usually increases in the upper grades (3-6) to 20% - 50%, depending on the program (<http://webapp.cal.org/Immersion/>).

Two-way immersion program. Two-way immersion programs are programs that give equal emphasis to English and a non-English language and in which one to two thirds of the students are native speakers of the non-English language, with the remainder being native speakers of English.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Growth of Bilingualism in the United States

The changing population of the United States is one reason that second language study is important to United States students. Students in the U.S. were going to school more often with immigrant students or students that are in children of immigrants. These students were often bilingual. According to the U.S. Census (2010), over 60.5 million people in the United States speak a language other than English at home. Over half (58.2%) of those people spoke English very well. That means that over 35 million people in the U.S. know how to speak more than one language. These multilingual or bilingual individuals are at an advantage in the job market and are more apt to academic success (Armstrong and Rogers, 1997).

The numbers of bilingual people in the U.S. are growing significantly as well. From 1980 to 2010, the number of people that spoke a language other than English at home was 23,060,040. In 1990, it rose to 31,844,979. The next decade saw an even bigger rise when it rose to 46,951,595. From there to the numbers rose from the latest census, 60,577,020, resulting in a 158.2% increase. In that same time period, the number of Spanish speakers increased 232.8%, Chinese 345.3%, Korean 327.1%, Tagalog 231.9%, and Vietnamese rose an astounding 599.2%. The United States cannot afford to isolate itself linguistically while its cultural landscape is changing (Savage and Hughes, 2014).

The U.S. Census data (2010) also offered a look at bilingualism and educational attainment. Spanish speakers who also spoke English had a high rate of higher educational attainment. Fully bilingual students, meaning they spoke both languages “very well,” had a college graduation rate of 73.5%. Compare that to 26.5% that spoke Spanish, but spoke English

“less than very well.” The numbers are similar to bilingual students where Spanish is not the language other than English. The rate of fully bilingual students graduating college was 71.4% versus 28.6% that spoke English “less than very well” (U.S. Census, 2010).

Whether immigration reform comes to the United States or not, there is no reason to believe that the numbers of people speaking a language other than English at home will not continue to grow. According to Ortman and Shin (2011) from the United States Census Bureau, the number is projected to increase to 68.1 million by 2020. Spanish is the second most spoken language in the U.S with over 37.5 million speakers (U.S. Census, 2010). These people need to go grocery shopping, visit the doctor and dentist, bank, and conduct day to day business transactions. The advantage that bilingual, graduating students entering the workforce have cannot be overstated. This applies even more so in the global job market.

Defining Bilingualism

The bilingual population of the United States has seen growth (U.S. Census, 2010). What is not known, however, is what constitutes being bilingual. There are different levels of reading, writing, listening, and speaking in any language. People may be deemed bilingual while possessing different skill levels in a second language. A person may be able to fluently speak, understand, read, and write in one language. That person may understand a second language and speak a few words and phrases. While some may see this person as bilingual, others may think differently. This matters because when studies come out proclaiming bilingual people are more creative or have better memories, people need to know what makes a person bilingual. It is doubly important that researchers know this too (Bialystok, 2001).

Diaz (1983) noted that early studies on bilingualism failed to consider other factors such as socioeconomic status. According to Diaz (1983), bilingualism was often associated with the

lower classes. Bilingual students from studies in the 1930s were often children of unskilled laborers while the English-speaking subjects came from higher classes (Diaz, p. 25). While the studies identified by Diaz made negative connections with bilingualism and student intelligence, researchers must also be aware that attributing academic success to bilingualism could be an error if the populations are not thoroughly vetted.

For children growing up in a community that speaks a different language from their home language, Romaine (1995), has given six different types of bilingual people. They are:

- Type 1: One person, one language
- Type 2: Nondominant home language/one language, one environment
- Type 3: Nondominant home language without community support
- Type 4: Double nondominant home language without community support
- Type 5: Nonnative parents
- Type 6: Mixed languages

The aforementioned children have come to bilingualism in different ways, affecting their levels of bilingualism (Bialystok, 2001). When studies are conducted with bilingual children, the differences must be considered.

Another aspect to consider is which bilingual children are being studied. Their routes to bilingualism may differ. A little girl might be bilingual because her parents are both bilingual and thought that it was important that their child know more than one language. Another bilingual child is the son of immigrants with little formal education from an undeveloped country. The bilingual girl will be taught two proper languages and most likely will be literate in those languages. The bilingual boy might be able to speak in his home or native language (L1), but may not be able to read or write or even speak that language using proper grammar. The boy

will also have received most of his education in his second language (L2), the native language belonging to the school where he attends. These are factors that would affect the development of these two children. In turn, these factors affect their linguistic and cognitive development (Bialystok, 2001).

Theories on Language Acquisition

There are varying theories on the topic of second language acquisition (Brown, 1994). Researchers such as Steven Krashen (1985), Ellen Bialystok (2001), and Berry McLaughlin (1990), have all posed theories on how people learn languages, whether it is the first language or second. Brown (1994) put forth six factors that are important when outlining a theory on second language acquisition:

1. A theory of second language acquisition includes an understanding of what language is, what learning is, and what teaching is.
2. Knowledge of children's learning of their first language provides essential insights to an understanding of second language acquisition.
3. A number of important differences between adult and child learning and between first and second language acquisition must be carefully accounted for.
4. Second language learning is a part of and adheres to general principles of human learning and intelligence.
5. There is tremendous variation across learners in cognitive style and within a learner in strategy choice.
6. Personality, the way persons view themselves and reveal themselves in communication, will affect both the quantity and quality of second language learning (p. 276).

Learning a language is a complex endeavor. It is important to be aware of these factors and variables when looking at the following theories.

There is the Analysis/Automaticity Model put forth by Bialystok (1978). Bialystok theorized that second language learning consisted of two factors: the explicit and the implicit. The explicit, or the analysis, in her model refers to the learning of facts, rules, and vocabulary of a language. The implicit, or automaticity, aspect of Bialystok's model refers to knowledge that can automatically be used in language (1978). This would be being able to understand what is being said without active listening, or being able to speak without having to recall the words before saying them.

Krashen's (1985) Monitor Model claimed that there are two factors in second acquisition. Brown (1994) wrote that Krashen believed that there were two variables in second language learning. There is the subconscious acquisition of a language and the conscious learning of the language (Brown, 1994). Brown (1994) noted that this theory was controversial, due to the vagueness of Krashen's definitions of conscious and subconscious.

Krashen (1985) later put forth his Input Hypothesis. This hypothesis is still based on the belief that language learners acquire language rather than learning it. A language learner needs to be immersed enough in the language where he or she can comprehend most of what is being said or conveyed. There should be enough input, however, that the learner has to strive to understand all of it. This is the idea of comprehensible input (Krashen, 1985). The input given to the learner needs to be slightly above his or her ability.

As Brown (1994) stated, Krashen's theories are controversial. There is no concrete definition of conscious and subconscious in psychology (Brown, 1994). There are also varying degrees of learning and acquisition, according to Brown (1994). One does not happen separately

from the other. A third criticism to Krashen is that the idea of language learning depends solely on the input that a language learner receives. It does not take into account the effort put forth by the learner (Brown, 1994).

McLaughlin (1990) also wanted to move away from the ideas of conscious and subconscious, so he put forth the attention-processing model. This theory does not differ greatly from Bialystok's. Instead of conscious and subconscious, McLaughlin (1990) argued that there were controlled and automatic processes in language learning. The controlled aspect to language learning refers to learning grammar structures and memorizing vocabulary. The automatic aspect refers to the recall from the brain and deals more in long term memory (McLaughlin, Rossman, & McLeod, 1983). Automatic processing comes from the repetition and practice from the controlled processing.

All three of the previous theories have two aspects to them (Bialystok, 1978; Krashen, 1985; McLaguhlin et al.). One tends to refer to the learning of rules and rote memorization. The other refers to the ability to automatically create and understand language. The second aspect is what language learners strive for. Learning a second language, however, begins with having to memorize vocabulary and word order (grammar). The two aspects are not exclusive of one another (Brown, 1994).

Benefits of Second Language Study

What follows provides some evidence on the cognitive benefits of second language acquisition. The benefits discussed in this study were relevant to academic progress. The review of literature examined links between being either bilingual or studying a second language and progress in other academic areas.

Before the 1980s, it was believed that there was no link between bilingualism and academic development (Diaz, 1983). Some researchers believed that bilingualism hindered academic development (Diaz, 1983). Tucker and Anglejan (1971), for example, believed that children instructed bilingually would suffer cognitive retardation, and that they would not master as much academic content. Diaz (1983) argued that these are merely beliefs. For the studies conducted linking detriments to bilingualism, Diaz wrote, “Others are based on studies that were poorly designed and that failed to control for relevant confounding variables such as children’s actual knowledge of their two languages or bilingual-monolingual group differences in socioeconomic status” (p. 24). Diaz then cited studies showing positive impacts of knowing a second language and cognitive development.

Peal and Lambert (1962) found that bilingual students outperformed their monolingual counterparts on various cognitive tests. Diaz (1983) added that bilingual children are more “cognitively flexible.” The meaning behind this is that bilingual children show more attention to detail, have better general reasoning, and have greater creativity (Diaz, 1983).

Hakuta (1986) found that bilingualism can have cognitive benefits. Young language learners have shown more cognitive flexibility, are better with problem solving skills, and generally show better higher order thinking skills (Hakuta, 1986). Goldenberg and Wagner (2015) supported the claims of bilingualism having cognitive benefits. They wrote that bilingualism can be associated with “...control over attention, improved working memory, greater awareness of the structure and form of language, and better abstract and symbolic representation skills” (p. 31).

Second language study has also been linked to lowering the achievement gap (Andrade, Kretschmer, and Kretschmer, 1989). In the United States, there exists a gap between students of

color, students from low socio-economic backgrounds, and students with low English language ability and their middle-class Caucasian counterparts. It is a complex problem that is being combatted across the nation. Second language study can be useful in this problem.

Andrade, Kretschmer, and Kretschmer (1989) studied a group of students that attended a language immersion school. There were working class students and middle-class students in the study, as well as African American and Caucasian students. The students participated in the immersion program and at the end of the school year took the California Achievement Test. In the first year of the program, African American immersion students averaged a score of 62.42 versus 55.5 for their non-immersion peers on the reading section of the test. The second year of the program saw the numbers dip, however. African American males in the program averaged a score of 58.72 against 53.12 for students not in the program. For the math portion of the test, the story is similar. In the first year of the program, African American students in the program scored 59.03 and in the second year scored 58.77. For the non-immersion African American students, the scores were 52.96 and 57.72. Additionally, Andrade, Kretschmer, and Kretschmer (1989) found that, "...working class immersion students, both black and white, scored as well as their middle-peers on the French Test linguistique, which measured listening comprehension and oral production" (p. 186).

Another link between academic achievement and second language study can be found in SAT scores. The mean scores for students that took a second language for three years or more are higher than the national average (The College Board, 2004). Furthermore, the longer a student takes a second language, the more the score rises. In 2004 the mean score of 1,419,007 students taking the SAT I was 509. The mean score for students that took two years of second language study was 478. However, the mean score for students taking three years of a second

language is 516. Students that had four years of a second language scored 559 on average. Lastly, students that took more than four years of a second language averaged a score of 561, over 50 points higher than the national average (The College Board, 2004).

Bilingualism also has been shown to help with memory. Kormi-Nouri et al. (2008) studied 144 randomly selected students from grades three, eight, and 11. The students in this study came from similar socio-economic backgrounds. They were tasked with various memory tests, written and oral. What Kormi-Nouri et al. discovered was that “bilingual children outperformed monolingual children in both episodic and semantic memory tasks” (p. 105). Episodic memory is memory pertaining to self and experiences. Semantic memory is remembering facts and information.

Other studies have shown a link between bilingualism and creativity. Leikin and Tovli (2014) studied 31 bilingual and monolingual kindergarten students. Memory and thinking tests were conducted on students. The results showed that, “Bilingual children showed higher creative ability than their monolingual peers, and bilingualism affected various domains of creativity differently” (p. 415). They go on to write that the bilingual children performed better on tasks related to semantic fluency and mathematical creativity.

Students from lower socio-economic homes tend to drop out at a higher rate (Stetser and Stillwell, 2014). The national average graduation rate for students in the United States was 79% in the 2010-2011 school year and 80% in the 2011-2012 school year. The graduation rates for black students in those years were 67% and 69%, respectively. Hispanic students’ graduation rates were 71% and 73%, respectively (Stetser & Stillwell, 2014, pgs. 7-10). Early second language study may help combat this. According to Goldenberg and Wagner (2015),

“...bilingualism is associated with a decreased likelihood of dropping out of high school and an increased probability of attaining a higher status job and higher annual earning” (p. 31).

Literacy Benefits

Literacy and reading are areas where second language acquisition can have an impact. The skills for reading are similar across languages (Krashen, 1996). Krashen admitted that his theory had detractors (Porter, 1990). However, he continued to detail the evidence that exists proving that “Once you can read, you can read” (Krashen, 1996, p. 23). Learning to read in one language will facilitate learning to read in a second. Miscue analysis, eye fixations, development in writing, and reading strategies can be used as evidence of this (Krashen, 1996).

Miscue analysis refers to the types of mistakes a reader will make. A reader does not merely code the letters being read and turn them into sound. The reader will also predict what will come next in the text (Krashen, 1996). Readers of English, Spanish, Polish, Yiddish, and Chinese all evidenced miscue analysis (Krashen, 1996). It is important to note that this happened in Yiddish and Chinese. Yiddish uses the Hebrew alphabet, and Chinese uses characters.

Eye fixation refers to the amount of time a reader will fixate his or her gaze on a word when reading. Readers in fourteen different languages fixated their eyes on words as they read for similar lengths of time (Krashen, 1996). Several of these languages used different alphabets such as Arabic, Hebrew, Chinese, Urdu, Navaho, and English. Gaze duration also increased for longer words or characters across languages as well (Krashen, 1996).

Development in writing means that one’s writing style is impacted by how much that person reads (Krashen, 1996). The evidence is primarily compared between English and Chinese. Essay tests in Taiwan showed that those that read for pleasure scored higher. This is

similar in English where those that read more, often undertake some of the writing styles of what they have read (Krashen, 1996).

The last bit of evidence that Krashen (1996) detailed of the theory that reading is similar across languages is in reading strategies. According to Krashen (1996):

Consistent with children learning to read in English, children learning to read in Dutch, whether as a first or second language have less difficulty with words in CVC (consonant-vowel-consonant) patterns than words with CC clusters, had less trouble with monosyllabic words than bisyllabic words, and were better at reading familiar than unfamiliar words (p. 25-26).

Krashen (1996) also reported that Chinese and Norwegian speakers had similar results when studied on reading strategies. Not only that, but both speakers of English and Chinese were able to remember important information from the readings, but forgot smaller, less important details (Krashen, 1996).

Steele, Slater, Li, Zamarro, and Miller (2015) also found that foreign language immersion students outperformed non-immersion students academically. The caveat was students that choose to go into a foreign language immersion program may be more motivated to succeed, however. According to Steele et al (2015), "Simply comparing immersion and non-immersion students in the district and adjusting for baseline demographic characteristics, we find that immersion students substantially outperform non-immersion students on all outcomes" (p. A-4). The study also suggested that foreign language immersion could improve literacy in English and not diminish skills in any other areas (Steele, et al., 2015).

Dangers of Subtractive Immersion

Immersion programs seem to be the best way to begin second language instruction if academic success is the goal. However, Hakuta and Gould (1987) warned against the use of subtractive immersion. In their study on English language learners (ELL) in the United States, they describe subtractive immersion as having the goal of the second language (English in this case) replace the student's first language. They found that two way bilingual programs, or bilingual immersion, are the most beneficial to not only ELL students, but also to American students in that they also partake in language immersion.

Settlage, Gort, and Ceglie (2014) also warn of the dangers of subtractive immersion. Their study involved putting teaching students that spoke English in a Spanish only physics class. The subjects in the study mostly reported negative feelings from being in the class. They also reported that not understanding the language used for the class discouraged them from trying (Settlage et al., 2014).

Settlage et al. (2014) observed the subjects while in the immersion class, and then had them fill out reflection forms. The teaching students being studied were on track to earn a Master's degree. One participant reported, "I hated being in a position where I had no idea what was going on. [...] I was almost getting mad at the teacher for being so nasty and not understanding that I was uncomfortable" (p. 54). The observers reported that this participant's attitude during the study was negative causing her to disengage from the activity.

Another participant from the study reported the same feelings in her reflection. The observers noted she was disengaged and tried to avoid doing anything during the immersion study (Settlage et al., 2014). This particular participant reported always liking her science

courses and always did well in science (Settlage, et al, 2014). Being completely cut off from her language caused her to disengage and not try.

These finding can parallel what many non-native English speakers feel when they first attend school in the United States. Many students are put at a disadvantage when they do not know the language of instruction. Students may disengage and suffer academically. These are the dangers of subtractive immersion (Hakuta & Gould, 1987). Partial one-way immersion and dual language immersion are better alternatives. Students are allowed to speak their native language some and can receive some instructions in their native language (Hakuta & Gould, 1987).

Second Language Immersion

Language immersion schools have been growing across the U.S. since the 70s. In 1971, there were three language immersion schools in the U.S. In 2011, there were 448. There are 337 elementary schools, 128 middle schools, and 41 high schools that are immersion schools, as of 2011. For schools that were K-8 or K-12, the number is represented in each school, hence the discrepancy in the numbers (The Center for Applied Linguistics, 2011). These schools will be pulling students from their zoned schools. It is important that public schools have good second language instruction to keep their students and to give their students the benefits previously mentioned.

Krashen (1985) wrote of the different types of immersion programs. There are early total immersion programs in which students in early grades (kindergarten to first or second grade) are taught totally in the target language. After those first grades, more subjects are taught in the native language (Krashen, 1985). Partial immersion programs are programs where some subjects are taught in the students' native language and other subjects are taught in the target language (Krashen, 1985). Finally, there are late immersion programs, where students enter the program

around seventh grade (Krashen, 1985). Immersion programs offer instruction of the language and also the opportunity to gain automatic understanding and speaking skills. These two aspects of language learning were previously detailed.

Krashen (1985) also wrote of three findings that have come from the research of immersion programs:

1. Immersion students do as well in English language skills as students educated entirely in English.
2. Immersion students do as well in subject matter as students educated entirely in English.
3. Immersion students acquire a great deal of the second language (p. 58).

The first finding is important, as it shows that being in an immersion program does not hinder a student's English education.

Krashen (1985) credited the success of language immersion to the use of comprehensible input, second language instruction that is slightly above the student's ability level. Krashen (1985) gave a couple of examples of using comprehensible input in the classroom. The teacher may give commands in the target language while acting out said commands (turning on the light, opening a book, etc.). Krashen argued that memorizing vocabulary and grammar rules are not helpful to a language learner. The best way to learn a new language is through comprehensible input (Krashen, 1985, p. 59).

Krashen's theories fall into the cognitive school of linguistic psychology (Brown, 1994.) This school of linguistic psychology is characterized by analysis and insight, acquisition, the process, and states of consciousness (Brown, 1994, p. 12). The term acquisition is important because it implies that a second language is not merely learned, but acquired (Krashen, 1985).

This adds to the belief that memorization of vocabulary and grammar rules are not the best method of learning, or acquiring, a second language.

Contrasting with the cognitive school of linguistic psychology is the behavioristic school of linguistic psychology (Brown, 1994). This can be considered the anti-Krashen view of language learning. Characteristics of the behavioral approach are repetition and reinforcement, conditioning, stimulus response, and performance (Brown, 1994). The assessment of language learning in this approach is based on public performance, what is seen (Brown, 1994). This means that it would be hard to truly know what the student understood and knew in the language. According to Brown, “The unreliability of observation of states of consciousness, thinking, concept formation, or the acquisition of knowledge made such topics impossible to examine in a behavioristic framework” (p. 10). The behavioristic approach deals with the *what* can be produced (or understood) linguistically while the cognitive approach deals with the *why* something has been produced (or understood) linguistically (Brown, 1994).

Immersion Programs

Often times, the implementation of second language curriculum and instruction is left up to the instructors. This can be a difficult task. Dominguez, Tucker, and Donato (2005) studied a group of teachers that were implementing a Spanish program in an elementary school. The teachers were discouraged because the previous school year did not yield the gains that they had hoped. They decided to implement a new program, Presentation, Attention, Co-Construction, and Extension (PACE).

The PACE program proved successful for them. They reported they were successful because they had support from the superintendent and administration, giving them a sense of empowerment. Also, the teachers were supportive of one another and worked as a team to

develop plans and share ideas. These are aspects to take into account when a school or district wants to implement a second language program.

Another immersion program is short-term foreign language immersion. Savage and Hughes (2014) studied one of these programs implemented by the United States Air Force to help their airmen learn Chinese. Language classes at the university level offer about 30-40 hours each semester of foreign language contact, while the U.S. Air Force Academy's program offered 80 hours over a four-week period and 120 hours for the six-week program (Savage & Hughes, 2014). The students were given pretests and posttests in reading comprehension and listening comprehension. The outcomes showed that the students in the programs scored significantly higher on their pretests when compared with their posttests at the end of the program (Savage & Hughes, 2014).

What is noteworthy is how the students talked about their experiences and learning of the language. One student is quoted as saying, "My spoken fluency has improved immensely, and I believe I could completely get by alone in China, if I had to" (Hughes & Savage, 2014). Another student said, "My listening skills dramatically increased by constantly and actively listening to native speakers" (Hughes & Savage, 2014, p. 112). Hughes and Savage (2014) are quick to point out that students used the term "actively listening," saying that it "... substantially contributed to student language learning" (p. 112). The students learned that listening does not always come natural. In language learning, trying to listen is a much needed skill. Immersion programs give students that skill by repetition of language. According to Hughes and Savage (2014), "By taking advantages of the opportunity to be surrounded by native speakers and immersed in the language, students were able to hear common words and phrases repeatedly, and this repetition was reported to assist in rapid language acquisition" (p. 112).

Teachers' Self Perceptions in Immersion

In a study (Dominguez, Tucker, & Donato, 2005) detailing the implementation of a Spanish language program in elementary school, teachers reported that they felt they were stakeholders in the program, that they felt a sense of empowerment in the program, that they were supported, and that they had positive concerns for the future. It should be noted that the program in this study differs in that it is not an immersion program. This was a foreign language program in elementary school (FLES), where elementary students received foreign language instruction (Spanish in this case) only a fraction of the day. Students are not instructed solely in the target language but mostly in their native language with some instruction or cues in the target language (Dominguez et al., 2005).

The teachers charged with the implementation of the FLES program had mostly positive reports in the study. The first thing they mentioned was that they felt as if they were stakeholders in the FLES program. The superintendent of the district in the study wanted an FLES program, and he let the teachers in the program have input on how it should be implemented (Dominguez, et al., 2005).

The FLES teachers also reported that they had a feeling of empowerment (Dominguez et al., 2005). They were trusted with a measure of authority in the implementation of the program. They were supported by their district and their administration (Dominguez et al., 2005). The dual language immersion teachers, however, would find themselves in disagreement with their peers in the PLC (Chesnut, 2015). They did not seem to feel the same sense of support that the FLES teachers had.

Again, it should be noted that the two programs that have been discussed are different. The FLES program was in the first stages of implementation. The teachers were able to help set

it up and had a positive outlook on their future (Dominguez et al., 2005). The dual language immersion teachers taught students some of their subjects in the students' native language, Spanish. The FLES teachers, while feeling as stakeholders in their program, did not have the weight of a high-stakes test looming over them. The dual language immersion teachers were tasked with preparing their students for a high-stakes test that was in language other than their native language (Chesnut, 2015). The dual language immersion teachers did report ownership in what they did as immersion teachers. They felt unique in their job and valued what they did (Chesnut, 2015). Teachers from both programs had that in common.

Floyd (2011) studied two foreign language immersion schools in Oklahoma. The participants of the study were 16 foreign language immersion teachers. The teachers in Floyd's (2011) reported that the effectiveness of the foreign language immersion model revolved around four main themes: 1. Strong parental support; 2. Intrinsic student motivation; 3. Support from the school district; and 4. Teachers' ability to incorporate state and federal standards.

The teachers in Floyd's (2011) study also reported the challenges that they face as foreign language immersion instructors. Again, the teachers mentioned the state and federal standards were a challenge. End of the year standardized tests were given in English, and immersion schools focused much of their instruction in the target language. Foreign language immersion teachers had to be creative to develop curriculum in the target language while focusing on state and federal benchmarks (Floyd, 2011).

While Floyd (2011) reported that strong parental involvement is imperative for a successful immersion program, the teachers from the study added that it is difficult for parents to help their children. Parents would only know English, so it was difficult for them to help their children with homework that was in the target language (Floyd, 2011). The teachers in the study

had to be creative developing material in two languages. They wanted the parents to be involved with their children's education. They also want the students to have the best foreign language instruction possible (Floyd, 2011).

In a study of teachers' perceptions of themselves in the setting of a dual language immersion program, Chesnut (2015) found that the teachers thought of themselves as unique but sometimes lost when it came to decision making and curriculum creation. The teachers in this study had some similar and some contradictory feelings as the teachers in Dominguez et al.'s study. Chesnut (2015) discovered three main themes in the language immersion teachers' perceptions of themselves and their work as immersion language teachers: (1) Dual immersion teachers are subordinates rather than managers of their own work; (2) Dual immersion teachers are unique (and often misunderstood); and (3) PLC work conflicts with dual immersion teachers' beliefs/identities (p. 346).

Dual language immersion schools differ from partial one-way immersion schools in that they are teaching students whose first language is different from the main language of the community in which they live (Chesnut, 2015). An example would be students whose first language is Spanish going to school in the United States where English is the main language. These students would be taking classes in English and in Spanish. That is what makes it dual language immersion. An example of partial one-way immersion would be native English speaking students in the United States taking classes in taught in Spanish (Directory of Foreign Language Programs in U.S. Schools, 2011).

The dual language immersion teachers in Chesnut's (2015) study taught Spanish-speaking students in Spanish. They also took classes in English, but other teachers taught those classes. The teachers in the study loved their work, and they felt unique in that they gained

insightful experiences teaching in Spanish to native Spanish-speaking students (Chesnut, 2015, p. 348). The subjects intimated that a world view was gained not previously had when teaching partial one-way immersion (Chestnut, 2015).

The problems the teachers in Chesnut's (2015) study faced, however, came about in conflict with their professional learning community (PLC) and the district's curriculum. As part of a PLC, the teachers would identify students that needed enrichment or remediation. Whenever native Spanish-speaking students' names would arise, the dual language immersion teachers would want to give lessons in Spanish. They were urged, however, to do it in English. The argument from the PLC was that since the high-stakes tests were in English, instruction should have been done in English as well (Chesnut, 2015). The teachers felt they could best help their students using Spanish instruction, putting them at odds with their PLC.

The district from Chesnut's (2015) study wanted all units taught at the same time the same way. The dual language immersion teachers felt that they could not do that as well in Spanish. The immersion teachers also discussed a professional development that they attended. They were given ideas and strategies for dual language immersion curriculum building. The teachers could not implement much the instructor taught them due to the district mandated curriculum. They also felt that they would receive lower evaluation scores if they used the strategies given to them instead of adhering to the curriculum (Chesnut, 2015, p. 328).

All three of these themes can be attributed to the teachers' lack of ability to create their own curriculum as they saw it should have been. They were often told to teach in English when they knew their students would learn better with instruction in Spanish. Their end of the year standardized tests were going to be in English, so any remediation or enrichment needed to be conducted in English according to decision makers in their school (Chestnut, 2015).

Detwiler (2016) studied four aspects of foreign language immersion. One of the aspects he examined was teacher perceptions of foreign language immersion as it relates to student achievement. Detwiler interviewed a focus group of eight foreign language immersion teachers. All interviewees taught fourth grade at one of three foreign language immersion schools in an urban school district. Detwiler identified three themes that emerged from the focus group: Teacher turnover/staffing, professional development, and Student assessments (2016).

The focus group shared with Detwiler (2016) that their schools recruit teachers from foreign countries where the languages are native. The problem for them is that their work visas were good for three years. The focus group shared that once the teachers from foreign countries would begin to become effective immersion teachers they would have to return to their home countries. This led to a high rate of turnover and burdened the immersion programs (Detwiler, 2016).

The focus group from Detwiler's (2016) also reported that professional development was an important aspect of foreign language immersion. They talked about how they receive quality professional development that helps their teaching. Some teachers in the focus group said that they wish some of the professional development could be delivered in the language of the immersion school. All the professional development they have received was done in English. It was difficult, they said, to have to convert the material from English to the foreign language of the school (Detwiler, 2016).

The third theme to emerge from Detwiler's (2016) focus group was centered on student assessments. The teachers reported that they must give assessments throughout the year to gauge student learning. Besides the end of the year reading assessment, the teachers designed their own assessments. Teachers in the study felt that there should be standardized assessments throughout

the year for the immersion programs. This would be so the teachers would know they were uniform in their planning with the other immersion schools (Detwiler, 2016).

Teachers' Self Perceptions in Education

Teachers' perceptions of themselves, be it in foreign language immersion or traditional education, is important. The manner in which teachers' view themselves can have an impact on their teaching and on student learning (Buchanan, Lang, & Morin, 2013). According to research (Fuller, 1969; Katz, 1972), there are phases that new teachers progress through in their first few years.

Katz's (1972) four stages of teacher development are: 1. survival, 2. consolidation, 3. renewal, and 4. maturity. Katz (1972) wrote that teachers go through these stages over the course of five years. The survival stage happens in the teacher's first year. The teacher is preoccupied with struggling through the day and the thought of making it through the week, month, or year (Katz, 1972). In Katz's (1972) next stage, consolidation, teachers begin to focus on specific problems, but still are unable to gain a macro view of teaching. Renewal, Katz's (1972) third stage of teaching finds the teacher growing weary of the profession. The cycle of school years is tiring on the teacher (Katz, 1972). In the final stage, maturity, teachers have gained insight and perspective of the profession and have accepted themselves as teachers (Katz, 1972).

Each one of these stages come with their own training needs. The teachers in Detwiler's (2016) study only had work visas that lasted three years. According to Katz (1972), it is unlikely that these teachers ever reached the maturity stage of their teaching in an immersion school. In a study by Lowe (2012) on teacher self-perception, 42% of respondents to a survey felt satisfied with their work. Most of the satisfied teachers' surveys came from teachers with five or more years of teaching experience (Lowe, 2012). Most teachers are not comfortable with the

profession or do not believe in their efficacy until they have been teaching for four to five years (Katz, 1972; Lowe, 2012).

Studies on Immersion Programs and Their Effectiveness

Jones (2004) studied students in a Spanish Immersion Program and students attending a non-immersion program in the Alamo Heights Independent School District in San Antonio, Texas. He studied a total of 1000 students. The number of students in the Spanish immersion program was 168. Jones (2004) randomly selected 832 students that were not in the Spanish immersion program and received all their instruction in English. Jones took data from the Cognitive Abilities Test (CogAT), the Texas State Assessments-Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAKS), and the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) and compared the results between the two groups.

The CogAT test is designed to appraise students' cognitive development in verbal and quantitative areas (Jones, 2004). Jones found the students who were in the third grade for the 2001-2002 school year proved to have a higher cognitive verbal ability than the students not enrolled in the Spanish immersion program. He also found that third grade immersion students from the 2002-2003 school year showed higher cognitive verbal abilities than their non-immersion counterparts. Finally, Jones (2004) found that second grade immersion students from the 2002-2003 school year scored higher on the verbal area of the CogAT than second grade students from the traditional school. All differences in the CogAT scores were statistically significant (Jones, 2004).

On the quantitative section of the CogAT test, Jones (2004) found that the Spanish immersion students outperformed the non-immersion students in four out of six groups. Fifth grade Spanish immersion students in the 2002-2003 school year scored higher than the non-

immersion students. From the 2001-2002 year, third grade immersion students outperformed their non-immersion counterparts from the same grade level (Jones, 2004). The next two groups of immersion students that fared better on average on the CogAT quantitative test are from the 2002-2003 school years. Both second grade students and third grade students from the immersion program outperformed non-immersion students in the same grades (Jones, 2004). The results reported were found to be statistically significant.

Jones (2004) also compared Spanish immersion students' scores on the state of Texas standardized test with students from a non-immersion setting. Before 2003, the test was the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS). For 2003 and later, the Texas standardized test was Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS). The results examined by Jones (2004) were in the areas of reading and mathematics.

In the reading section of the TAAS for the 2000-2001 school year, third grade students from the Spanish immersion program had higher reading achievement than students not in the immersion program (Jones, 2004). The same immersion students once again outperformed the non-immersion students in reading on the TAAS the 2002-2003 school year as fifth graders. Jones (2004) found these results to be statistically significant.

For the mathematics section on the TAAS and the TAKS, Jones (2004) found two groups of Spanish immersion students that outperformed the non-immersion students to be statistically significant. The first group of immersion students that outperformed their non-immersion counterparts were third grade students in the 2000-2001 school year. The students from the Spanish immersion program had higher math achievement than the students that were not in the Spanish immersion program.

The second group of immersion students that performed better than non-immersion students on the mathematics sections of the TAKS or the TAAS were fourth grade students in the 2002-2003 school year. The students in the Spanish immersion program outperformed students not enrolled in the immersion program on the math section the TAKS.

The third test that Jones (2004) studied to compare the Spanish immersion students and the non-immersion students was the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS). Like the TAAS and the TAKS, the ITBS scores students in the areas of reading and mathematics. For the reading section, there were two groups of Spanish immersion students that the non-immersion students with statistical significance. For the mathematics section, there were two instances of Spanish immersion students scoring higher than the non-immersion students with statistical significance (Jones, 2004).

From the reading portion of the ITBS, third grade students from the Spanish immersion program scored higher than the students that were not in an immersion program. This was for the 2001-2002 school year (Jones, 2004). The following school year, 2002-2003, third grade students from the Spanish immersion program once again outperformed the students that were not in an immersion program (Jones, 2004).

From the mathematics section of the ITBS, Jones (2004) once again found two groups of immersion students that scored higher than the non-immersion students with statistical significance. Third grade Spanish immersion students from the 2000-2001 school year had higher achievement on the mathematics section of the ITBS than students that were not in the immersion program (Jones, 2004). For the second comparison, third grade Spanish immersion students had higher math scores than non-immersion students on the ITBS on the 2002-2003 school year (Jones, 2004).

Violette (2013) also researched end of year standardized test scores of foreign language immersion students and compared them with that of non-immersion students. The population of Violette's studied involved over 5,100 third-grade students in two school districts in North Carolina. The two districts both offered foreign language immersion elementary programs and traditional elementary programs. Violette (2013) compared the students' test scores on the standardized North Carolina end of grade exam in reading and math for the 2011-2012 school year.

When employing a chi square analysis, Violette (2013) found that the foreign language immersion students scored higher on the math and reading sections of the standardized North Carolina end of year test. Violette (2013) found these results to be statistically significant.

Violette (2013) then used the same data in a *t*-test. The average score on the reading section of the end of grade test for the immersion students was 342.6. The non-immersion students' average score was 341.1. While the immersion students had a higher average on the reading section of the test, the results were not statistically significant (Violette, 2013).

Violette (2013) found similar results using the *t*-test to examine the students' average scores on the math section of the end of grade test. The foreign language immersion students averaged a score of 346.4. The non-immersion students averaged a score of 345.2. Again, there was a higher average for the immersion students, but the results were not statistically significant (Violette, 2013).

Detwiler (2016) studied three magnet schools that offered language immersion programs from kindergarten through eighth grade. Different languages were offered in in different immersion programs. The immersion programs wither followed the 90/10 model or the 50/50 model. Detwiler (2016) examined end of the year test scores in reading for fourth grade students

in the immersion programs and for fourth grade students throughout the rest of the school district.

Using the end of the year test scores in reading from the 2014-2015 school year for fourth grade students in the district studied, Detwiler (2016) determined that students enrolled in an immersion program outperformed the average of fourth grade students in the district. The language immersion students in Detwiler's study averaged a score of 446.39 on the reading portion of the test. Fourth grade students enrolled in traditional schools in the district averaged a score of 435.60. All fourth-grade students in the district, immersion and traditional, took the same end of the year reading test (Detwiler, 2016).

Detwiler (2016) then examined if there was a difference in academic achievement between students enrolled in a Spanish immersion program and students in other immersion programs. Other than Spanish, the district that Detwiler studied offered immersion programs in French, German, and Mandarin. While Detwiler (2016) did not find a statistical difference in the scores of the students from different immersion programs, students in the French, German, and Mandarin programs were outperforming the students in the Spanish program. Detwiler's study was again based on the reading section of the standardized end of the year test that all fourth-grade students in the district take. This test was from the 2014-2015 school year. The average reading score for students in the French, German, and Mandarin immersion programs was 447.71. The average reading score for students in the Spanish immersion program was 445 (Detwiler, 2016).

Detwiler (2016) also examined the differences in performance among English language learning students (ELL) and students whose native language was English. ELL students are students whose first language is not English and are still learning English. Only students in the

immersion programs were examined in this study. In this area, Detwiler (2016) found that native English speaking students outperformed ELL students. There was a statistical difference in the scores. ELL students averaged a score of 444.59 on the end of the year reading test for the 2014-2015 school year. Native English speaking students averaged a score of 450.65 on the same test. Detwiler (2016) noted that the end of the year reading test is in English and that ELL students were still learning English skills in reading, writing, listening, and speaking.

Chapter 3

Research Methodology

This was a qualitative research case study. This study was applied for and approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Carson-Newman University. A foreign language partial immersion elementary school was examined. There were three areas studied. Teachers at an immersion school were interviewed. Their perspectives of their school and their views on language immersion were analyzed. A walkthrough of the school was conducted by the researcher. This was to offer an impression of the school and the environment. The third aspect was the published end of year test scores of the school in reading and math. These scores were compared to the state average in which the school resides. These methods helped the researcher understand how the faculty of the school views themselves and their school and what makes this language immersion school unique and successful.

Qualitative Research

Determining what makes language immersion schools unique and either successful or unsuccessful in the eyes of the faculty of the school is the focus of inquiry of the research. To do this, a qualitative approach to the research was undertaken. Qualitative research aims to interpret a situation and understand it (Ary, Jacobs, Sorensen, and Walker, 2014, p. 451). To understand why the faculty of the language immersion school feels the way they do about language immersion will reveal much about the school itself. Qualitative research will help uncover themes and patterns to language immersion study.

According to Ary et al (2014), qualitative research "...can produce vivid, richly detailed accounts of human experience" (p. 476). Accounts from this language immersion school will help those interested understand the mechanics of language immersion and why it is or is not

important for children to have this opportunity. Qualitative research is different from quantitative in that it seeks to investigate why an entity works the way it does. Quantitative research, on the other hand, takes a step back and investigates numbers and data and must be testable and confirmable (Ary et al, 2014). With quantitative research, theories beget questions, questions beget number study, and number study begets proof or lack thereof. Qualitative research details an occurrence and seeks to understand why.

There are many tools in the qualitative researcher's tool belt. Observation is important to qualitative research. While observation in qualitative research may be time consuming, it is important because it can give the researcher a "complete description of behavior in a specific setting" (Ary et al, 2014, p. 459). It is important that the researcher know his or her role in the observation. The researcher may participate in the setting as a nonparticipant (Ary et al, 2014). Those being observed may be aware that they are being observed or they may have no idea about it. It is important for the researcher to know what type of observation will work best for the research.

Interviews are useful in qualitative research. Like observation, interviews can also be time consuming. However, according to Turner (2010), "Interviews provide in-depth information pertaining to participants' experiences and viewpoints of a particular topic" (p. 754). Participants in a study have the opportunity to convey their opinions and feelings on topic being researched. This gives the researcher an insight not gained in quantitative study.

There are several approaches to the interview in qualitative research. Interviews can be structured where certain questions are asked of all those being interviewed. They can also be unstructured where the interview more resembles a conversation. There are also varying degrees

of semi-structured interviews. Here, the interviewer knows what he or she would like to discuss, but also has the freedom to vary the questions as he or she sees fit (Ary et al, 2014, p. 466).

Analyzing documents and artifacts can net the researcher understanding of the topic being studied (Ary, et al, 2014, p. 471). According to Ary et al (2014), “The term documents refers to a wide range of written, physical, and visual materials, including what other authors may term artifacts” (p. 471). Documents can be helpful because they can add a level of understanding to the research that may not be gained from interviews and observations. Documents also are not subjective like interviews and observations can be (Ary et al, 2014).

Case Studies

The research conducted took the form of a case study. According to Ary et al. (2014), “... a case study focuses on a single unit to produce an in-depth description that is rich and holistic” (p. 485). A case study was best suited for this research because it offered a detailed examination of the foreign language immersion school. The school as a whole was the “unit” (Ary, et al., 2014). The school was unique in that it dedicated a certain amount of time to instruction in a foreign language. The uniqueness of the unit makes a “bounded system” (Ary, et al., 2014).

Ary et al., (2014) detailed three different types of case studies: the intrinsic case study, the instrumental case study, and the multiple (or collective) case study. The intrinsic case study involves a single unit because it is unique in some way (Ary et al., 2014). An instrumental case study examines a unit that can help the researcher understand a more complex issue (Ary et al., 2014). The multiple case study examines several units to help the researcher understand a phenomenon (Ary et al., 2014). The uniqueness of the foreign language immersion school made this case study intrinsic.

Research Approach

The study was comprised of three data sources. The primary source of the information came from interviews with the faculty of the school. A walkthrough of the school was done by the researcher. Published state testing scores in the areas of reading and math were reviewed and compared with the state average. Triangulation of data provided the researcher insight into language immersion schools and what makes them unique.

Interviews

There were a total of eight interviews. Interviewees were chosen using stratified purposive sampling. Stratified purposive sampling was used to insure that certain subgroups are represented (Ary et al, 2014). Since the testing data that was reviewed comes from reading and math, reading and math teachers were preferred for the interviews. Two random math teachers were chosen, as well as two random reading teachers. Two more teachers were chosen randomly. The final two interviews came from administrators and/or guidance counselors, which took some of the randomness out since there are not many administrators in this particular elementary school.

The interviews fell on the spectrum between semi-structured interviews and structured interviews. Each interviewee was asked the same ten open-ended questions. There was room for certain follow-up questions or clarifying questions. This is to ensure “optimal responses from participants” (Turner, 2010, p. 758). The interviews were recorded and later transcribed. Each interview was reviewed in depth in the coding process.

Observation

A walkthrough of the school was conducted for an observation. The researcher took the observer as participant role. This means that participants knew that they were being observed.

The researcher may talk to or interact with the participants but does not become directly involved with the participants (Ary et al, 2014, p. 461). This type of observation lets the researcher find more of an impression of the atmosphere of the school.

In the walkthrough, the researcher visited classes taught in the native language (L1) and classes taught in the target language (L2). Field notes were used during the walkthrough. According to Ary et al (2014), “Notes may supplement information from other sources, including documents and interviews” (p. 463). The field notes contained descriptive and reflective aspects. Descriptive notes indicate the setting of the study, while reflective notes indicate the feelings or perceptions of the researcher (Ary et al, 2014).

Documents: Test Score Data

According to Ary et al (2014), there are four types of documents: public records, personal documents, physical documents, and researcher-generated documents (p. 472). Test score data for schools in the state are published online and easily accessible to the public. Thus, they are public records. Because of Common Core and the focus on literacy and math skills (www.corestandards.org/standards-in-your-state/), reading and math scores from the state’s standardized test were accessed. These scores were not dissected and compared with other scores from the same district due to differences in demographics. However, the possible benefits foreign language immersion may have on state standardized testing was investigated by comparing the state standardized testing scores of the foreign language immersion school with the state average of the scores.

Site Participants

The school that was studied is a foreign language partial immersion school in the southeastern United States. The grade levels are Kindergarten to 4th grade. The total enrollment

of the school is 427 students. The school is 86.5% Caucasian, 5.3% Hispanic/Latino, 5% African-American, and 3% Asian. Eleven percent of the population is on free or reduced lunch and 9.6% is special education.

While the school is located in an urban school district, the immersion school is not representative of the district. The school district is 42.92% African-American and 23.24% Hispanic or Latino. 16.03% of the district's students have limited English proficiency (LEP) and 11.90% receive special education services. The population of the school zone of the immersion school boasts some of the highest incomes in the state. Most of the other schools in the district comprised of populations from low socio-economic backgrounds.

Partial immersion programs are programs in which up to 50% of subjects are taught in the foreign language; some materials taught in the foreign language will be reinforced in English (Directory of Foreign Language Programs in U.S. Schools, 2011). At this particular school, math, science, and some social studies were taught in the target language (L2), according to their school profile. The stake holders also took pride in teaching cultural aspects from countries that speak the L2. In order for the school to remain anonymous, the school's profile and website were not cited.

Within the school that was studied, teachers were interviewed. Those teachers were chosen using stratified purposive sampling. Two randomly chosen math teachers were asked for an interview, as well as two random reading or English teachers. Two administrators were also interviewed. If the school does not have more than one administrator, then a guidance counselor, librarian, or school board representative may be interviewed. All participants remained anonymous throughout the study. In the reporting of findings, their names were changed to maintain their anonymity.

Data Collection

Data were collected from the interviews, the walkthrough, and from the published state testing scores. Interviews were recorded and transcribed. Field notes were taken during the walkthrough using both descriptive and reflective notes. The school's state testing data were retrieved from the school's website. If there are any newer data, the researcher requested it from the administrator. State testing data were also retrieved for the entire state. The state averages were compared with the immersion school's scores.

Analysis of Data

The interviews were recorded and transcribed. The researcher listened and read the interviews multiple times. The field notes were also reread several times. This helped the researcher become familiar with data retrieved from the interviews (Ary et al, 2014). Interjections and hesitations were also noted. This helped the researcher because small variances in speech can add meaning to the interview and what was said (Ary et al, 2014).

After the data became familiar, it was organized by interviewee and by question. Once organized, the data was coded. According to Ary et al (2014), "This is the core of qualitative analysis and includes the identification of categories and themes and their refinement" (p. 515). Finding themes that emerge from the data is the essence of coding (Ary, et al, 2014). The researcher initially began to place that data from the interviews and observation into categories. Once categories are made and the data has been sorted, themes began to emerge (Ary et al, 2014).

After the establishment of categories and themes, the data were summarized and then interpreted. Meaning was extracted from the data and a picture began to develop to see "what is important, why it is important, and what can be learned from it" (Ary, et al, 2014, p. 522). With

this meaning, a story of the school began to develop. Interpretation began at this point. The interpretation gave meaning to the story and helped bring about explanations of what that data that was gleaned in the research (Ary et al, 2014).

Ethical Considerations

In this instance of educational qualitative research, the researcher came into contact with the students and faculty of the school being studied. Being inside the school and talking with faculty and maybe students gave insight to the school. It is important to be aware that something unethical may be witnessed. Anything witnessed that may be deemed to be detrimental to the children would have to be reported.

Maintaining anonymity can be difficult in qualitative research (Ary et al, 2014). The researcher learned the names of the participants of the study. It is important that the researcher did everything possible to keep names and identifying factors protected and unpublished. While taking notes, code names for the participants or number coding were used.

Summary

This research on a foreign language partial immersion elementary school took the form of basic qualitative research. Data came from three main sources: observation, interviews, and published data. A walkthrough of the school was conducted and field notes were taken. Descriptive data were noted, which would be the setting of the school and what can be seen or heard. Reflective data were also taken into account, which described the feeling or aura of the school as felt by the observer. Interviews were conducted with teachers and administrators. The interviews took a semi-structured approach so that interviewees were able to properly convey their feelings and opinions of the school and of language immersion. The goal was to investigate why the teachers feel that language immersion is unique or helps students be more successful. It

was possible they might feel the opposite. Finally, publically available and published state testing data were examined and compared to the state averages for a glimpse of the relationship between language immersion and literacy and math scores.

Chapter 4

Presentation of Findings

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to determine what makes foreign language immersion elementary schools unique as evidenced by the staff of the immersion school studied.

Walkthroughs and observations of the classes of the school were conducted. Interviews with staff members were also conducted. Publicly published academic data for the school were explored and compared with state averages.

Testing Data

This elementary immersion school can be considered successful academically when compared statewide. The school has recently been the recipient of nationally recognized award based on academic excellence. Banners depicting this accomplishment adorn walls on the outside and inside of the school. The school excels academically, and it is proud of the outcome of the hard work involved.

Testing data also supported the idea that this school is academically successful when compared with statewide averages on end of the year state tests. In the last three years that data were available, 50.8% of the students of in the state scored proficient or advanced in math in 2013, it was 51.3% in 2014, and rose to 55.6% in 2015. On the reading and language arts portion of the state standardized tests 50.4% of students in the state scored proficient or advanced in 2013. For 2014 statewide, 49.5% of students scored proficient or advanced. In 2015 48.4% of the students in the state scored proficient or advanced in reading and language arts. The data for the state scores are represented Table 1.

Table 1

Statewide Data on Percentage of Students Scoring Proficient or Advanced in Mathematics and Reading/Language Arts for the Years 2013-2015

Year	Percent of Students Scoring Proficient or Advanced in Math	Percent of Students Scoring Proficient or Advanced in Reading/Language Arts
2015	55.6	48.4
2014	51.3	49.5
2013	50.8	50.4

Those same years on the same test, students at the immersion school tested well in math and reading and language arts. In 2013, 88.5% of the students scored proficient or advanced in math. The next year saw a rise to 89.4% scoring proficient or advanced. Then in 2015, 90.2% of the students scored proficient or advanced in math. The immersion school numbers for the test scores in reading and language arts also compare better with statewide scores. In 2013, 91% of the students were proficient or advanced. In 2014, the number was 85.8%. In 2015, 86.3 of the students were considered proficient or advanced in reading and language arts. The data for the immersion school are in Table 2.

Table 2

Spanish Language Immersion School Data on Percentage of Students Scoring Proficient or Advanced in Mathematics and Reading/Language Arts for the Years 2013-2015

Year	Percent of Students Scoring Proficient or Advanced in Math	Percent of Students Scoring Proficient or Advanced in Reading/Language Arts
2015	90.2	86.3
2014	89.4	85.8
2013	88.5	91

Emerging Themes

In conducting the study of the immersion school, four main themes began to emerge that contribute to the uniqueness of the school:

1. The school places an emphasis on the exposure of different cultures within and outside of the United States.
2. Parent involvement is a factor in the school's success.
3. Strong professional development and the attendance at foreign language immersion conferences were cited as being another factor to the success of the school.
4. A strong bilingual teaching staff is important to the success of an immersion school.

Exposure to culture. One of the first things that is noticed in this foreign language immersion school is the dedication to cultures that are different from mainstream culture in the United States. One hallway has a tiled mosaic that is nearly from floor to ceiling. It is an inspired art style that honors the school and celebrates diversity and learning. A visit to the school's home page on its website shows students and teachers standing in front of a mural, a style of art that is

popular in some Hispanic countries. Every wall in every classroom is covered in artwork and materials. Some of them are in English, some in the target language, and of course, student work is displayed.

Faculty members were quick to point out the exposure to different cultures that students experience in the immersion school and the uniqueness of it:

- Faculty member number 1 stated: *And then I just think the cultural implications of it are huge, too. They're being exposed to the fact that English isn't the only language and the fact that there are people in this world and I think it's a great thing.*
- Faculty member number four spoke of the students: *There is potential for better understanding that their culture isn't the only one, and that there is ...a strong emphasis on Hispanic culture.*
- Faculty member number five commented that there is a: *... focus on culture of Spanish speaking countries, and that there is an ... appreciation of other cultures in the school.*
- Faculty member number 3 felt that more diversity would be a factor that could make an immersion school more effective.
- Faculty member number 6 stated: *I just think being exposed to the different language just gives them a more global perspective.* Number 6 also added that foreign language immersion: *... helps promote creativity and I think more global awareness, and, you know, helping prepare them for the global world and society that we live in.*

Parent involvement. This immersion school enjoys strong parent involvement. Walking through the halls on a regular school day, it is common to run into parents helping the classrooms. They may be bringing in snacks or supplies. Parents are often in the school to help the teachers set up activities or projects.

Parent involvement at this school was often mentioned by the faculty members as being a factor in the school's academic success. Only one school was studied, so it cannot be determined that this factor is unique to all foreign language immersion schools. Children from anywhere in the school's district can register to attend the school. Enrollment at the school fills up every year. This is a school that parents want their children to attend.

Faculty members reported about parent involvement at the immersion school.

- Faculty member number 6 spoke extensively on the involvement and impact of the parents of the students at the immersion school: *We have a very well educated family base with lots and lots of helicopter parents, lots and lots of volunteers. We have a very involved PTO (parent teacher organization), the [immersion school] PTO raises close to, if not over \$100,000 for the school a year. [...] the PTO helps pay for tutors. [...] I believe it's the biggest factor that I have seen in my experience after working in the inner city outside of [another large city in the Southeast] is the parent participation and involvement and just even the appreciation of education and valuing that. Those core values are what truly impacts doing well or not in school in general and also that would include an immersion setting. I believe anyone when they're determined and appreciate and value education, anyone can do well and thrive, if not excel in an immersion setting.*
- Faculty member number 2 added that at the school: *Parents expect excellent teaching and children expect to learn.*

Foreign language immersion is unique to this district. This school is the only immersion school in the district. Since it is such a different approach, it is helpful for parents to be supportive of the program. Teachers felt that for a foreign language immersion program to succeed, the parents of the students must be supportive:

- Faculty member number 7 stated: *Parents must value the importance of pushing students to grow their foreign language skills.*
- Faculty member number 4 echoed this sentiment: *Parent involvement and commitment to the program and helping their students is crucial.* This faculty member added: *... make sure the parents are aware of the benefits and challenges.*
- Faculty member number 2 said: *Parents must be invested in the program in order for their children to do well here.* Number 2 also stated: *The parents would have to be invested in the program or it wouldn't work.*
- Faculty member number 1 added: *I think having parents that understand the program is really, really important. We have done in the past Parent Night explaining what immersion is, how to help your kids with something. We get that a lot. Our parents are concerned with 'how do we help them with homework' and 'how do we help them prepare for tests if we don't speak the language.' Getting parents on board and explaining to them how it works is really crucial.*

Professional development and immersion conferences. Since the foreign language immersion school studied is the only one in the district, there are not any peers nearby with which to develop curricula or model itself. Several of the faculty members mentioned going to conferences such as the Center for Advanced Research on Language Acquisition (CARLA) holds. Teachers and administrators discussed attending conferences with CARLA and how it has

helped them to create curriculum and develop best practices for foreign language immersion. Strong professional development opportunities were also mentioned by faculty members.

In order for foreign language immersion to be successful, the faculty members at this school shared the following.

- Faculty member number 2 stated: *Go to language immersion conferences to see what is being done well.*
- Faculty member number 5 shared that it is important to: *Provide quality professional development* as one of the things to be implemented first in an immersion program.
- Faculty member number 6 added: *We just started from the ground up. We got some initial training from teachers in Arlington, Virginia, from an immersion program there that had been in existence for over 25 years. And we built our program and it evolved over the 13 years that we've been opened.*
- Faculty member number 1 cites that research which was shared at the conference provides an argument for why foreign language immersion should be implanted more in the United States: *Everything I've learned leads me to believe that it definitely should [be implemented more]. Most of the training that I've had – I've been to several different conferences, I presented at a couple of them too. Most of the keynotes speak to the research of immersion. It really seems to function well in some of these low-income districts like [school's district].*
- Faculty member number 6 also added: *... and also a lot of teacher training here at [immersion school studied], trying to bring in a lot of speakers from conferences and just different ways to build the program.*

Strong bilingual teaching staff. Being a foreign language immersion school, the teachers teach half the day in English and half the day in Spanish. Their speaking and knowledge of both languages must be fluent and strong in both languages. Bilingualism is not common in teachers in the United States. Many schools across the U.S. struggle to find bilingual teachers (Camera, 2015). The faculty at the school studied were proud of their abilities. They also feel that the strength of the teaching staff is a factor in their success. However, some did note that keeping highly qualified staff can be difficult. The following statements were in response to the question, “If you were building a foreign language immersion program, what are some things you would implement first?” How the faculty members felt regarding this follows.

- Faculty member number 5 said: *Hire excellent teachers.*
- Faculty member number 2 added: *Hire the right staff and principal.*
- Faculty member number 7 replied: *Staffing an immersion school is a challenge. I would try to identify staff proficiency in the target language, then create realistic norm for target language instruction that fit the skills of the staff.*
- Faculty member number 3 said that: *Finding fluent educators would be a priority.*
- Faculty member number 1 stated: *And then you obviously need primarily native speakers. That’s pretty much every school I’ve visited. They’ve had almost all native speakers. At our school we have quite a few that aren’t, that the Spanish level isn’t proficient enough to carry an immersion program. [...] The schools I’ve been to say, ‘We hire native speakers or people with near native like fluency,’ which is definitely what we’ve done here. But I think that starting a new school, native speakers offer cultural elements that people like me just can’t.*

- Faculty member number 6 also had much to say: *Before anything, you have to find the qualified, educated, bilingual people. [...] That was always the most challenging thing was finding quality dedicated people who are truly bilingual. [...] I think that's the most crucial thing is finding quality people and holding on to them.*

During a walkthrough of the school and observing the classrooms, it was obvious that the teaching staff at the school were bilingual. Lessons were being taught in Spanish completely. In the higher grades, specific science academic language was used in Spanish. Specific scientific vocabulary is not common, but specialized. In the lower grades, teachers lead songs in Spanish and teach more basic vocabulary such as the days of the week and numbers. While days of the week and numbers may not be more a more specialized vocabulary, it was evident that the teachers were fluent in Spanish and could teach and converse in the target language.

Faculty members commented on the skills of the teachers:

- Faculty member number 1 stated: *I feel like because we teach in a different language, we have to use a lot of different strategies to convey, the material and I always tell people that the way you teach an immersion is best practice anyway because you're using a bunch of visuals and you're acting things out.*
- Faculty member number 6 commented that: *The turnover is really high because, in a sense, you're getting the work of two teachers. You're getting English and Spanish.*

Other Potential Emerging Themes

There were two other themes that began to emerge, although the majority of the faculty members involved in the study did not mention them, or they were divided in their opinions. The idea that foreign language immersion could have a positive impact on students from low socio-

economic backgrounds was explored. Students' love for reading was witnessed at the school and faculty members were asked about a link between foreign language immersion and literacy scores on the standardized test that the students take at the end of the year.

Foreign language immersion and socio-economic background. One aspect of foreign language immersion explored in this study was that foreign language immersion would be beneficial to students coming from lower socio-economic backgrounds. The student population at the school studied has a low number of students on free or reduced price lunch. It is not representative of schools in the same district. One of the questions in the interview asked, "How do you feel foreign language immersion would impact students from lower socio-economic households?" The respondents reported that foreign language immersion would have a positive impact on students from low socio-economic backgrounds.

- Faculty member number 7 stated: *It would greatly impact them. [...] Foreign language immersion challenges all students and gives all students extra skills. More language is a good thing.*
- Faculty member number 4 simply stated: *I think any student would benefit from an immersion school, regardless of socio-economic background.*
- Faculty member number 2 was less optimistic, replying: *Might be helpful.*
- Faculty member number 6 felt that an immersion program could be beneficial, but the supports from outside the class were more important. This respondent answered: *I believe anyone, when they're determined and appreciate and value education, anyone can do well and thrive, if not excel in an immersion setting.*"
- When asked more specifically how immersion would impact students that did not have support from home, faculty member number 6 then replied: *I think it will have a positive*

impact, and even when I was teaching [in another urban district], I did teach some Spanish. I wasn't required to, but I was allowed to in the setting. It was a very positive thing, but then again, when you don't have the value and parental support at home – it is all, it takes a village as they say. I find that that is the biggest difference that I have seen after working in an inner city and working in a school like this where you have so much involvement.

- Faculty member number 5 added: *It would be beneficial because of all the research proven benefits. Dual immersion would be particularly helpful to Spanish speaking students in our district so that their native language could be better used to support their English acquisition.*

The idea of dual language immersion came up with another interviewee. In a dual language immersion program, also called two-way immersion, half of the student population comes from a native language background (English in the case of the United States) and the other half comes from backgrounds where the target language is spoken at home (Center for Applied Linguistics, 2011). Another interviewee talked in depth on dual language immersion and how it could be beneficial in the district in which the foreign language immersion school resides. Faculty member number 1 stated:

It really seems to function well in some of these low-income districts like [immersion school's district]. And the ideal model is when you have two different populations. Like a Spanish speaking population and an English-speaking population. And then they're learning from each other. And that has proven to be really successful. [...] I think more than anything else, I love the idea that kids aren't just ELL (English language learners) that

we have so many of in [immersion school's district] aren't simply being assimilated and aren't losing their language but it becomes a tool, something valuable.

This interviewee also discussed this when asked what would be the first thing to implement if starting a foreign language immersion school. Faculty member number 1 said:

The schools that I visited even and read about that are truly intriguing to me are those true dual schools where you have two separate populations. So, I think that if anyone were to start, that would be the first thing to look at. How can we get 50% Spanish speakers and 50% English speakers, or whatever your target is? [...] I just think that that's a really interesting environment and I would really like to see, it could be so easily applicable to [immersion school's district] and I think that would be a really good place to start.

Reading. Another aspect of the school that was observed was the love of and encouragement for reading. During the walkthrough, most of the classrooms were visited. Every classroom that was visited had a section that was filled with books. In many of those classrooms, the book area of the room also hosted students reading on their own. Some classrooms had comfortable chairs, others had bean bags or blankets. Students were witnessed relaxing with a book. Depending on classroom policies, students are allowed to read if they are finished with their work or in their free time.

There is a big emphasis on scoring well in reading on the state standardized test at the end of the year. The reading and language arts portion of the test are only in English. Thus, reading and language arts are taught in English, and there is not much emphasis on reading in Spanish.

The classrooms are stocked with books in Spanish, however. The library also boasts a section dedicated to books in Spanish. The students seem to prefer the books in English when they read for pleasure. They are more comfortable with reading in English. It is how they are taught. According to their test scores, the students are academically successful in reading and language arts. Faculty members were split when asked if they thought foreign language immersion impacted students' literacy scores. The following are what teachers said regarding a link between foreign language immersion and literacy scores in English.

- Faculty member number 5 answered: *Yes, positively. Students better understand English by comparing and contrasting it with a second language.*
- Faculty member number 6 added: *Any literacy work is going to help the mother tongue (referring to English).*

The following teachers felt that foreign language immersion did not help the students' literacy scores. However, they did note that reading and writing are not taught in the second language at this school.

- Faculty member number 1 said: *Definitely not here. We don't do a lot of immersion in reading and writing because of the mandate from the district. [...] Our kids perform very high so it's not an issue for us.*
- Faculty member number 3 added: *No, reading and writing are reading and writing. Full immersion schools in other states have great success.*

Conclusion

This foreign language immersion school is academically successful as evidenced by the end of year the standardized test scores. Faculty members felt that a strong parent and community involvement were reasons behind the school's success. Students are exposed to

different cultures in addition to mainstream culture in the United States. Professional development and attendance at foreign language immersion conferences were cited as important characteristics of a successful foreign language immersion school, as was having a strong bilingual teaching staff.

Chapter 5

Implications and Recommendations

The purpose for this study was to determine the characteristics of a foreign language immersion elementary school. Foreign language immersion programs aim to expose children to a second language at a younger age. Many also have the goal to expose the children to different cultures other than the ones familiar to them.

In 2011, there were 337 foreign language immersion elementary schools in the United States (Center for Applied Linguistics). Last year, there were 129,189 public elementary schools (Department of Education, 2016). This means that less than a quarter of a percent of elementary schools offer second language immersion. For parents that want foreign language immersion for their children, there often is not an option for them.

Foreign language immersion schools are unique in that instruction is given in a second language. Students of foreign language immersion learn the same content as students in traditional public elementary schools. The difference is that the content is delivered in a language other than the student's native language. How much content is delivered in a second language depends on the type of immersion program that the school employs.

An elementary foreign language immersion school was examined for this study. The immersion program is partial immersion. This means that part of the day the students receive instruction in a foreign language. In this case, the language was Spanish, and the students received instruction in the subjects of science and math. These subjects were usually taught at the beginning of the day.

Students in lower grades were taught in Spanish too. They also learned songs and sang in Spanish. As the students were observed, it was noted that their comfort level with Spanish

seemed high, and there were many students that seemed confident answering questions in Spanish.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to identify characteristics of a foreign language immersion school. This was a case study of a Spanish language immersion school in an urban school district in the Southeastern United States. The school is a public elementary school. It encompasses pre-K through 4th grade. A case study was the best avenue for this research because it offered a detailed examination of the Spanish language immersion school. The focus of inquiry of this study was as follows: “As evidenced by interviews and observations, what are the characteristics of an elementary foreign language immersion school?”

Summary of Findings

The themes that emerged from this study characterize the foreign language immersion school studied as a place where there is a great emphasis on Hispanic cultures. Parents are involved at the school. The teaching staff of the school is knowledgeable and bilingual. The faculty members feel that professional development and attending foreign language immersion conferences are important for the success of a foreign language immersion program.

Exposure to culture. Faculty members interviewed discussed the importance of exposing the students to different cultures. This was one of the aspects that set the school apart from traditional public elementary schools. The school is a Spanish language immersion school. The cultures that the students are exposed to are cultures from the Spanish speaking world. The faculty members reported that teaching of culture gave the students a greater sense of the diversity that exists in the world.

The learning of different cultures is becoming more important with the advances in technology. People worldwide are now connected in ways that once seemed unfathomable. It is very beneficial to teach students about different cultures around the world and within their own communities. DeCapua and Wintergerst (2016) stated it best:

As we continue our journey through the 21st century, it is self-evident that contact among members of different cultures has increased significantly as a result of expansions in technology, and economic and political developments worldwide. With this increase in cross-cultural contact, there is a greater need to understand ourselves and others and how we are all shaped by our culture and language (p. iii).

Strong parent presence. Many of the faculty members that were interviewed indicated that many parents of students at the immersion school were involved in their children's education. The school has strong parent teacher organization (PTO) presence. When the researcher visited the school, parents were in the hallways helping different classrooms. While other parents may not have been directly involved in the school, most indicated an involvement with their children including helping with school work and understanding content. Parent involvement was suggested by many interviewees to be the reason behind the school's academic success.

Studies have shown that parent involvement in a child's education can be crucial to the child's academic success and social and emotional growth (Choi, Chang, Kim, & Reio, 2014). It can be assumed that the involvement of the parents at this school has impacted the academic success of the school. The types of parents that are involved in their children's education may also be seeking out this school since it offers Spanish immersion. The fact that this school is

sought out (enrollment for has already filled up for the 2017-2018 school year) shows that this is a place where parents want their children to be educated. Foreign language immersion is popular and attracts the parents that want that type of education for their children.

Choi et al (2014) also mentioned that parents' socio-economic status affects their involvement. Too often, students that come from low socio-economic backgrounds suffer from lack of involvement from parents. As mentioned previously, the school studied has one of the highest rates of families coming from high socio-economic households in the district. Location of the school is a factor in this. It is located in one of the more affluent areas of the city. It is easily accessible for students that live nearby. They can be transported by their parents or ride the bus. Students from other areas in the district do not have the option of riding the bus to school. Transportation becomes an issue that affects the population of the school.

Parent involvement and level of household socio-economic status are discussed because they are known to be factors in academic success (Kurtulmus, 2016; Choi et al, 2014). The students are successful because of these factors. The foreign language immersion gives them opportunities for creativity and language development.

Professional development and conferences. Faculty members reported that professional development helped lead the school to be successful. Many faculty members also talked about attending foreign language immersion conferences where they could learn about what are best practices for a foreign language immersion school. It was at conferences where the founders of the immersion program at the school learned how to best implement the immersion process. Faculty members that are committed to the success of foreign language immersion attend the conferences on a regular basis.

The theme of professional development has arisen in previous studies on foreign language immersion teaching. The teachers in Floyd's (2011) study reported that there was a lack of professional development opportunities specific to foreign language immersion and the target languages. The foreign language immersion teachers in Detwiler's (2016) study reported that they received quality professional development throughout the year. They did lament, however, that they would often have to translate their materials from English to the target language (Detwiler, 2016).

Strong, bilingual staff. Science and math are taught in Spanish at the immersion school studied. Every classroom teacher at the school must be bilingual. The faculty interviewed at the school felt it was important that the teachers be completely fluent in the target language. Some faculty members that were interviewed felt that there should be more native Spanish-speaking teachers at the school. Other immersion schools had been visited by some faculty members, and they found that most foreign language immersion schools try to employ native speakers of the target language or teachers that have native-like fluency in the language. This was listed as a challenge for the school in that it is difficult to find and retain teachers with this level of fluency in two languages.

This challenge is not unique to this one school. Historically, the United States has been short on bilingual teachers (Camera, 2015). A lack of effective, bilingual teachers harms the foreign language immersion model. Detwiler (2016) reported on this in his study. The teachers he interviewed described the difficulties their schools had in retaining bilingual teachers. The schools in Detwiler's (2016) study hired teachers from other countries and after three years, the teachers would have to return to their countries because their visas had expired. By the time a

teacher would become effective, it was time for that teacher to leave and new, unexperienced teachers would come in to replace them (Detwiler, 2016).

Rigor of the Study

The rigor of a qualitative study deals with the credibility and validity of the study. The results need to be truthful and dependable (Ary, et al, 2013). This study employed a triangulation of data. Testing data from the school and from the state in which the school resides was examined. Faculty members at the school were interviewed. A walkthrough observation of the school and classrooms was conducted.

The interview process was adapted during the study. Due to accessibility of the participants, six of the interviews were conducted online. The other interviews took place over the phone and were recorded, then transcribed. The transcriptions of the interviews were sent back to the interviewees so they could review them for accuracy and context. The interviewees did not have any conflicts with the transcriptions.

The students at the immersion school studied had high scores on the end of year standardized test. The purpose of the study, however, was not to investigate if foreign language immersion impacted end of the year test scores. The purpose of the study was to investigate the characteristics of a foreign language immersion school and examine what makes such a school unique.

The school was unique regarding its test scores. In the last three years that data was available, the Spanish immersion averaged 37.7% more students that scored proficient or advanced in the areas of mathematics and reading/language arts. There could be a few reasons for this. The school is in an affluent area of an urban district. The school is not representative of most the elementary schools in the district. There is strong parent involvement in the school.

Parents of students in the school are involved in their children's education. Another reason for this could be the Spanish language immersion. Sections in Chapter 2 discussed the cognitive benefits of second language learning and bilingualism. There were also studies (Detwiler, 2016; Violette, 2004) discussed in Chapter 2 that suggested that foreign language immersion and academic success correlated.

Similar themes emerged from previous studies that emerged in this study. The idea of professional development being important to the growth of foreign language immersion was discussed in Detwiler's (2016) and Floyd's (2011) study of foreign language immersion schools. Floyd (2011) mentioned strong parental support at the immersion schools in his study. Also, as in this study, the theme of a strong, bilingual teaching staff emerged as a unique characteristic of a foreign language immersion school (Detwiler, 2016; Floyd, 2011). These themes are commonalities among this study and the other studies mentioned.

Recommendations for the School District

This study intended to examine the uniqueness of foreign language immersion by visiting a Spanish language immersion elementary school. An observation walkthrough was conducted and teachers at the school were interviewed. Testing data were also examined. The following recommendations are for the school district of the school studied based on the findings of the study.

1. Consider expanding foreign language immersion to more schools in the district. The school has an open enrollment with a waiting list for students to be admitted. The interest in foreign language immersion warrants consideration in implementing more immersion programs.

2. Develop a recruiting strategy to attract bilingual teachers to the district. There are not enough effective, bilingual teachers in the district. More of these teachers would support expansion of foreign language immersion and make the school district more attractive.
3. Supply professional development to the Spanish immersion teachers. Professional development was cited by the teachers in this study and previous studies to be necessary to learn strategies in teaching and curriculum building in foreign language immersion.
4. Encourage foreign language immersion teachers to develop a conversational network in the target language. By some of the faculty members own admission, the level of Spanish fluency among faculty needs to be higher. This could strengthen fluency among staff and possibly strengthen professional learning communities.
5. If foreign language immersion cannot be expanded in the district, consider implementing foreign language classes for students beginning in elementary school. The students observed in the walkthrough showed no signs of apprehension at speaking a foreign language. As a high school foreign language teacher, the researcher sees older students that are fearful of a new language and withdraw from learning it.

Recommendations for Future Study

Following are recommendations for the future study of foreign language learning and foreign language immersion.

1. The school in this study was predominantly Caucasian with a low number of students from low socio-economic backgrounds. A study on the impact of foreign language

immersion and students from low socio-economic backgrounds could affect the decision of some school districts on implanting foreign language immersion programs.

2. Studies (Andrade, Kretschmer, and Kretschmer, 1989) have shown that second language study can help lower the achievement gap. Studies on the affect that foreign language immersion can have on the achievement gap would be beneficial to education in the United States.
3. Research is recommended on the relationship between second language learning and literacy scores. It would be beneficial to examine if knowing or learning a second language impacts a student's level of literacy in the native language. This could drive decision making for districts and schools that want to raise their end of the year standardized test score in literacy.
4. Research is recommended on the relationship between second language learning and math scores. It would be beneficial to examine if knowing or learning a second language impacts a student's ability in math. This could drive decision making for districts and schools that want to raise their end of the year standardized test score in math.
5. Parent involvement was a theme that arose in this study. It was also mentioned in another study (Floyd, 2011). Research is recommended on what makes foreign language immersion an attractive option for parents of students.
6. Research can be conducted on what makes professional development for foreign language teachers valuable. Foreign language immersion teachers in this study and other studies (Floyd, 2011; Detwiler, 2016) mentioned professional development as a factor in their schools' success or as something that was lacking in their schools. Foreign language immersion teaching has specific needs that differ from traditional teaching.

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Appendices

Appendix A
Interview Protocol

Interview Protocol

Institutions: _____

Interviewee (Title and Name): _____

Interviewer: _____

Survey Sections:

- A. Interviewee background
- B. Perceptions of the school
- C. Perceptions of foreign language immersion
- D. Immersion and literacy

Other Topics Discussed: _____

Documents Obtained: _____

Post Interview Comments or Leads:

Introductory Protocol

Spoken: To facilitate note-taking, I would like to audio tape our conversations today. Please sign the release form. For your information, only researchers on the project privy to the tapes which kept locked and destroyed after three (3) years. In addition, you must sign a form devised to meet our human subject requirements. Essentially, this document states that: (1) all information held confidential, (2) your participation is voluntary and you may stop at any time if you feel uncomfortable, and (3) we do not intend to inflict any harm. Thank you for your agreeing to participate.

I have planned this interview to last no longer 30 -45 minutes. During this time, I have several questions that we would like to cover. If time begins to run short, it may be necessary to interrupt you in order to push ahead and complete this line of questioning.

Introduction

You have been selected to speak with us today because you have been identified as someone who has a great deal of insight in foreign language immersion. My research project as a whole focuses teachers' perceptions in a foreign language immersion school and how they feel immersion impacts the students. The study does not aim to evaluate your techniques or experiences. Rather, we are trying to learn more foreign language immersion, and hopefully learn about foreign language immersion in an elementary setting.

Interview Questions:

A. Interviewee Background

How long have you been...

_____ in your present position?

_____ at this institution?

Interesting background information on interviewee:

What is your highest degree? _____

What is your field of study? _____

Have you taught in a different setting? _____

If so, where and for how long? _____

1. Briefly describe your role at this school as it relates to foreign language immersion?

B. Perceptions of the school

2. How does this school differ from standard public elementary schools?

3. What does this school do differently that better prepares students for the TCAP test?

C. Perceptions of foreign language immersion

4. How are the students impacted by participating in foreign language immersion?

5. What experiences have you had that leads you to either believe or not believe that foreign language immersion should be implemented more in the U.S.?

6. Your school is in a zone with little low socio-economic students. How do you feel foreign language immersion would impact students from lower socio-economic households?

7. Is foreign language immersion a good fit for all students? What experiences with students have you had that supports how you feel about this?
8. What are some other factors (about the school, zone, or students) that would make foreign language immersion more or less effective?
9. If you were building a foreign language immersion program, what are some things you would implement first?

D. Immersion and literacy

10. Does reading and writing in the target language impact English literacy scores? If so, how?

Appendix B

Consent for Participation in Interview Research

Consent for Participation in Interview Research

I volunteer to participate in a research project conducted by Kurt Bissinger from Carson-Newman University. I understand that the project is designed to gather information about teachers' perceptions in foreign language immersion. I am one of approximately 8 people being interviewed for this research.

1. My participation in this project is voluntary. I understand that I will not be paid for my participation. I may withdraw and discontinue participation at any time without penalty. If I decline to participate or withdraw from the study, no one on my campus will be told.
2. I understand that most interviewees may find the discussion interesting and thought-provoking. If, however, I feel uncomfortable in any way during the interview session, I have the right to decline to answer any question or to end the interview.
3. Participation involves being interviewed by the researcher from Carson-Newman University. The interview will last approximately 30-45 minutes. Notes will be written during the interview. An audio tape of the interview and subsequent dialogue will be made. If I don't want to be taped, I will not be able to participate in the study.
4. I understand that the researcher will not identify me by name in any reports using information obtained from this interview, and that my confidentiality as a participant in this study will remain secure. Subsequent uses of records and data will be subject to standard data use policies which protect the anonymity of individuals and institutions.
5. Faculty and administrators from my campus will neither be present at the interview nor have access to raw notes or transcripts. This precaution will prevent my individual comments from having any negative repercussions.
6. I understand that this research study has been reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) for Studies Involving Human Subjects: Behavioral Sciences Committee at the Carson-Newman University. For research problems or questions regarding subjects, the Institutional Review Board may be contacted through Dr. Deborah Hayes, dhayes@cn.edu.
7. I have read and understand the explanation provided to me. I have had all my questions answered to my satisfaction, and I voluntarily agree to participate in this study.
8. I have been given a copy of this consent form.

My Signature _____ Date _____

My Printed Name Signature of the Investigator

For further information, please contact:

Kurt Bissinger
 Carson-Newman University
 kwbissinger@cn.edu
 (615) 484-3155

Appendix C
Walkthrough Observation Protocol

Walkthrough Observation Protocol

The purpose of the observation is to see the school and witness the instruction and interactions between the faculty and the students. Understanding what makes the school unique is important to the research. Pairing the observation with the interviews will create a more complete picture of the school and foreign language immersion (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007). The observer would prefer to see two or more classes, with one in the target language and the other in the native language. If possible, the researcher would like to observe a reading and a math class. It will be up to the administration of the school on what will be allowed to be observed.

The observer will be taking on an observer-participant role. He will enter the classrooms and not interrupt instruction. He may, however, ask some clarifying questions as needed (Gall et al., 2007).

What follows are variables that pertain to the research and may be noted:

- Setting
 - Number of students in a classroom
 - Student to teacher ration
 - Examples of literacy in English and Spanish (reading activities, posters on walls, etc.)
- Instruction
 - Instruction in English and Spanish
 - Student engagement
 - Teacher engagement
- Reflective factors
 - Tone of environment (quiet, loud, conversational, relaxing, stressful, etc.)
 - Observed emotions of students (happy, sad, excited, apprehensive, bored, tired, etc.)
 - Observed emotions of teachers (same)

Setting	Participants
Date: Time:	

Describe on the odd lines

Reflect on the even lines

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____

7. _____

8. _____

9. _____

10. _____