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# Case for Foreign Language in the Elementary School

## Abstract

Our students are learning and growing in a rapidly changing world that is far more globally interconnected and culturally diverse than we had envisioned at the close of the 20th century. As we are now well into the 21st century, research and test scores consistently reveal that U.S. students are not prepared to take their place as the servant-leaders of their time where opportunities for active participation require the ability to compete, cooperate, and communicate cross-culturally.

Research shows that language is acquired best when instruction is initiated in early childhood and sustained over an articulated number of years. Since the 1960's pedagogical methods for teaching foreign language to elementary students have been developed and refined. The Sequential FLES, FLEX, and total immersion approaches have especially proven to produce foreign language proficiency in younger students to varying degrees.

It is imperative that educators have a forward focus based on a biblical perspective of their calling to prepare students for works of service within the global context in which they live. Therefore, it is important that students are allowed the opportunity to become proficient in at least one other world language in order to equip them to effectively and competently acquire the skills needed in order to engage our world today.

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A Case for Foreign Language in the Elementary School

By

Mary Beth Pollema

B.A. Dordt College, 1991

Thesis

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment  
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Degree of Master of Education

Department of Education  
Dordt College  
Sioux Center, Iowa  
January, 2014

A Case for Foreign Language in the Elementary School

By

Mary Beth Pollema

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### **Abstract**

Our students are learning and growing in a rapidly changing world that is far more globally interconnected and culturally diverse than we had envisioned at the close of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. As we are now well into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, research and test scores consistently reveal that U.S. students are not prepared to take their place as the servant-leaders of their time where opportunities for active participation require the ability to compete, cooperate, and communicate cross-culturally.

Research shows that language is acquired best when instruction is initiated in early childhood and sustained over an articulated number of years. Since the 1960's pedagogical methods for teaching foreign language to elementary students have been developed and refined. The Sequential FLES, FLEX, and total immersion approaches have especially proven to produce foreign language proficiency in younger students to varying degrees.

It is imperative that educators have a forward focus based on a biblical perspective of their calling to prepare students for works of service within the global context in which they live. Therefore, it is important that students are allowed the opportunity to become proficient in at least one other world language in order to equip them to effectively and competently acquire the skills needed in order to engage our world today.

## **Introduction**

There was a time in our not so distant past that the United States set the standard of educational excellence and was reputed for graduating the leaders of society from our schools. This heavy emphasis on equipping our youth with necessary skills for their time helped the United States become the dominant economy of the world. However, over the past two decades other countries have risen in their influence and have even superseded the U.S. in their embrace of the globalization and expansion of markets. This development correlates directly with declining standardized test scores and other student output from our nation's schools (Jacobs, 2010).

The U.S., once the leader of educational affairs, is now 18<sup>th</sup> in the world in high school graduation rates and 13<sup>th</sup> in college completion. Surveys from the Asia Society and the National Geographic Society have shown that when compared with their peers in other industrialized countries, U.S. high school students lag behind in knowledge of other countries and cultures. A large part of their cultural illiteracy can be attributed to the fact that only 50% of U.S. high school students and 25% of elementary students study a foreign language as compared to most other nations that value multilingualism (Jacobs, 2010).

Emphasizing the study of world languages and cultures must take a prominent place in our educational systems if we desire our nation to reassume its position of leadership within the global arena. A report from the National Academy of Sciences warns that, "the pervasive lack of knowledge of foreign cultures and languages threatens the security of the United States as well as its ability to compete in the global

marketplace and produce an informed citizenry” (Committee to Review the Title VI and Fulbright-Hays International Education Programs, 2007). The U.S. can no longer afford to lag behind other countries while producing graduates who lack the skills necessary to compete, connect, and cooperate with their international peers and colleagues (Jacobs, 2010).

The concept of foreign language instruction in U.S. schools is not new. Even the idea of teaching world languages to elementary students with the goal of maximizing proficiency has been debated and studied since the 1960’s. An overwhelming majority of Americans see the value of learning a foreign language. In fact, a 2007 Gallup poll showed that 85% of respondents believed it was important to learn a second world language and 70% stated that it should begin in the elementary school. More recently, a 2010 survey of all Minnesota public schools showed that 88% of those that responded agreed that world language study is a critical component to prepare students for the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Minnesota Department of Education, 2010). And yet foreign language instruction in most schools has simply been too little, too late (Jacobs, 2010).

Because of mass media, digital technology, advanced methods of transportation, immigration and many other factors, our society is becoming increasingly more global and more and more the demographics of our communities are changing drastically, even exponentially as each year passes. Educators need to lead the way in preparing the next generation for the environment in which they will live and work. Now, more than ever before, it is likely that they will not be entering a predominantly homogenous, English-speaking culture when they leave our schools. Teachers bear the responsibility for

equipping their students with the essential skills for effectively and competently engaging our 21<sup>st</sup> century culture.

This study focused on Spanish language instruction, but in actuality, the questions and the teaching methods discussed can be applied to any world language. The learning of Spanish was emphasized because it is a language that most U.S. students have authentic opportunities to use within their own communities since the Hispanic community is the fastest growing demographic group in the United States.

According to the census data, native Spanish-speakers made up 9 percent of the population of the U.S. in the 1990, 12.5 percent of the population in 2000, and 16.7 percent in 2010. To put it another way, the Hispanic population in the U.S. grew at a rate of 3.5 percent during the last decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and at a rate of 4.2 percent during the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Comparatively, the rate of growth among Hispanics in one year between 2010 and 2011 was 2.5 percent signifying that our current decade could realize the greatest increase of growth among the Hispanic population and gives reason to project that by the year 2050 the percentage of Spanish-speaking Americans will comprise 30 percent of our nation's population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010).

Secondly, Spanish is the second most widely spoken language in the world following Mandarin. There are more than 300 million native Spanish speakers worldwide making it an excellent choice to learn as a second language in order for our graduates to acquire the essential skills for connecting, communicating and competing in a global context (Central Intelligence Agency, 2013).

So what are educators to do given the current situation where the essential skill set students must have before they graduate is transforming dramatically? The United States

could hold on to its historical standard of monolingualism and continue to expect the rest of the world to learn English, but that would be akin to burying one's head in the sand. Our country is changing, our world is changing and, therefore, the instructional needs and skills of today's student are also changing. To not allow them the opportunity to become proficient in other world languages would put them at a huge disadvantage in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

This research project addressed the need to develop world language proficiency as an essential skill and gave some practical models for doing so drawing upon six decades of research to answer two primary questions in depth:

1. When is the best time to begin foreign language instruction and why?
2. What are some effective methods that elementary schools can use for foreign language instruction?

### **Definition of Terms**

For the sake of clarity, definitions for the following terms are listed in the words of the researcher unless otherwise noted.

**Bilingualism:** proficiency in two languages.

**Critical Period Hypothesis (CPH):** the concept that there is a time frame for optimal acquisition of a language being from infancy to puberty

**FLES\*:** the overall umbrella term for all types of elementary school foreign language programs in grades K-8 (Lipton, 1988).

**FLEX:** An exploratory program that introduces one or more foreign languages. Few language skills and limited proficiency are expected with a once or twice a week program which emphasizes limited language acquisition and extensive cultural awareness (Lipton, 1988).

**Fundamental Difference Hypothesis (FDH):** the concept that children possess an ability that is lost in most adults—the innate ability to intuit the rule structure of a language (Hinkel, 2005).

**Immersion:** the use of the foreign language throughout the school day by teachers and students, for teaching the various subjects of the elementary school curriculum. Good proficiency in the foreign language is expected after four or more years in the program (Lipton, 1988).

**Language proficiency:** the ability to speak, read, write and understand an acquired language.

**Lexical Semantics:** the study of the meaning of words and the relationship between words.

**Maturational State Hypothesis (MPH):** the concept that optimal acquisition of language deteriorates gradually as a person matures with age.

**Morphology:** the analysis of the structure of a language (e.g. sentence structure).

**Multilingualism:** proficiency in several languages.

**Phonology:** the analysis of the sounds of a language and how they are organized (e.g. pronunciation).

**Sequential FLES:** an introduction to one foreign language for two or more years, with a systematic development of language skills (listening, speaking, reading, writing and culture) within the parameters of themes, topics or content areas. Good theme-related proficiency is expected (if scheduled 5 times a week, 30 minutes or more a day) for four or more years (Lipton, 1988).

**Syntax:** the rules for the formation of grammatical sentences and phrases (e.g. grammar and usage).

**Universal Grammar (UG):** the theory that the ability to acquire language is hard-wired in the brain in that the brain automatically compartmentalizes the components of language according to the principles and parameters common to them all.

## Literature Review

### Three Major Hypotheses Regarding Language Acquisition

There has been a long history of interest concerning second language acquisition that has prompted much research and some debate. Lenneberg (1967), one of the forerunners in the field of applied linguistics with his research regarding early language acquisition, advanced the Critical Period Hypothesis that postulated that language can only be acquired within a critical biological period extending from early infancy until puberty. In its most basic form the CPH applies primarily to first language acquisition, though many researchers have since studied second language acquisition in light of the CPH and have found evidence that it applies also in this regard.

Through his research, Lenneberg (1967) proposed that by the onset of puberty, the brain having reached its adult values, had lost the plasticity and reorganizational capacities necessary for acquiring language. His findings led other neurologists and linguists to consider the question as to whether or not children are better second language learners than adults and should consequently attain higher levels of proficiency in the second language. A flurry of research projects ensued that produced results some of which supported the CPH and some that challenged or varied from Lenneberg's original hypothesis.

From this research emerged at least two more hypotheses that will be discussed in this project, namely, the Maturation Constraint Hypothesis (MCH) and the Fundamental Difference Hypothesis (FDH). All three hypotheses, though having different nuances, compliment each and lead to similar conclusions and applications. The question that these studies were striving to answer is whether or not there is an age-

related limitation on the learning of a language and if so, do we attribute it to biological or environmental factors?

Some of the studies conducted seem to contradict each other. Some concluded that children acquire language more easily; others seemed to say adults have the edge (Brown & Gonzo, 1995). When synthesizing and analyzing the large collection of data dating as far back as the 1960's, it is important to consider which components of language acquisition were being observed and what is the ultimate goal of second language acquisition. Is it the mastery of the rule-structured dimensions of the language such as morphology, phonology, and syntax or overall proficiency? Adults seem to progress towards attainment of the grammatical components of language more quickly, though some studies have indicated that this progression is short lived and eventually children surpass adults in their attainment of overall proficiency including near-native mastery of the foreign accent of the target language, an aspect of foreign language learning that consistently alludes adults (Brown & Gonzo, 1995).

In part, the CPH answered the question of when is the best time to begin foreign language instruction by suggesting that it is in the early childhood years since this is the critical period prior to adolescence when the brain is most malleable and especially receptive to learning a second language (Genesee, 2000). It has often been concluded then that teachers should take advantage of this ease of learning by teaching children a second language as early as possible.

Consequently, these findings have sparked numerous attempts worldwide to teach foreign languages at the elementary school level (Cook, 1996). While there is general consensus that there is such a critical period for language learning as Lenneberg (1967)

and others proposed, subsequent research has called into question whether all of the neurological events Lenneberg (1967) cited in his study occur at an appropriate time for them to be called “critical” (Hinkel, 2005). Other research has shown that the cut-off for language acquisition is not as sharp as Lenneberg (1967) suggested, but declines more gradually in adolescence with language skills and plateaus throughout adulthood (Seliger, 1978).

Opinions also vary on the age of closure for a critical period. Several large-scale studies noted a difference in performance throughout the teen years or even earlier. Patkowski (1980) and Johnson and Newport (1989) indicated the cutoff point in the mid to late teen years (Patkowski, 1980). A study by Mayberry (1993) suggested that the optimal period closes much earlier. Researchers, such as Mack (1998), also isolated various language components to study stages of development for each and found that native-like pronunciation is acquired before the age of four, while syntax and semantics may be acquired by age six. Conversely, Singleton and Lengyel (1995) reported that there is no critical period for learning vocabulary and thus, concluded that adults can acquire new vocabulary as easily as children.

Other researchers, such as Seliger (1978), proposed the existence of multiple critical periods, each managing a different aspect of language. Along with Seliger (1978), Long (1990) and Eubank and Gregg (1999) argued that the malleability of the language portions of the brain end according to different schedules, phonology being the first to close as early as age six, followed by morphology and syntax closing near puberty. They suggested that the acquisition of lexical semantics may remain available throughout a person’s life. Thus, by the end of the 1990’s, studies began to question a

biologically ordained critical period based on maturational factors (Hinkel, 2005). A main source of skepticism were the numerous exceptions to their findings. In other words, as the researchers studied the language developments of their test subjects they were finding several adults who were late onset language learners and yet were attaining high proficiency in the target language (Snow & Hoefnagel-Hohle, 1977). Nevertheless, researchers were still finding the same correlation between onset age and test performance especially at the phonological, morphological and syntactical levels (Hinkel, 2005). Namely, that the earlier the onset of foreign language instruction begins, the better when striving for overall second language proficiency.

Adding to the din of dissenting voices pertaining to the neurobiological factors and schedules that affect the critical period was another group of researchers that attempted to define environmental factors that might affect this linguistic phenomenon (Brown & Gonzo, 1995). In other words, they attempted to explain how certain language acquisition skills are nurtured in some situations and conditions and not in others. A leading voice in this debate was Oyama (1978), who attributed the differences to factors other than maturation which happens in correlation with age and argued that an adult is less motivated than a child to learn the language fully because adults tend to be more self-conscious about speaking (e.g. making errors) and are less able to maintain the open attitudinal and affective state necessary for language acquisition to take place (Oyama, 1978).

Some age-related research claimed that it is the situation of learning, rather than the potential for learning that is the best predictor of eventual successful attainment. These studies suggested that there are factors that positively enhance the learning

situation such as daily use of the second language especially in a total immersion or similar input-rich environment, marriage to a native speaker, and high levels of education in the target language (Hinkel, 2005). Other researchers found evidence that language acquisition is enhanced by natural aptitude which reconciled some of the exceptions to the CPH. De Keyser (2000) maintained that some older individuals possess a special talent for language learning and explained why sometimes late-onset language learners achieve a similar proficiency level as early-onset learners (De Keyser, 2000).

So is there an age-related limitation on the acquisition of a second language? As has already been noted, numerous studies pointed to the reality that children have an advantage over adults when it comes to learning languages. However, other studies have been conducted that would indicate contradictory results, though on a superficial level (Singleton & Lengyel, 1995). Often these apparent contradictions can be resolved when one separates performance in the early stages of language learning from eventual attainment of proficiency in the target language (Cook, 1996). Some research showed that age actually had a positive advantage as demonstrated in a longitudinal study involving English-speaking adults and children who had gone to live in Holland and were compared at the end of three months using a variety of tests (Snow & Hoefnagel-Hohle, 1977). The tests showed that adults were better at all aspects of the Dutch language except pronunciation. But after a year, the same test revealed that the adult advantage had faded and the older learners were better only at vocabulary (Cook, 1996)

Scovel (1997) also criticized “the younger, the better” concept claiming that it is hard to deny the advantage that adults have in learning certain linguistic skills especially literacy, where the ability to read and write comes later in childhood. For second

language learners, adults can bring their preordained literacy skills into play since many of the literacy abilities in their first language transfer over positively into the second language. The same process can happen in vocabulary building since adults are more likely to recognize cognates and employ word-decoding skills. Thus, they often acquire new words more rapidly especially when the first language is typologically related to the second language, as is the case with Spanish and English (Scovel, 1997). But even with his skepticism regarding the CPH, Scovel (1997) admitted that only children who learn a second language before preadolescence can attain accent-free proficiency (Scovel, 1997).

Scovel's (1997) position also supported the Universal Grammar theory first postulated by Chomsky (1995) that maintains that the ability to learn grammar is hardwired in the brain and there are certain principles and parameters that apply to all languages. Thus, when language learners are able to compare and contrast the correspondence between their first language and the target language they are more likely to succeed in its acquisition (Bialystok, 1997). The UG theory would then in part explain some of the instances in which late-onset learners have the advantage over early-onset language learners since their internal understanding of language, in general, is more sophisticated and established (Galasso, 2002). It will be discussed later, however, how UG can actually block a learner's acquisition of a new language.

The Maturation Constraint Hypothesis branches from the CPH in maintaining that language acquisition mechanisms begin to deteriorate before puberty, yet this deterioration has more of a modular nature (Brown & Gonzo, 1995). The CPH sets a block of time, namely, from age 2 until puberty, after which there is a sharp cut-off in general acquisition ability. In comparison, the MCH postulates a number of closures at

which certain language skills are thought to be less easily learned but not entirely unattainable (Brown & Gonzo, 1995). Johnson and Newport (1989) conducted one of the most widely cited studies that supported the CPH and particularly the MCH version of it. In their study they set out to understand the nature of the critical period for language acquisition and to answer the questions, “Is there a relation between the age of acquisition and ultimate performance in the grammar of a second language and, if so, what is the shape of the relationship between age of acquisition and ultimate performance?” (Johnson & Newport 1989).

In order to obtain answers to the aforementioned questions, Johnson and Newport (1989) selected 46 native Chinese or Korean speakers who had learned English as a second language. Their primary criteria for selecting their subjects was that each one had moved to the U.S. and, thus, had become totally immersed in English at different ages. Another criteria was that all subjects had to have exposure to English for at least five years and had lived in the U.S. for an unbroken minimum stay of three years. Also, each subject was chosen from the student or faculty population of an American university. The 46 test subjects varied in age at the time of their arrival to the United States from age 3 to 39 and there was a fairly even distribution of ages. The subjects were then divided into two equal groups according to their age at the time of their arrival. There were 23 subjects that arrived in the U.S. before the age of 15 (early arrivals) and 23 that arrived after the age of 17 (late arrivals). In terms of years of exposure in the United States the late and early arrivals were also fairly even (See Table 1).

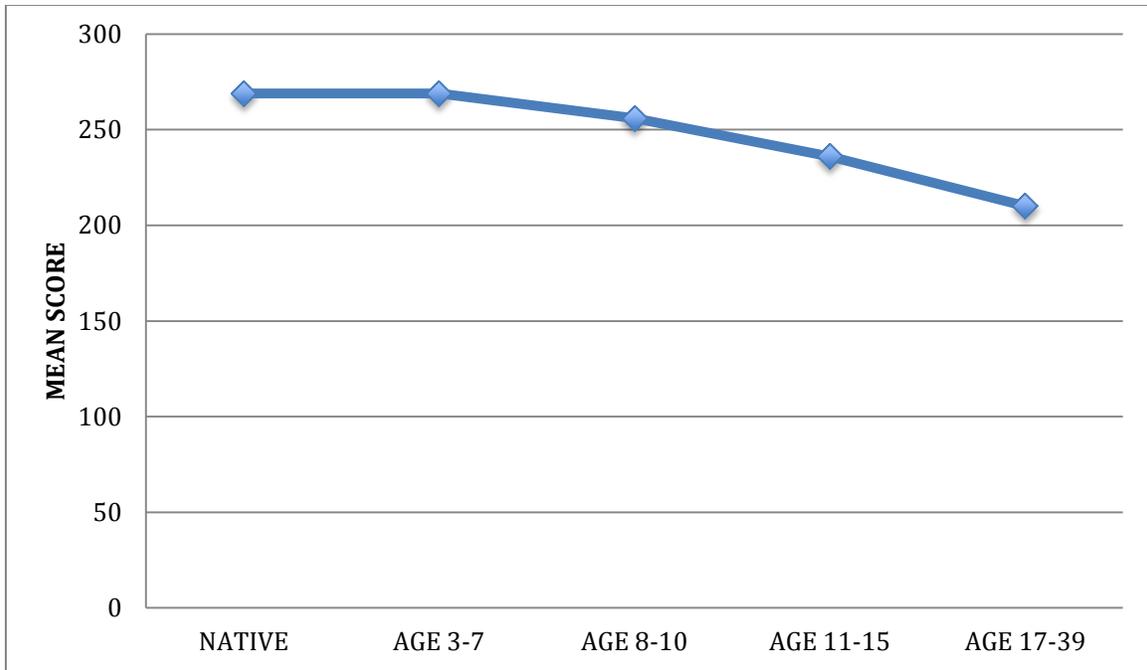
**TABLE 1. The Distribution of Early and Late Arrivals in Terms of the Number of Years They Lived in the U.S.**

YEARS IN THE U.S.	Age at Arrival	
	3-15	17-39
3-6	4	7
7-10	10	11
11-15	9	3
23-26	0	2

*Note.* From “Critical period effects in second language learning: The influence of maturational state on acquisition of English as a second language” by Johnson and Newport, 1989, *Cognitive Psychology*, 21, pp. 70.

The study proceeded as follows: the subjects were given a test on their knowledge of spoken English grammar based on 12 rule types. The subjects listened to each of 276 sentences spoken in a laboratory setting and then had to make a judgment whether the sentences was grammatically correct. The 12 rule types included past tense, plural, third person singular, present progressive, determiners, pronouns, particle movement, subcategorization, auxiliary verbs, Yes/no questions, Wh-questions and word order. To provide a baseline performance on the test, 23 native English speakers were also chosen and considered in with the results.

**FIGURE 1. The Relationship between Age of Arrival in the United States and Total Score Correct on the Test of English Grammar (Johnson & Newport, 1989)**



*Note.* From “Critical period effects in second language learning: The influence of maturational state on acquisition of English as a second language” by Johnson and Newport, 1989, *Cognitive Psychology*, 21, pp. 79.

**TABLE 2. Mean Scores of Nonnative and Native Speakers of English**

	NATIVES (n=23)	Age of Arrival			
		3-7 (n=7)	8-10 (n=8)	11-15 (n=8)	17-39 (n=23)
Means	268.8	269.3	256.0	235.9	210.3
SD	2.9	2.8	6.0	13.6	22.8
Range	275-265	272-264	263-247	251-212	254-163
(Errors)	(1-11)	(4-12)	(13-29)	(25-64)	(22-11)

*Note.* From “Critical period effects in second language learning: the influence of maturational state on acquisition of English as a second language” by Johnson and Newport, 1989, *Cognitive Psychology*, 21, pp. 78

The results of the study provided three sets of facts that any theory regarding a critical period would have to account for while also supporting the MCH that says that early in life humans have superior capacity for acquiring languages, but this capacity declines gradually with maturation (Brown & Gonzo, 1995). The three facts derived from this study were postulated from:

1. The gradual decline of performance— The performance of the subjects on the English grammar test gradually declined from about age seven on until adulthood. It did not indicate a “block” of time like Linneberg (1967) hypothesized for normal language learning since there is not necessarily a sharp cut off, but rather a peak in sensitivity. Several other studies also support this finding (Hess, 1973, Scott, 1978, Kroodsmas, 1981).
2. The age at which a decline in performance is first detected—Linneberg’s CPH proposed that performance would drop off at puberty. Later studies show a small, but significant decline as early as age 8-10. In the Johnson and Newport (1989) study, the 3-7 age group scored the highest on the second language grammar rules test indicating that the decline in language learning ability begins earlier than initially through by most researchers.
3. The nature of adult performance—Language does not become totally unlearnable during adulthood, but there is great variability among adult individuals in ability to acquire a second language. For adult learners, age does not continue to be a predictor of performance while early learners are uniformly successful in acquiring their second language to a high degree of proficiency (Brown & Gonzo, 1995). (See Figure 1 and Table 2)

A final hypothesis that deserves attention in cooperation with the CPH and the MCH is known as the Fundamental Difference Hypothesis. First set forth by Chomsky (1995), the FDH explained why children learn a second language more effectively than adults. The cornerstone of the FDH is that adults cease to operate as children in respect to their processing of linguistic information. It stated that children possess an ability that is lost in most adults, namely, the ability to intuit the rule structure of the language without paying much attention to it (Hinkel, 2005).

Some researchers have attributed child/adult differences to the decline in cognitive learning ability that accompanies aging. But this decline usually takes place much later. Schaie and Willis (1996) conducted research that followed subjects ages 25-88 as they performed a range of cognitive tasks. The data show modest gains in cognitive ability from young adulthood to middle age and then a gradual decline while the peak performance in second language acquisition in all studies is found in learners who began before the age of six or seven (Schaie & Willis, 1996). No other cognitive learning produces such an advantage for learners younger than seven (Hinkel, 2005).

So the fundamental difference between child and adult learners with which the FDH is concerned must be dependent on some other factor other than cognitive ability. Chomsky states that UG is responsible for this difference (Chomsky, 1995). In regard to the FDH, the UG serves as a child's innate template and his or her only means of an internal linguistic reference guide through which to filter any external linguistic input. It is in this sense that UG is essential to a child's language learning, but a hindrance to an adult's language learning (Galasso, 2002).

For a child, UG not only restricts and narrows down an otherwise potentially overwhelming and confusing influx of linguistic input by sifting and organizing the external information into meaningful units and internal neural compartments, it also guides the input to take certain pathways which will eventually lead to correct grammatical assumptions about the target language based on repetitive practice. The adult, on the other hand, will first have to reconcile the second language input with the first language input that has already been firmly established as sort of a surrogate UG causing interference between the first language parameter settings and the new language to be acquired. This is why most adult language learners must work out cognitive-based learning strategies for recognizing and dealing with second language concepts and skills that seem to come more naturally to the child learner. Because of this extra processing, foreign language learning for an adult often seems more laborious and ineffective (Galasso, 2002).

### **Neural Circuits Research**

Thus far, three of the most prominent hypotheses in the field of applied linguistics relating to multilingualism have been explained. In light of the information already presented it is obvious that the best time to begin foreign language instruction is when children are young. In addition, other areas of brain research provide direct evidence that learning occurs when connections are made in the brain between neurons and along neural pathways between not only adjacent neurons, but also distant ones so that over time neuro-chemical communication is facilitated. More recently, researchers have found that articulated time is what is needed to establish these connections (Genesee, 2000).

These findings explain why learning takes time. It can be illustrated like this—In the early stages of learning, neural circuits are activated somewhat randomly and incompletely similar to viewing a photo that is pixelated or partially exposed. With more experience and repeated practice, the picture becomes clearer and more detailed. As exposure is repeated, less input is needed to activate the neural network responsible for processing the image. With more time and repeated activation, the processing and recognition of the image becomes more automatic until the learner can eventually direct his or her attention to other areas of the task. It is at this point that learning has occurred (Genesee, 2000).

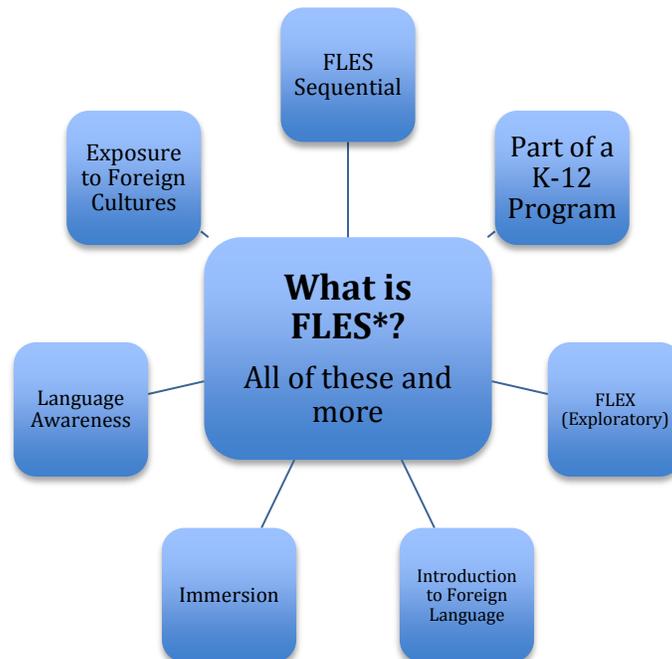
This explains why learning takes time since learning is the process that establishes new connections along neural pathways and the knowledge and skills that are learned are neural circuits and networks formed due to repeated activation. An implication that these findings have for education is that students need time and repeated practice in order to learn new skills and knowledge (Genesee, 2000). So in the case of foreign language learning it becomes a matter of “come early and stay late” as more and more research is confirming what we already know (Jacobs, 2010). Second language learning is facilitated when instruction is provided in childhood years and continues for an extended period of time. There are several ways that this be accomplished in our schools today, so the focus will now be directed to the second question this thesis addresses:

### **Foreign Language in the Elementary School (FLES\*)**

Teaching foreign languages to young children is a concept that is not new by any means. Some would say that it dates back even to the Roman Empire when children

were instructed in Latin while simultaneously learning their native tongue (Genesee, 1996). Here in the United States, foreign language instruction at the primary levels entered our public school systems in earnest shortly after the launching of Sputnik in 1957 which created an urgency among American policy makers in their insistence that science, math and foreign languages be expanded and supported in U.S. schools (Lipton, 1998). In its most basic form FLES\* is an overarching term that refers to all forms of elementary foreign language instruction. (See Figure 2) Three major program models will be examined in light of their characteristics and desired outcomes. (See Table 3)

**FIGURE 2. The Multifaceted Nature of FLES\***



*Note.* From “Practical handbook to elementary foreign language programs: including FLES, FLEX, and immersion programs” by Gladys Lipton, 1988, Lincolnwood, IL: National Textbook Co.

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**TABLE 3. Types of FLES\* Programs**

FLES (Sequential)	FLEX (Exploratory, Language Awareness)	Immersion and Partial Immersion
One language, taught for two school years or more	One or more languages taught for one or more school years	One language, K-6
<i>Grades K-6</i>	<i>Grades K-6</i>	<i>Grades K-6</i>
Foundation language learning in four skills and culture*	Minimal foundation; language learning in four skills and culture* (sometimes only oral skills)	Subject matter of elementary school curriculum taught in the foreign language
<i>Outcomes:</i> Limited Proficiency	<i>Outcomes:</i> Very limited proficiency	<i>Outcomes:</i> Proficiency in the foreign language
Interest in language and culture(s)	Interest in language(s) and culture(s)	Interest in language and culture
Interest in future foreign language study	Interest in future language(s) and culture(s)	Interest in study of other foreign languages
Correlation of foreign language with social studies and language arts	Correlation of foreign language with social studies and language arts	High correlation with social studies and language arts
Integral part of elementary school curriculum	Possibly integral part of elementary school curriculum	Integral part of elementary school curriculum
<i>Teachers:</i> Specialist or nonspecialist	<i>Teachers:</i> Specialist, nonspecialist, volunteers	<i>Teachers:</i> Specialist in foreign language
<i>Students:</i> Available to all: some selection due to budget	<i>Students:</i> Available to all students the first year	<i>Students:</i> Available to limited number of students who can cope with challenges

**(Types of FLES\* Programs continued)**

<i>Materials:</i> Wide variety to support content and interest	<i>Materials:</i> Wide variety to support content and interest	<i>Materials:</i> Wide variety to support content and interest
<i>Content:</i> Thematic units such as greetings, health, sports, food, etc.; cultural themes	<i>Content:</i> Thematic units with limited vocabulary and structure: cultural themes	<i>Content:</i> Content of social studies, science, mathematics, etc.
<i>Time:</i> Wide range of time based on local needs, finances, and grade level (range from 5% to 20%)	<i>Time:</i> Wide range of time based on local needs, finances, and grade levels (range from 2% to 5%)	<i>Time:</i> 50% to 100%

*Note.* From “Practical handbook to elementary foreign language programs: including FLES, FLEX, and immersion programs” by Gladys Lipton, 1988, Lincolnwood, IL: National Textbook Co.

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FLES\* was very popular in U.S. school systems in the 60’s and 70’s and then began to wane in its utilization after that for various reasons. The first suspected cause is that the FLES\* programs initially grew too rapidly without much thought or planning beyond the first year since the rationale was often based on a “bandwagon” mentality. There was also a lack of adequate time in the school day to teach the foreign language and not enough qualified teachers. Additionally, the programs often did not have the support of the secondary schools and supervisors which led to a lack of articulation and cohesiveness between the primary and secondary school foreign language curricula. Thus, FLES students entering secondary school found that they had to begin the language from the beginning. This was frustrating to the students and parents alike. In the end,

funding for the programs dried up since taxpayers were not seeing results quickly enough (Lipton, 1998).

While FLES\* programs did diminish in popularity, they did not disappear completely and much thought and planning has gone into refining and strengthening them in order to see better results. Methodology is one of those areas that have evolved. From its beginning in the 1960's, the way FLES\* was taught was very rigid. Audiolingual methods were used exclusively meaning that students only listened or spoke the language for at least 100 clock hours before they were allowed to read or write it. Fortunately, there is much more openness today to many different types of methodology. The goal for FLES\* teachers today is to match their methodology to the program goals, outcomes and needs of the students. In contemporary FLES\* programs, at least 12 major approaches or methodologies have been defined which have helped to increase the effectiveness of these programs and interest among students. (See Table 4)

The best FLES\* programs combine these approaches rather than fixating on one or two as they did in the past. Combining several approaches leads to new configurations for teaching and learning, holds the interest of the learners better, and yields more effective acquisition of the foreign language. In any FLES\* program, repetition is an extremely important component, but the content taught can remain dependent on the goals of the program. An overarching goal for any FLES\* program is to develop the four major skills of language—reading, writing, speaking, and listening—along with cultural awareness (Lipton, 1988).

**TABLE 4. Major Approaches or Methodologies for teaching FLES\***

<b>FLES* Approach:</b>	<b>Learning Activities:</b>
<b>Communication</b>	Basic structures, vocabulary and idiomatic expressions are used and practiced in the context of a specific topic or conversation.
<b>Story or Narrative</b>	Teacher uses or adapts authentic folk tales that reflect the foreign culture.
<b>Cross Cultural</b>	Development of cultural context through the discussion of history, geography and weather and the role it plays in the lives of the people; cross-cultural contrasting of customs and traditions, and role-playing.
<b>Dialogue/Drama</b>	Creating and using simple dialogues and dramatic presentation to give students practice in using Spanish and gaining insight into Hispanic culture.
<b>TPR/TPRS (Total Physical Response/Storytelling)</b>	Learning through moving and storytelling
<b>Question/Answer-Command/Action</b>	Students and teacher ask each other questions and respond. Commands can also be given that demand an action (TPR).
<b>Thematic</b>	Three or more years of sequential, spiral learning with each year reviewing and expanding previous work as well as introducing additional themes.
<b>Native Language Kid Talk</b>	Similar to thematic approach, but it emphasizes themes that are important to children such as: family, school, play, sports, television, video games, etc. It give children a chance to express their reactions and justify their opinions.
<b>Interdisciplinary/Content-enriched or Content-based</b>	Integrating the study of basic vocabulary and expressions in the Spanish with other content areas. One of the newer approaches, also sometimes called Immersion FLES
<b>Learning Games</b>	Enjoyable activities that help students learn Spanish by enforcing repetition, vocabulary and other language elements
<b>Individualized/Personalized</b>	Using the students' birth dates, food preferences, favorite colors, etc. to practice the language.
<b>Music/Song</b>	Students learn through listening to and singing songs which are particularly useful when they represent the culture.

Note. From "Practical handbook to elementary foreign language programs: including FLES, FLEX, and immersion programs" by Gladys Lipton, 1988, Lincolnwood, IL: National Textbook Co.

## **Immersion Programs**

Immersion is one of the most common types of FLES\* programs and is based on the premise that second language learning is similar to first language learning and that people learn a second language in the context where they experience it in its natural form and where they are socially motivated to communicate. Immersion programs have an excellent history for enhancing second language acquisition. There are two main types of immersion—total and partial. Total immersion is considered to be the most effective way of developing overall foreign language proficiency (Curtain, 1986).

Immersion succeeds because it allows for comprehensible input with a focus on meaning (acquisition) instead of a focus on form. Because there is no formal grammar instruction in the early stages, students acquire the language through using it, rather than attending to all the rules of the language. Supersaturation is the key. The most effective language learning takes place only where the learner is immersed in an environment in which he or she is actively receptive and responsive (Genesee, 2000).

Just like the general concept of FLES\*, the idea of putting language learners in the environment where they must use the language is not new. U.S. schools took their cue from Canadian schools in the initial implementation of immersion programs in the elementary school. The first recorded program as such was a kindergarten class in St. Lambert, Quebec, in 1965 where English-speaking parents were concerned that the traditional French instruction did not meet their children's needs. They felt that there needed to be a greater emphasis on comprehension and French proficiency at that time in history when bilingualism had become an important issue in Canada (Genesee, 1996).

The first replication of the Canadian immersion experience took place in a Southern California school system in 1971 (Curtain, 1986). A Spanish immersion program was initiated in Culver City, CA, in hopes of preparing their students for living and working in the bilingual society of that area. In 1976, Montgomery County, Maryland schools began a French immersion program (Genesee, 1996). Taken together, both projects attest to the effectiveness of foreign language immersion programs. The English-speaking students achieved noteworthy levels of proficiency in the target language without sacrificing native English language development or academic achievement (Met, 1993).

A major concern for educators who are considering implementing an immersion program is that the development of English language skills does not become secondary to the learning of the foreign language. A close examination of immersion projects, including those of the Milwaukee Public Schools where German and French immersion were introduced in 1977 and Spanish in 1978, helps to dispel that fear. Eight years after the implementation of the Milwaukee immersion programs, standardized test results showed that at all grade levels the immersion students were achieving at or above their ability level, performing much better than citywide or national samples on English tests and their test scores were increasing grade by grade (Genesee, 1996). Educators were thus led to conclude that immersion programs now were a viable educational alternative and that they, moreover, held the promise that other FLES\* programs of the past had been unable to accomplish—functional proficiency in the second language (Genesee, 1996).

### **Immersion Methodology and Outcomes**

Immersion is a method of foreign language instruction in which the regular school curriculum is taught through the medium of the target language. In other words, the foreign language becomes the vehicle for content instruction rather than a subject to be studied separately (Met, 1993). Long range goals inherent to an immersion program consist of developing a high level of proficiency in the foreign language, a positive attitude toward those who speak the foreign language and to their cultures, English skills on par with the expectations for the student's age and abilities, and skills and knowledge in the content areas of the curriculum in keeping with stated standards in those areas (Met, 1993). Thus, the content of an immersion program revolves around the daily use of the foreign language for the purpose of communication and instruction. Usually the content is controlled by the school district and should mirror what other children at the same level are learning, only the immersion students are learning the content in a foreign language (Lipton, 1988).

Some general guidelines for an immersion program are as follows:

- The foreign language is used throughout the day in total immersion programs and at least 50% of the time in partial immersion.
- All instruction is in the foreign language and students are expected to use the foreign language to communication throughout the school day, though initially some may need to use English for a short time.
- By the end of the first year students usually understand everything except the presentation of new words in the foreign language.

- Students learn the four essential skills (reading, writing, speaking and listening) and culture as they study all aspects of the elementary school curriculum (Genesee, 1996).

Effective immersion programs also require a specific sequencing of foreign language vs. native language instruction. Typically, in the early primary grades the teacher focuses on phonology and reading readiness activities in the target language. At this level, students speak with each other and the teacher in English, but the teacher responds in the foreign language. However, within 1 ½ to 2 years in the immersion program, students quite naturally begin speaking in the foreign language (Curtain, 1986).

In grades 2 and 3 word attack skills in the foreign language are developed and practiced as well as reading and writing activities. Specific vocabulary for the rest of the content areas is presented in the foreign language. Immersion programs also provide instruction in English language skills, but this is usually delayed until grade 3 while the rest of the content remains in the target language. Formal English Language Arts instruction is usually conducted for 30-60 minutes a day in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade.

In the upper elementary grades, 50% of the content is taught in the target language and 50% in English and by the end of elementary school, total immersion instruction ceases (Met, 1993). Research studies indicate that some students experience some lag in English language skills in the middle elementary grades, but that most of these deficiencies are resolved by the end of elementary school (Genesee, 1996).

Not wishing that students in any way lag in English language skills is one reason why some schools opt for a partial immersion program where only 50% of the instruction is in the foreign language and students learn to read in both languages simultaneously.

The amount of foreign language instruction remains the same throughout the elementary years (Met, 1993). While the initial lag in English achievement associated with total immersion usually does not occur in partial immersion, in the long run, partial immersion does not produce better English language achievement than total immersion (Curtain, 1986).

Extensive research studies have shown that children benefit from immersion and do not suffer a loss of native skill development. They not only become functionally proficient in a foreign language, but also develop above average skills in their native language. These studies have also shown that students in early immersion programs perform as well as their English-educated peers or often outperform them (Campbell, Gray, Rhodes & Snow, 1985). They initially lag behind English-only students in their English skills, but catch up within a year after the English component is introduced. Part of the learning strategy is that students develop literacy skills in the foreign language that are then transferred over to the first language. This happens quite naturally especially when learning languages that are similar to English such as Spanish. Immersion education also has positive effects in the mastery of other content subjects such as math, science and social studies as immersion students consistently show equal or superior performance as compared to their monolingual peers in these areas (Genesee, 1996).

Another probable effect of an immersion program is that students will be fluent in the foreign language by grade 2 or 3. This does not mean their skills will necessarily be native-like with respect to all characteristics of vocabulary and grammar, but they will likely gain a remarkable level of functional proficiency in comparison to students in

traditional foreign language programs. Swain (1979) explained that “functional proficiency” does not mean that the children were always able to say exactly what they wanted to, but they used numerous strategies or techniques such as circumlocution to say what they did not have the grammatical means to say. A national study of the relative effectiveness of alternative foreign language teaching programs showed that students in immersion achieved higher levels of second language proficiency than students in any other type of FLES\* program (Campbell, Gray, Rhodes, & Snow, 1985).

### **Sequential FLES and FLEX: Methodology and Outcomes**

There are a variety of ways to teach Sequential FLES and FLEX and several different emphases. Some programs stress listening comprehension before speaking; others insist on an emphasis on speaking and listening to the exclusion of reading and writing. In reality, there is no evidence to show that excluding or isolating any of the four language skills (reading, writing, speaking, listening) is beneficial to overall learning of the language. The “how” of teaching foreign language using Sequential FLES or FLEX methods will vary from teacher to teacher and from school to school. The key question to ask is “What do you want the students to be able to do with the language?”

Usually the primary evidence of understanding that FLES and FLEX teachers look for is the ability to speak the language. Also, students (and their parents) find fulfillment in attaining this ability, so that is often where FLES and FLEX teachers start. The companion skill to this is comprehending what is being said. It is important, however, to structure the speaking and comprehending learning activities on real-life situations in order to hold the interest of the students. In the past, FLES instruction has

depended heavily on students memorizing and reciting dialogues. This type of learning should not be confusing with the ability to speak. Mimicking the teacher or memorizing a dialogue is not learning how to speak the language in a natural setting (Lipton, 1988).

Successful Sequential FLES and FLEX programs rely on the following guidelines to ensure that maximum learning is taking place:

- Speaking in the foreign language should be applicable to real-life situations.
- Errors in pronunciation, structure, word order, grammar, etc. are to be expected.
- Vocabulary should be taught in context.
- Content should be taught using a number of approaches and a variety of instructional tools and materials.
- Emphasis should be given to all four skills of language learning: reading, writing, listening and speaking.
- Grammar is usually taught by modeling and repetition.
- The speed of speaking is normal and authentic, both by the teacher and the student.
- Students are not expected to speak in complete sentence. Utterances may be complete sentences, groups of words, single words, etc. depending upon the nature of the speaking situation.
- Limit the use of English so that students are encouraged to use the foreign language. English should only be used by the teacher when clarification is necessary.

- Word associations are made between the foreign language and the object, action or concept, rather than with the English equivalent.
- Each lesson requires a great deal of spiral review and reinforcement.
- Cultural components must be interwoven with the linguistic learning activities (Lipton, 1988).

Cultural awareness is an essential element of any FLES or FLEX program since language is the function of the culture and, as such, reflects the culture. In other words, language is culture. They are intrinsically linked. Learning cultural components, therefore, should not involve the isolated memorization of rote facts. Rather it is an attempt to help students understand a different way of life (Lipton, 1988).

As methods of learning foreign language, Sequential FLES and FLEX are very similar to each other as far as learning activities and approaches that are used (See Table 4). The main difference is the amount of time devoted to each and the intended outcomes. Since the goal of Sequential FLES is to produce limited proficiency (See Table 3) while the goal of FLEX is very limited proficiency, more time is devoted to teaching the foreign language in a Sequential FLES program—usually 30 minutes per day. This type of program is referred to as Sequential FLES because the intention is to continue instruction in one particular foreign language for 2 or more years in a row where FLEX programs seek only to expose students to language(s) and culture(s) in an exploratory nature for a shorter period of time—maybe only a semester or a quarter of the school year (Lipton, 1988).

Thus far, scientific evidence has been presented that concludes that foreign languages are best learned when onset of instruction starts in the early elementary years

and continues over a prolonged period of time. Then three prominent methods of teaching foreign language in the elementary school that have proven to develop proficiency to varying degrees depending on the program have been examined. The focus of this next section is to consider what is currently being done at a national, state, and local level in regard to early foreign language instruction and what more needs to be done in order to adequately prepare our students to confront the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Pufahl and Rhodes (2011), from the Center of Applied Linguistics, surveyed a nationally representative sample of more than 5,000 U.S. public and private elementary and secondary schools during the 2007-2008 school year in order to determine how well our schools were doing in preparing students to become global citizens who can communicate in languages other than English. Their findings were disappointing for many U.S. policy makers, educators, parents, business leaders and major research organizations who, for decades, have been calling for an education system that adequately prepares our students to become competent world citizens who can communicate effectively in languages other than English. On the other hand, their findings have also served to intensify efforts for education and advocacy for FLES instruction and have brought to the foreground several recommendations that may serve to change the trajectory of decline in FLES instruction that is occurring in our nation for a number of reasons (Pufahl & Rhodes, 2011).

The *National K-12 Foreign Language Survey* that they conducted showed that only 15% of public elementary schools offered foreign language instruction in 2007. This percent was a decline from a decade earlier when 24% were offering it in 1997.

Meanwhile, private schools remained steady in their offering of foreign language instruction at over 50% of schools over the same decade. With both public and private schools combined, the offering of FLES\* decreased from 31% to 25% in ten years. Among the schools with foreign language programs, Spanish was the most commonly taught language and most schools were likely to offer FLEX programs which produce the most limited level of proficiency (Pufahl & Rhodes, 2011).

A number of explanations were given by the school districts that decided to drop their elementary foreign language programs. Of these, some of the most common ones were: lack of funding, a shortage of language teachers, decision-making at the district level, languages were not seen as a core component of the curriculum, or previously existing programs were no longer feasible. Undergirding these concerns were also the constraints of a poor economy, cut backs in educational funding, and unintended adverse effects of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation since more funding was viewed as necessary for teaching “testable” subjects such as math and reading (Lenker & Rhodes, 2007).

On a state level, some interesting, yet disconcerting findings came out of a *K-12 World Language Survey* conducted by the Minnesota Department of Education in 2010. This study showed that in comparison to national data, Minnesota schools offer world languages in fewer elementary, middle and high schools. In fact, only 8% of Minnesota elementary schools have any sort of FLES\* program even though 88% of 520 school districts that responded to the survey agreed that world language study is a critical component to prepare students for the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Minnesota Department of Education, 2010).

For this thesis project a local survey was also conducted (Appendix A and B) via a Google form that was sent electronically to 80 public and private schools of Regions 6 and 8 located in Southwest and West Central Minnesota. Twenty-seven schools responded and indicated that 15% of those schools were offering elementary foreign language instruction and the majority of those schools were using the FLEX methodology to do so. These findings were very much in line with national percentages and a bit higher in comparison to the rest of the state.

Most national, state, and local educational entities who are concerned with preparing students for the 21<sup>st</sup> century would agree that the ability to communicate with others and to interact with cultural sensitivity is key for every student's future (Minnesota Department of Education, 2010). Yet the discussion and recommendations that issued forth from the national K-12 foreign language survey revealed that foreign language instruction at the high school level remained relatively stable over the last decade but has decreased substantially in the middle and elementary schools. The survey results also showed a huge mismatch between what is happening in our schools and what the U.S. workforce and culture are demanding--that is an education system that prepares all children to be competent world citizens, who can communicate in more than one language (Pufahl & Rhodes, 2011). So we are inclined to ask, how does what we know translate into practice?

First of all, it is important to understand the history of FLES\* and strive to not repeat the same mistakes that led to its decline in the first place during the 1960's and 70's. New foreign language programs need to be advocated for and established, especially at the elementary level, but also planned out strategically with a solid, long-

term program that utilizes qualified teachers. Another major improvement needed would be in the articulation of K-12 foreign language so that there is a continuous flow of instruction that builds on itself year after year and is established on the national standards for foreign language instruction.

Garnering support for this effort is paramount before the momentum for implementing FLES\* programs can build once again. It is important to understand that until there is widespread acknowledgement among school districts and policy makers that knowing a second language is as important as knowing mathematics, reading and science and can actually enhance the acquisition of those disciplines, FLES\* will continue to be marginalized. Decision makers need to revisit the research that has been conducted over the past 50 years which overwhelmingly concludes that age is a major factor for learning languages and also recognize that providing first-class language education to all K-12 students would contribute greatly to our nation's capacity "to maintain national security, promote international cooperation, compete effectively in a global economy, and enhance our domestic well-being." (Committee for Economic Development, 2006; National Research Council, 2007, Partnership for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills, 2004, U.S. Department of Education, 2008, U.S. Department of Defense, 2005).

### **Discussion**

So what does this mean for us in the context of Christian education? I believe this research demands that we go back to our vision and strongly consider why we do what we do and what we are to teach our students. Most Christian schools strive to provide high-quality, Christ-centered education in order to equip students to live lives

of service and to actively participate within their cultural context. Our goal is to prepare students to be *in* the world while not being *of* it. Therefore, as Christian educational leaders, we need to ponder whether or not we are fully addressing our purpose if we are not providing students the opportunity to become highly proficient in Spanish as a second language. Are we truly equipping them to live lives of service within a global context? And if not, where do we go from here?

Based on the research that I have presented in this thesis, I humbly offer the following recommendations:

- Survey major stakeholders, including parents, the broader school community, students and businesses about their beliefs and attitudes regarding the need for developing high proficiency in Spanish as an essential 21<sup>st</sup> century skill that our students should be given the opportunity to obtain.
- Provide information to interested stakeholders regarding the process of acquiring a second language including maturational constraints and age-related factors that impact the effectiveness of learning a foreign language.
- Determine which type of FLES\* program the school is able to offer. I would recommend a Sequential FLES program in grades K-8.
- Employ the help of a qualified foreign language teacher who would develop and implement articulated curriculum founded on national standards that would prepare students to enter our high school Spanish courses at an intermediate or advanced level rather than at a beginner level.

- Challenge K-8 teachers to integrate Spanish language and culture with other content areas in order to maximize exposure and instruction in the foreign language while minimizing time taken away from other core subjects.

These recommendations are personally important since I have experienced first hand how knowing Spanish has opened doors of opportunity for me in the past and even more now than ever as Hispanic immigration increases at an astounding rate. More than merely for financial gain, job opportunities or personal satisfaction, becoming highly proficient in Spanish will give our students the tools and potential to impact the Spanish-speaking demographic group with the truth of the Gospel. Taking into consideration that there are approximately 300 million English speakers in our world today and roughly an equal amount of Spanish-speakers, we can see that by allowing our students to become highly proficient in Spanish we can increase their ability by 100% to actively pursue the calling and purpose God has placed on their life.

At the beginning of this school year, a Spanish1 student raised his hand in class and asked, “If we take three years of high school Spanish, will we be fluent?” I wanted so badly to be able to say, “Yes, you’ll have what you need to go out into the world and make a difference in both English and Spanish.” But with regret, I could not confidently say that. When we start our formal foreign language instruction in high school, I believe we are missing a window of opportunity and are requiring our students to work much harder at acquiring Spanish than they would have to if instruction were started more intensively during the elementary years. Based on the research that I have cited

throughout this thesis, it is apparent that waiting to offer world language instruction until high school is a case of “too little, too late.”

I believe Christian schools, especially, are called to be educational leaders and examples of excellence among our regional schools. We should strive to always meet, even exceed state and national standards. Therefore, I believe it is time to evaluate our efforts towards preparing our students to become effective witnesses and active participants within our global context. We should not be content to follow the patterns of decline or stagnation in the area of foreign language instruction in similar fashion to national and state public schools. Instead, Christian schools should provide the opportunity for students to become highly proficient in a second world language so that they will be equipped to make a greater impact on the world in which we live. This can be most effectively accomplished if foreign language instruction is initiated in the early elementary grades and sustained for a number of years until advanced proficiency is achieved.

If we agree with the large majority of Minnesotans that language study is a critical component to prepare students for the 21<sup>st</sup> century, we then need to consider if we're willing to rise to the challenge of adequately equipping our students to effectively engage the world and work force they will enter upon graduation by providing a quality foreign language program in the elementary school (Department of Education, 2010).

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## Appendix A: Southwest/West Central Minnesota Survey

### World Language Instruction Survey

Thanks so much to the schools that completed this survey within the past week. I'm so grateful for your responses which will help me immensely with my research for my thesis. If you haven't completed the survey yet, could I humbly request that you take a second look at it? Be assured that it only takes about 30 seconds to complete. I hope you all have a relaxing Labor Day weekend. Blessings on your new school year too!

Mary Beth Pollema  
(Spanish teacher, Central MN Christian School)

\* Required

1. **1. What is the name of your school? \***

.....

2. **2. How many years of foreign language do you offer in all grades PreK-12? (if the answer is more than zero, proceed to questions 3-5) \***

.....

3. **3. In which grade levels do you offer foreign language? (Check all that apply)**

*Check all that apply.*

PreK-4

5-8

9-12

4. **4. If you offer foreign language in grades PreK-8, which type of program do you use?**

*Mark only one oval.*

Total immersion (100% of instruction via the target language)

Partial Immersion (at least 50% of instruction via the target language)

FLES (emphasis on speaking, listening, reading and writing in the target language)

FLEX-Exploratory (general exposure to foreign language and culture)

Other: .....

5. **5. Which foreign languages do you offer in any grades PreK-12? (Check all that apply)**

*Check all that apply.*

Spanish

French

German

Other: .....

## Appendix B: Southwest/West Central Minnesota Summary of Survey Responses

**1. What is the name of your school?**

(27 schools responded but will remain unnamed.)

**2. How many years of foreign language do you offer in all grades PreK-12? (if the answer is more than zero, proceed to questions 3-5)**

levels 1,2,3,4 (AP) 6 years k-12. This will be the first year 3-12 2, sometimes 3 or 4 independently 10, though 9-12 grades are the only grades where it is an every day, full hour-long course. 3 2 1 0 5 4 9 8 13 12 10 2, sometimes independent study for 3 or 4 2.5

**3. In which grade levels do you offer foreign language? (Check all that apply)**

PreK-4	<b>6</b>	15%
5-8	<b>10</b>	25%
9-12	<b>24</b>	60%

**4. If you offer foreign language in grades PreK-8, which type of program do you use?**

Total immersion (100% of instruction via the target language)	<b>0</b>	0%
Partial Immersion (at least 50% of instruction via the target language)	<b>1</b>	8%
FLES (emphasis on speaking, listening, reading and writing in the target language)	<b>1</b>	8%
FLEX-Exploratory (general exposure to foreign language and culture)	<b>6</b>	50%
Other	<b>4</b>	33%

**5. Which foreign languages do you offer in any grades PreK-12? (Check all that apply)**

Spanish	<b>25</b>	76%
French	<b>3</b>	9%
German	<b>3</b>	9%
Other	<b>2</b>	6%

## Curriculum Vita

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Home:  
5086 140<sup>th</sup> Ave. SE  
Clara City, MN 56222  
(320) 847-2594  
[bmbpollema@mac.com](mailto:bmbpollema@mac.com)

Current Work:  
Central MN Christian School  
204 School Street  
Prinsburg, MN 56281  
(320) 978-8700

### Education

M.A. Masters of Education, emphasis in Teacher Leadership, Dordt College (2014)

B.A. Elementary Education and Spanish, Dordt College (1991)

Additional course work completed at Fuller Theological Seminary (2000-2004)  
36 graduate level hours completed

### Academic Employment

Spanish and English Teacher (9-12), Central Minnesota Christian School, Prinsburg, MN (2009-present)

Remedial Education and Librarian (K-6), Central Minnesota Christian School, Prinsburg, MN (2008-2009)

(1998-2008- gap in professional employment while raising our three children at home prior to their entering elementary school)

High School Mission Trip Coordinator, I.D.E.A. Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI (1996-1998)

Teacher (K-8), King's College, Belize, Central America (1994-1996)

Teacher (3-4), Leota Christian School, Leota, MN (1991-1994)

### Academic Awards

Dordt Merit Scholarship (1987-1990)

Jack Visser Scholarship (1987)

Curriculum Vita Continued:

Publications and Presentations

“Ten Terrific Tech Tools for Teacher”- professional development workshop for Heartland Teacher’s Convention, Dordt College (October, 2013)

“Elementary Spanish for Schools on a Budget”- professional development workshop for Heartland Teacher’s Convention, Dordt College (October, 2012)

“Learning in the Classroom AND the ‘Cloud’”- professional development workshop for Heartland Teacher’s Convention, Dordt College (October, 2011)

“Getting the Most Out of Your Short-term Mission Trip” *Christian Educators Journal* (December, 2012)

“Social Networking in Education...lol or idk?” *Nurturing Faith* (February, 2012)

“Perspectives on Ecclesiastes: the Problem of Justice, Work and the Meaninglessness of Life” *Fuller Vision* (November, 2002)

Professional Memberships

American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL)

Southwest Minnesota World Language Alliance (SMWLA)