

World Language Learning and Cultural Beliefs Among Elementary Students

by

Jocelyn Kuhn

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of Bachelor of Arts

With Honors in Psychology from the

University of Michigan

2011

Advisor: Susan Gelman

Abstract

This study examined the effects of foreign language classroom instruction on elementary school children's cross-cultural understanding. Fourth grade students from a school with Spanish instruction ($n=13$) and a school with no foreign language instruction ($n=17$) were interviewed and asked to complete a series of tasks. Findings suggest that children who have exposure to foreign language instruction have greater knowledge of and interest in cultures associated with the language of study. However, attitudes toward other cultures did not significantly differ between the groups. Together, these findings highlight the possibility for the foreign language classroom to serve as an environment conducive to cross-cultural learning. These findings also build upon previous research showing that development of attitudes, feelings, and beliefs about other national groups is highly dependent on background and context.

World Language Learning and Cultural Beliefs Among Elementary Students

Cross-cultural interactions have become routine in our increasingly globalized world. International communication occurs with little cost or effort thanks to technology such as the Internet, smart-phones, and social networking websites. Cheap and convenient travel facilitates tourism and international business. Centuries of ongoing immigration have increased the prevalence of multicultural societies, shuffling a world that was once culturally divided. New demands arise for the modern person who lives side-by-side with people from different backgrounds, comments on the Internet blogs that are read worldwide, and travels internationally for business and pleasure. Cross-cultural consciousness, communication, and understanding are now essential skills for daily and professional life in most communities. Failure of the educational system to teach citizens these vital skills will permit upcoming generations to fall back on ethnocentrism, stereotyping, and other forms of ignorance in order to get by in an increasingly complex and interconnected world.

For the purpose of this study, we narrow in on one key subject area that provides schools with an opportunity to combat such ignorance: foreign language courses. Language and culture have an inherently strong relationship, as one cannot exist without the other. One of the greatest tasks in foreign language education today is utilizing this connection to help students develop a “global cultural consciousness” (Kumaravadeivu, 2007). This type of cultural understanding, also termed “reciprocity of the foreigner” (Piaget & Weil, 1951) and “transcultural competence” (Furstenberg, 2010), embodies the concept of demonstrating knowledge and skills to respectfully interact with other cultures.

Aware of the growing importance of these skills, foreign language educators have worked to implement a focus on cross-cultural learning over the past few decades. In 1996, the

National Standards for Foreign Languages Project created a comprehensive document that suggests for culture to be taught in tandem with foreign language as part of the 5 goal areas known as the “5 C’s of Foreign Language Education”: Communication, Cultures, Connections, Comparisons, and Communities. The “Cultures” goal is based on the idea that students “cannot truly master the language until they have also mastered the cultural contexts in which the language occurs.” The “Comparisons” goal aims for students to realize the existence of multiple ways to view the world (Byrnes, 2010). Similarly, the Common European Framework of Reference for Language and Learning (CEFR), which the Council of Europe developed in 2001, sets clear foreign language education standards including aims for “interculturality” (Kumaravadivelu, 2007).

While standards such as these have been clearly established, the researchers doubt that they have been carried out successfully. Kearney (2010) questions whether classrooms are too culturally distant to provide the desired levels of cultural learning. Current trends show that educators leave culture in the periphery because “culture is a highly complex, elusive, multilayered notion that encompasses many different and overlapping areas and that inherently defies easy categorization and classification” (Furstenberg, 2010, pp. 329). With 21 countries and even more cultural groups that speak Spanish exclusively, where is a teacher who wants to fulfill the 5 C goal areas or CEFR objectives of interculturality to begin? It is much easier to focus on the systems of language and to hope that students will pick up cross-cultural understanding somewhere else in their education and life experiences.

The challenge of bringing the true colors of culture into the walls of a foreign language classroom is a difficult endeavor; rote memorization of vocabulary words and verb conjugation patterns, however, is not. In fact, the teachers and students alike express little expectations for

culture to be taught in tandem with foreign language. Previous research by Drewelow (2010) illuminates these problems. Drewelow surveyed and interviewed college students enrolled in French courses throughout a semester to determine how their opinions of French people may adjust as a result of their coursework. She found that even with a clear objective to teach culture in the curriculum, the students maintained their pre-existing assumptions about French people throughout the course. The students also expressed a belief that foreign language study only teaches a linguistic skill. These results led Drewelow to conclude that the impact of foreign language courses on cultural beliefs may be limited.

Similarly, Byram, Esarte-Sarries and Taylor (1991) found no relation between English children's attitudes toward French people and the study of French in school. If the students in these studies did not develop their beliefs about French cultures during their French courses, then when exactly in their cognitive and social development did they form their beliefs toward the French and other national groups?

Previous scholarly research has generated theories for the developmental stages of children's knowledge, feelings and beliefs about national groups. Piaget and Weil (1951) created foundations in this area of research with their study on Swiss children's beliefs about other national groups and geographical knowledge. They looked at children from ages 4 to 15 and formulated the following stage-theory:

1. Birth to age 5: Pre-stage of ignorance
2. Age 5 to 7 or 8: Acquisition of socially shared beliefs
3. After age 10 or 11: Either socio-centricity or advanced development of reciprocity of the foreigner (characterized by independence from social environment in making judgments)

This work inspired psychologists such as Jahoda (1964) and Lambert & Klineberg (1967) to explore how children develop views of foreign national groups. Overall, the follow-up research negates the validity of Piaget and Weil's (1951) stage theory and criticizes its rigid oversimplification of a developmental process that is in reality complex and idiosyncratic. Jahoda (1964) found that 6- to 7-year-old Scottish children's likes and dislikes of foreigners varied on an individual basis. Lambert and Klineberg (1967) studied a broader population (3 age groups in 11 parts of the world) and also found high variability within and across groups. They found that in-group attitudes were not always positive, that children of all ages studied (6 to 14) could hold negative and positive attitudes of foreigners, and that in some groups these attitudes did not change with age. The combined work of these studies revealed the existence of considerable variability in the development of national beliefs and attitudes.

Recent comparative international research projects have traced some trends in children's development of cross-cultural attitudes and beliefs. The CHOONGE Project (Children's Beliefs and Feelings about their Own and Other National Groups in Europe) and the NERID Project (Development of National, Ethnolinguistic and Religious Identity in Children and Adolescents Living in the New Independent States of the former Soviet Union) found exhibited in-group favoritism along with generally positive attitudes of out-groups among 6- to 15-year-old children (Barrett, 2006). Nevertheless, these projects found a "sheer variability and diversity that occurs in children's development... (that) poses severe problems for any developmental theory that posits universal patterns in the development of children's intergroup attitudes" (Barrett, 2006, pp. 187). Numerous factors that alter across individuals can explain this variability. Such factors include the roles of formal education, the mass media, socio-economic status, family values, ethnicity, travel experience, and strength of national identity.

Unlike previous research on this topic, the current study does not use time or age as the independent variable while looking at the development of cross-cultural knowledge, attitudes and beliefs. Rather, age is a constant and the experiment is based on whether foreign language is included in a child's school curriculum. Thus, we isolate one of the factors that may contribute to the variability found in previous developmental research.

The present study attempts to shed light on the effects that foreign language courses may have on the development of students' cultural attitudes, knowledge, and beliefs. Is it possible to effectively teach culture within the confines of a classroom? Can foreign language instruction engender increased interest in or knowledge of foreign cultures? In order to answer these questions, I interviewed 4th-grade students from two different schools. One school included foreign language in the curriculum, and the other did not. I formed a first hypothesis that the students receiving foreign language instruction would show increased levels of interest, knowledge and understanding and would demonstrate more positive attitudes about the foreign culture associated with the language of study and foreign cultures in general. I made a second hypothesis that the children receiving foreign language instruction would show preference for learning foreign language in school and at a younger age.

Method

Participating Schools

Two elementary schools were recruited to participate in this study. The Spanish Instruction (SI) School was selected from the Ann Arbor Public School District because this district has implemented Spanish World Language courses to its 3rd and 4th grade students. Approval for research was attained from the district, and then a single elementary school was recruited based on high Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP) standardized test

scores, close proximity to the University of Michigan, and the principal's willingness to allow the research to take place. The SI school's 5th grade students recently placed in the 98th percentile for Reading, the 93rd percentile for Math and the 100th percentile for Science on MEAP tests. At the time of the study the ethnic demographics of the student body were: 77% white, 12% black, 5% Hispanic, 4% Asian/Pacific Islander, and 1% American Indian/Alaskan Native. 10 to 15% of the students were eligible for free or reduced-price lunch program. The school had a high attendance rate and spent approximately \$11,500 per pupil (GreatSchools, 2011).

The No Foreign Language Instruction (NFLI) School was selected because of its lack of foreign language courses in the curriculum, its similarly high MEAP scores and geographical proximity to the SI School, and the principal's willingness to allow the research to take place. The NFLI School's 5th grade students recently placed in the 92nd percentile for Reading, and in the 90th percentile for Math and Science on MEAP tests. The NFLI School had roughly the same sized student body and teacher to student ratio as the SI School. At the time of the study, the ethnic demographics of the student body were: 97% white, 2% Hispanic, and under 1% other ethnicities. Roughly 10% of the students were eligible for free or reduced-price lunch program. The school had a high attendance rate and spent approximately \$9,200 per pupil (GreatSchools, 2011).

Once these sites gave official approval for research, approval to carry out the study was obtained from the University of Michigan Medical Institutional Review Board.

The Ann Arbor Languages Partnership. The Ann Arbor Languages Partnership (A2LP) designed and implemented the SI School's foreign language curriculum. A2LP, an initiative launched in 2009, is a mutually beneficial partnership between the University of Michigan's School of Education and the Ann Arbor Public School District. The University and

District work together to train, mentor, and supervise Apprentice Teachers (ATs) who teach Spanish World Language classes as part of an undergraduate-level Education course. The ATs are expected to instruct in the Spanish target language as much as possible. Each elementary class has one or two ATs who deliver two 30-minute lessons each week, which totaled 43 lessons in the 2010-2011 academic school year.

Using the Common European Framework of Reference for Language and Learning (CEFR) as a model, the A2LP curriculum encourages elementary students to learn to comprehend, write, and interact in Spanish. Evidence of students learning a new language for their own purposes is documented in World Language Portfolios. This assessment portfolio includes two parts: capturing individual learners' intentions for what exactly they want to be able to do with the language and then documenting their progress toward mastering course content to meet these goals. Course content covers the CEFR's "Basic User" stage of understanding commonly used expressions and communicating about relevant topics of conversation. The coursework also includes occasional conversations and activities that encourage students to experience Spanish language and cultures locally and globally. Students are encouraged to use their language learning as a gateway to cultural and social integration in the classroom, school, community, and larger global context. (University of Michigan School of Education, 2009).

Participants

To recruit participants, one 4th grade classroom teacher at each school distributed informational letters and consent forms to parents of all their students. The intended sample size was 32 participants (16 from each site). The students whose parents signed and returned consent forms composed the sample population for the study ($n=30$; 10 male, 20 female). The participants from the SI School ($n=13$; 3 male, 10 female) included 11 Caucasian children, 1

child adopted from a Spanish-speaking country, and 1 child adopted from a non-Spanish-speaking country. The participants from the NFLI School ($n=17$; 7 male, 10 female) included 16 Caucasian students and 1 Asian-American student. All students at both schools reported that English was the main language spoken in their homes. All of the students were enrolled at the fourth grade level ($M_{Age} = 9.78$ years, age range: 9.21–10.64 years) and were recruited through two cooperating elementary schools. Students were interviewed individually in a random order.

Procedures and Measures

In the SI School, interviews for research took place in a conference room behind the principal's office. The students were pulled from lunch or recess to do the interview. In The NFLI School, the interviews took place at a table in the hallway outside of the classroom. The students were pulled from general class time to complete the interviews. After the child gave verbal assent to an audio-recorded interview, the interviewer administered 11 separate tasks in fixed order to all participants.

Ball Toss Task. The researcher and the child tossed a ball back and forth a total of 4 times. With each toss the researcher and child took turns naming a foreign country. The researcher always said Canada on the first toss, a non-English-speaking country on the second toss (i.e. Italy, China), and then triggered Spanish-speaking countries for the second two tosses (i.e. Mexico, Argentina, Spain). A point was scored for each Spanish speaking country that the child named, resulting in a final score of 0 through 4. The purpose of this task was to measure the salience of Spanish-speaking countries in the child's consciousness. In accordance with the first hypothesis, it was predicted that the SI group would name Spanish countries more frequently.

Travel Task. The researcher took out a world map and asked the participant, “If you could take a trip to any 3 countries in the world, where would you choose to go?” The participant referred to the map at his own will and gave the names of 3 countries where he would like to travel. The responses were scored 0 to 3 with a point for each Spanish-speaking country named. The purpose of this task was to measure the child’s interest in traveling to and learning more about Spanish-speaking countries. In accordance with the first hypothesis, it was predicted that the SI group would name Spanish-speaking countries more frequently.

Language Sorting Task. The researcher took out a paper sheet titled “Spanish,” a paper sheet titled “Non-Spanish,” and 12 slips of paper, each with the name of a different foreign country. Six slips were Spanish-speaking countries (Spain, Mexico, Chile, Puerto Rico, Argentina, and Cuba) and six slips were non-Spanish-speaking countries (Germany, China, Canada, Australia, Russia, and India). The child was asked to do his best to sort the country slips into two piles based on the main language spoken (Spanish or non-Spanish). The scores were based on the tally of slips in the correct pile for each category (number of Spanish countries placed correctly: 0-6; number of non-Spanish countries placed correctly: 0-6) added together resulting in a score from 0 to 12. In accordance with the first hypothesis, it was predicted that the SI group would be more successful with this task.

Foreign Friend Task. The researcher asked, “Do you know anybody who is from a foreign country?” The child then answered yes or no, and if the answer was yes then he was asked where that person is from. “Yes” responses were scored 1 and “no” responses were scored 0. For “yes” responses, a 0 was scored if the friend was from a non-Spanish-speaking country; a 1 was scored if the friend was from a Spanish-speaking country. The purpose of this task was to measure the child’s exposure to foreigners in terms of relationships formed. In accordance with

the first hypothesis, it was predicted that there would not be a significant difference in the quantity of foreign acquaintanceships reported by the two groups.

Moving Task. The researcher took out the same map that was used in the Travel Task and asked “If you had to pick a country outside of the US for you and your family to live in, where would you choose?” The child then referred to the map at his own will and answered with the name of one country. If the child named an English speaking country, a 0 was scored; if the child named a non-English and non-Spanish-speaking country, a 1 was scored; if the child named a Spanish-speaking country, a 2 was scored. The purpose of this task was to measure how open the child felt toward living in a country that speaks a language other than English, and toward living in a Spanish-speaking country. In accordance with the first hypothesis, it was predicted that the SI group would report a desire to live in a non-English-speaking (and particularly in a Spanish-speaking) foreign country more often.

Smiley Task. A scale of face images (very happy, happy, neutral, unhappy, very unhappy) was taken out for the child to use in expressing his like or dislike for a series of statements. After explaining the scale to the child, the researcher said a series of nine separate phrases and the child pointed to the face that best corresponded with how the statement made him feel. The first three statements were used to allow the participants to gain practice and comfort with using the scale. These statements were: “I like to eat ice cream,” “I like to eat toast,” and “I like to eat broccoli.” The following six statements were then presented:

1. I would like to have a friend who speaks a different language than me.
2. I would like to have a friend who speaks Spanish.
3. I would like to travel to a place where I don't understand the language.
4. I would like to travel to a place where the people speak Spanish.

5. I like to eat food from different countries.
6. I like to eat Mexican food.

After each statement, the participant pointed to one of the five face images, and the researcher recorded the responses. The scale was scored in increments of 1 with the happiest face scoring a 5 and the saddest face scoring a 1. Scoring of the tasks was grouped into non-Spanish and Spanish categories. Statements 1, 3, and 5 were in the non-Spanish category and yielded a combined score ranging from 3 to 15. Statements 2, 4, and 6 were in the Spanish category and yielded a combined score ranging from 3 to 15. The purpose of this task was to measure the child's attitudes about foreign cultures and languages in general and the child's attitudes about Spanish cultures and language in particular. The "smiley scale" measure was selected because children aged 5 to 12 relate better to pictures than to words or numbers (Wells, 1965). In accordance with the first hypothesis, it was predicted that the SI group would hold more positive attitudes for both the Spanish and non-Spanish statements.

Scheduling Task. The researcher took out a mock class-scheduling form titled "5th Grade Class Schedule." The form listed four required classes (Math, Science, Social Studies, and Language Arts) and six elective classes (Art, Music, Health, Spanish, Gym, and Library). The participant was asked to rank the electives in order of importance to help a hypothetical student decide which to take. The numerical ranking of the Spanish elective was recorded as the score for this task (1 through 6, with 1 being most important and 6 being least important). The purpose of this task was to measure the child's opinion of how important it is to have Spanish class at school compared to other elective courses. In accordance with the second hypothesis, it was predicted that the SI group would rank the Spanish elective higher.

Dance Task. The student was shown four 30-second video clips of different types of dancing in a random order. The dances included French Ballet, Afghani Bhangra, Indian Kathak, and Spanish Salsa. The smiley scale was taken out again for the participant to rank how much he enjoyed each dance. After watching each clip, the child's response was recorded using the same scoring as the Smiley Task (happiest face=5, saddest face=1). The purpose of this task was to measure children's attitudes toward foreign cultural traditions. In accordance with the first hypothesis, it was predicted that the SI group would hold more positive attitudes toward the traditional foreign dances.

Early/Late Language Acquisition Task. The researcher asked, "Some people think its good to start a language early, and others think its better to start late. Do you think it is best to start earlier or later?" A score of 1 was given for "earlier", a score of 0.5 was given for "middle," and a score of 0 was given for "later." The purpose of this task was to measure which stage of life the participant thought was the ideal time to acquire a foreign language. In accordance with the second hypothesis, it was predicted that the SI group would respond with "earlier" more often.

Age Task. The researcher asked the participant to follow up on his answer to the Early/Late Language Acquisition Task by giving an ideal age for a person to start learning a foreign language. The actual age given was recorded as the score for this task. The purpose of this task was to measure participants' opinions of the ideal age to learn a language. In accordance with the second hypothesis, it was predicted that the SI group would give a younger age.

Parent Language Acquisition Task. The researcher asked, "Do you think it would be a good idea for your parents to start learning a new language now?" A response of "yes" scored 1 and a response of "no" scored 0. The purpose of this task was to measure the child's opinion

about adults learning a new language. In accordance with the second hypothesis, it was predicted that the SI group would respond “no” more.

In the final part of the interview, the researcher asked about the languages that the participants’ parents could speak, the languages usually spoken at home, the number of siblings the participants had, and the participants’ birth dates (verified on the consent forms).

Materials

The materials used included a digital audio recorder, a ball, a world map printed out in color (See Appendix A), a paper with the smiley scale of 5 different faces that ranged from very happy to very sad (See Appendix B), a 5th grade scheduling form, slips of paper with names of foreign countries and large sheets titled “Spanish” and “non-Spanish,” and a laptop computer with dance clips ready to play.

Results

An independent samples t-test was conducted to compare all interview task scores of the Spanish Instruction (SI) group and the No Foreign Language Instruction (NFLI) group. Statistical significance was determined with a 95% confidence interval for these analyses. See Table 1 for results comparing the performance of the SI group and NFLI group in all tasks.

Results for two of the tasks revealed a statistically significant difference between the two groups where a difference was predicted. In the Travel Task, the SI group named statistically significantly more Spanish-speaking countries where they would like to visit ($M = .62, SD = .65$) than the NFLI group ($M = .29, SD = .33$), $t(16.7) = 2.52, p < .05$. For the Sorting Task, the SI group was able to sort the countries into Spanish-speaking and non-Spanish-speaking categories with statistically significantly higher success ($M = 10.46, SD = 1.61$) than the NFLI group ($M = 8.29, SD = 2.34$), $t(28) = 2.86, p < .05$. These significant differences support my first hypothesis.

The Foreign Friend Task suggested no statistically significant difference between the NFLI and SI groups where no difference was predicted. Results suggested no significant difference between the amount of foreign people that the SI group and NFLI group knew, $t(28) = .97, p = ns$, which shows a lack of support that first-hand acquaintanceships with foreigners could be a source for the previously mentioned significant group differences in task performance. This finding provides additional support for my first hypothesis.

However, results for a handful of tasks fail to support my first hypothesis. These tasks include the Ball Toss Task, $t(28) = .98, p = ns$; the Moving Task, $t(28) = .34, p = ns$; the Smiley Task, $t(28) = .818, p = ns$; and the Dance Task, $t(28) = 1.05, p = ns$. No statistically significant difference between the NFLI and SI group performance on these tasks was found where a difference was predicted.

Additionally, all tasks that were run to test my second hypothesis were not significant despite a predicted difference. The Scheduling Task, $t(28) = .97, p = ns$; the Early/Late Language Acquisition Task $t(28) = -.674, p = ns$; the Age Task, $t(28) = .24, p = ns$; and the Parent Language Acquisition Task, $t(28) = -.36, p = ns$ results fail to support my second hypothesis. It is interesting to note that on average, all participants thought that 9.32 years was the ideal age to begin learning a new language and 80% of all the participants responded “yes,” it would be a good idea for their parents to begin learning a new language now.

In order to detect how the different tasks related to one another, an intercorrelation matrix was produced (see Table 2). The correlations between the Dance Task and the non-Spanish Smiley Task, $r(28) = .51, p < .05$; the Dance Task and Spanish Smiley Task, $r(28) = .49, p < .05$; and the non-Spanish Smiley and the Spanish Smiley, $r(28) = .70, p < .05$ were statistically significant. Therefore, all tasks using the smiley scale method for measuring children’s attitudes

were correlated. The correlation between the Age Task and the Early/Late Language Acquisition Task also showed a significant relationship, $r(28) = -.58, p < .05$. Note that the negative correlation here occurred because the coding for these two tasks was done in an inverted way. Therefore, students who responded with “early” for this task also gave a younger ideal language acquisition age. Lastly, the Sorting Task significantly correlated with the Travel Task $r(28) = .40, p < .05$, which shows that students who were more successful with sorting countries into Spanish and non-Spanish categories were more interested in traveling to Spanish-speaking countries. The Sorting Task was also correlated with the Scheduling Task, $r(28) = .49, p < .05$. Note that the scoring for the Scheduling Task and the Sorting Task were inverted; thus, as students ranked Spanish class as more important, they were less successful with sorting out countries into Spanish and non-Spanish categories.

Discussion

As outlined previously, the results partially support my first hypothesis that the SI group would show higher interest, knowledge, and understanding and have a more positive attitude of foreign countries and Spanish-speaking countries. The Sorting Task results showed that the SI group had better knowledge of the languages spoken in foreign countries, and the Travel Task results revealed that the SI group had greater interest in traveling to countries where Spanish is spoken. The possibility that these differences occurred due to differing encounters with foreign or Spanish-speaking people is unlikely, given the non-significant Foreign Friend task results. Therefore, the results show that the SI group’s Spanish instruction increased their knowledge about associations between language and nations. Furthermore, it sparked interest in traveling to countries associated with Spanish, thus encouraging aspirations for first-hand cultural learning experiences in the future.

Additionally, the significant correlation between the Sorting Task and the Travel Task responses shows that the participants who were more successful at sorting countries by language spoken were also more likely to name Spanish-speaking countries in their top-three travel destinations. Perhaps this observation models a real-life occurrence of the Mere Exposure Effect. Increased exposure to Spanish foreign countries may have led participants to find those Spanish-speaking places more desirable travel destinations. Alternatively, life experiences and Spanish instruction yielding increased knowledge could be underlying factors of this correlation. For example, if a student had traveled to Mexico, they probably knew that Spanish is spoken there; if a student had learned that Costa Rica is full of vibrant tropical rain forests in Spanish class, they probably knew the language spoken there and would want to visit.

A deeper look into the SI group's Spanish curriculum provides helpful insight into what about the curriculum may have fostered the difference between groups for these tasks. The A2LP Spanish curriculum is progressive and designed to include cultural learning. For example, one lesson has students practice talking about the weather by giving weather reports for different Spanish locations. Another lesson has students assume roles of travel agents and clients and plan pretend trips to various Spanish-speaking countries. The connection between students participating in these types of activities in Spanish class, performing higher on the Sorting and Travel tasks, and having progressed development of cross-cultural knowledge and interest is clear.

While the link between A2LP coursework and apparent cultural benefits is promising, results for other tasks suggested a lack of support for my first hypothesis. The Ball Toss Task showed that the SI group and NFLI group were similarly likely to spontaneously name a Spanish-speaking country. Although this task did not directly tap into knowledge, interest,

attitudes or understanding, it did reveal common mental accessibility to Spanish and non-Spanish foreign countries across the two groups. This implies that given four opportunities to name any foreign country, Spanish-speaking countries did not have higher salience in the minds of children receiving Spanish instruction. It is likely that this occurred because the A2LP curriculum only occasionally brings up specific countries. Other factors such as participants' personal connections to foreign countries, learning of other countries in other coursework, and recent news coverage may have played a larger role in which countries were most automatically accessible in the participants' minds.

The Moving Task revealed that the children in both groups had similar interest in moving to a place that speaks a language other than English, regardless of whether the language spoken is Spanish. The A2LP curriculum aims for Apprentice Teachers to address students in the target language as much as possible and gives students an opportunity to develop skills in acquiring a new language without dependence on English. Although SI students received in-class experiences of being taught Spanish in mostly Spanish, the non-significantly different results show that this SI experience did not increase children's preference for moving to a place where English is not the main language. It is likely that this occurred because the SI students were not truly immersed in a foreign culture. Their greater surroundings included their American peers, classroom, school, and community. Perhaps the target language teaching was too superficial for SI students to be able to form meaningful confidence and enthusiasm in regard to authentic foreign language immersion.

The Smiley and Dance tasks suggested that there was no difference between the groups in attitudes toward foreign and Spanish cultures, traditions, or people. With the assumption that the measures for attitude were accurate, these results imply that the A2LP curriculum's capacity to

affect actual attitudes was limited, and that perhaps other social influences and personal preferences held more power over the children's attitudes of foreign cultures. However, a more reasonable explanation for the similarity in attitude between the two groups is that the "Smiley Scale" did not successfully measure the participants' true attitudes. Non-significant responses to the 4th statement on the Smiley Task, "I would like to travel to a place where the people speak Spanish," contradicts the significant results from the Travel Task in which the SI group named significantly more Spanish-speaking countries where they would like to travel. Furthermore, the significant correlation between the Smiley Task and Dance Task suggest that the participants who pointed to happier faces for the Smiley Task were significantly more likely to point to the happier faces for the Dance Task. Perhaps the participants' preferences relating to the scale itself had more of an effect on participants' responses than their actual attitudes did.

Results from the Scheduling, Early/Late Language Acquisition, Age, and Parent Language Acquisition tasks fail to support my second hypothesis, which stated that students receiving foreign language instruction would place greater importance upon learning a foreign language in school and upon beginning the study of foreign languages at a younger age. The fact that no differences were found between the groups' opinions for these items suggests that the SI group's foreign language courses had no effect on elementary students' ideas of when in life one should begin learning a foreign language, or on the importance of having foreign language courses during the elementary years. When averaged, the reported ages were roughly close to the average age of the participants. However, the variation in these ages shows that only about half of the children actually reported an age close to their own age. Thus, the results demonstrate a general uncertainty and disagreement about the ideal age to acquire a foreign language. Furthermore, there is a contradiction between the average ideal age reported and the large

majority's response that it would be a good idea for their parents to begin learning a new language. This could be a reflection of the participants' actual openness to adults learning a new language even though on average the ideal age is closer to 9 years old. It could also be explained with the leading wording of the question and the participants' eagerness to agree for something to be a good idea. Results from a question such as, "Do you think kids or adults are better at learning new languages?" may have been more telling.

The Scheduling Task showed that the SI group and the NFLI group did not significantly differ in their views of the importance of learning Spanish in school in comparison to other electives. However, there was a significant positive correlation between the Scheduling Task and the Sorting Task. Given the reverse coding of the scales for these two tasks, children who demonstrated higher levels of cultural knowledge in the Sorting Task ranked Spanish courses as less important. Perhaps this connection has to do with these particular children feeling sufficiently competent in their knowledge of foreign cultures and the less competent children recognizing their lack of knowledge or confidence. The Scheduling task always occurred later than the Sorting Task, so feelings of confidence or uncertainty while attempting to sort out countries could have later affected how children ranked Spanish class.

The results of the present study contribute to answering the overarching question of whether culture can successfully be taught within the walls of a classroom. Keeping in mind that the effects were modest, the increased knowledge and travel interests in the SI group points out that foreign language classes can have a positive impact on children's intercultural interests and understanding given an effortful emphasis on culture in the curriculum. This finding contradicts previous studies that looked at development of cross-cultural attitudes and beliefs of foreign language students across time and concluded that no change occurred (Byram et al., 1991;

Drewelow, 2010). For developmental psychologists to gain a better understanding of the formation of intercultural competencies, perhaps it is more effective to isolate certain factors that may contribute toward individual development, such as foreign language courses, travel experiences, family values, media influences, and community diversity. The current study suggests that foreign language courses do have the capacity to accelerate children's cross-cultural competencies, thus providing educators with reason to maintain a focus on making culture the core of foreign language learning.

In regard to patterns in child development of feelings, knowledge and beliefs toward other national groups, the overall findings of the present study agree with prior research findings. Past researchers have analyzed broad populations, looking at multiple age groups worldwide and found that development in this area is highly idiosyncratic (Barret, 2006; Klineberg, 1967). Given the present study's conclusions that foreign language plays some role in individual development, it is logical to assume that other varying factors have effects on an individual basis too. As children gain different life experiences in and out of the classroom, their overall understandings of the world alter.

Although the present study builds upon prior research in an important way, several factors threaten its internal and external validity. Aside from the previously mentioned limitations of certain measures (e.g. smiley scale, question wording), the main threat to the study's internal validity is the question of whether the two groups were comprised of random samples from populations that were parallel in every way except for their Spanish instruction at school. Actual participants were selected for the study on the basis of submitting consent forms, which prevents the sample from being truly random. Furthermore, the sample groups are relatively small and only come from one classroom for each school. These schools are in nearby

towns, but the surrounding communities are not parallel. The SI school was in a small city with a diverse population and the influence of a large progressive university. The NFLI school was in a smaller town with a less diverse population. The SI school district's efforts to implement A2LP Spanish instruction in the first place reflects general values and resources in the community that interfere with holding the two towns on a level plane. Furthermore, social, economical, and cultural aspects unique to the population studied make it difficult to extend the findings of this study to the general population. Without examining a large sample from multiple locations and varying types of foreign language instruction, it is difficult to predict how consistent the findings would be for other populations.

With the limitations and the implications of the present study in mind, future research on children's development of cross-cultural understanding and the benefits of maintaining a cultural focus in foreign language courses is highly important. One possibility is to improve upon the measures of the present study and to extend this research to broader populations. It may be more effective to examine children's attitudes toward foreign cultures with more open-ended questions and a qualitative data analysis. To follow up on the present study's finding that Spanish instruction encouraged Spanish travel interests, it would be interesting to conduct a longitudinal study that tracks whether these aspirations transform into first-hand experiences abroad that allow interest and understanding of foreign cultures to compound. Future research that isolates various possible influences of idiosyncratic development of cross-cultural feelings, knowledge, and beliefs could provide educators with a better understanding of how to help the youth to successfully relate cross-culturally and realize the importance of learning this skill. Lastly, future research on the ways that the A2LP program effectively fosters cross-cultural learning and the

ways in which it could improve in this area would be very beneficial to both A2LP and future foreign language education designs.

References

- Barrett, M. (2006). *Children's knowledge, beliefs, and feelings about nations and national groups*. Hove: Psychology Press.
- Byram, M., Esarte-Sarries, V. and Taylor, S. (1991) *Cultural studies and language learning: a research report*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
- Byrnes, H. (2010). Revisiting the role of culture in the foreign language curriculum. *The Modern Language Journal*, 94, 315-317.
- Drewelow, I (2010). *The influence of instructed learning on american college students' cultural assumptions about the french language and people*. (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). University of Wisconsin, Madison.
- Furstenberg, G. (2010). Making culture the core of the language class: Can it be done? *The Modern Language Journal*, 94, 329-332.
- GreatSchools Inc. (2011). *Michigan Schools*. Retrieved from <http://www.greatschools.org/>
- Jahoda, G. (1964). Children's concepts of nationality: A critical study of Piaget's stages. *Child Development*, 35, 1081-1092.
- Kearney, E. (2010). Cultural immersion in the foreign language classroom: Some narrative possibilities. *The Modern Language Journal*, 94, pp. 332-335.
- Kumaravadeivu, B. (2007). *Cultural globalization and language education*. Yale University: Mary Jane Peluso.
- Lambert, W. E. & Klineberg, O. (1967). *Children's views of foreign people*. New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts.
- Lange, D. L. (2003). *Culture as the core: perspectives on culture in second language learning*. Greenwich, CT: Information Age Pub.

Piaget, J. & Weil, A. (1951). The development in children of the idea of the homeland and of relations with other countries. *International Social Science Journal*, 3, pp. 561-578.

University of Michigan School of Education. (2008). *The Ann Arbor Languages Partnership* [Brochure]. Retrieved from: http://www.a2schools.org/ins.home/world_languages

Author Note

Jocelyn Kuhn, Department of Psychology, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.

Thank you to my mentor Dr. Susan Gelman for collaborating with me on this project and for supporting me throughout my undergraduate career. I learned and grew so much from working with her. Also, thank you to Dr. Maria Coolican for helping to coordinate the research sites and for helping to make my participation in A2LP extremely rewarding. Lastly, I give a special thanks to my family and friends for their wonderful support.

Table 1

Contrast of SI Group and NFLI Group for All Interview Tasks

Task	Maximum Score	Spanish Instruction		No Foreign Language Instruction		<i>p</i>
		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	
Ball Toss	4	0.54	0.78	0.29	0.58	<i>ns</i>
Travel	3	0.61	0.65	0.12	0.33	.022
Sorting	12	10.46	1.61	8.30	2.34	.008
Friend	2	0.54	0.66	0.82	0.73	<i>ns</i>
Moving	2	0.73	0.73	0.64	0.61	<i>ns</i>
Smiley – non-Spanish	15	11.58	2.91	10.56	2.54	<i>ns</i>
Smiley – Spanish	15	11.92	2.81	11.47	2.43	<i>ns</i>
Scheduling	6	3.54	1.45	3.00	1.54	<i>ns</i>
Dance	20	12.54	3.31	13.18	3.66	<i>ns</i>
Language acquisition: early/late	1	0.81	0.33	0.88	0.28	<i>ns</i>
Language acquisition: age	-	9.54	5.01	9.14	3.88	<i>ns</i>
Language acquisition: parents	1	0.77	0.44	0.82	0.39	<i>ns</i>

Note. P-values < .05 are in boldface.

Table 2

Summary of Intercorrelations for Scores on Dependent Task Variables

Measure	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Ball Toss	1								
2. Trip	.000	1							
3. Sorting	.027	.402*	1						
4. Moving	.220	.210	.155	1					
5. Smiley – non-Spanish	.227	-.023	.230	.196	1				
6. Smiley – Spanish	.259	.008	.154	.017	.696**	1			
7. Scheduling	.109	.154	.493**	-.028	.165	.048	1		
8. Dance	.244	.078	.084	.065	.512**	.492**	.252	1	
9. Language acquisition: early/late	.051	.000	.204	-.076	-.128	.203	.158	-.100	1
10. Language acquisition: age	.156	.202	-.089	.153	-.072	-.110	-.129	-.098	-.577**

Note. Intercorrelations for all participants ($n = 30$) are presented. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$ (2-tailed).

Appendix A

World Map Image Used in Travel Task and Moving Task



Appendix B

Smiley Scale Used for the Smiley Task and Dance Task

