

FOREIGN LANGUAGE ENROLLMENT ATTRITION:  
EXPLORING THE KEY FACTORS OF  
MOTIVATION,  
ACADEMIC SUCCESS, INSTRUCTION, AND ANXIETY  
AT THE ELEMENTARY LEVEL

By

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## ABSTRACT

The Olathe District Schools has been experiencing a trend of enrollment decline in middle School Spanish since 2007 despite the implementation of a video-based elementary Spanish program.

The purpose of this study was to investigate the influential factors of motivation (integrative/instrumental), instruction, academic success, and anxiety, which are found in the literature related to foreign language enrollment attrition, to determine whether any of these four variables could predict whether students continued or discontinued enrollment in Spanish upon entering their middle school years in the Olathe School District.

Gardner's mini-AMTB with slight modifications was administered to 560 5<sup>th</sup> grade students. A binary logistic regression was then run. Results revealed that students with higher levels of integrative motivation were more likely to continue in their Spanish studies upon entering middle school. In addition, the results of this study support the findings of several foreign language program enrollment attrition studies done at the secondary level. Recommendations for the Superintendent, International Language Assistants (ILA's), and the District Foreign Language Coordinator were made based on the findings of this study.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

As of 2010, the United States reported 46.9 million Spanish speakers, ranking them number two in the world only behind Mexico (Aldrich, 2010). It therefore comes as no surprise that according to a study done by the Modern Language Association (MLA, 2010) Spanish is the most commonly studied foreign language in the U.S. with French and German close behind (MLA, 2010). However, this has not always been the case. Throughout the years, many changes have occurred in language study in the United States. Dating back to WWI, German was more commonly taught than any other language with Latin a close second (Barnwell, 2008). In 1958, The National Defense Education Act (NDEA) provided funding for teachers to be trained with the capabilities of teaching German, French, Spanish, and Russian at both the elementary and secondary levels with the rationale being that if United States scientists could have read Russian journals, they would have been cognizant of the development of the Sputnik before it was launched in 1957 (Curtain & Dahlberg, 2010). This served as the catalyst to a language surge in the United States. Interestingly enough, out of the four languages stated in the NDEA, the 60's provided a slow shift toward an overwhelming domination of French and Spanish with the latter ultimately winning out in the 1970's (Barnwell, 2008). Now, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Spanish still continues to be the most predominantly taught foreign language (MLA, 2010).

Current national trends indicate increases in enrollment across almost all languages studied with Arabic showing the largest percentage growth (MLA, 2010). This may be due to the fact that as of 2008, 26% of all U.S. colleges and universities had

incorporated some foreign language proficiency as an admission requirement (Barnwell, 2008). Yet another theory could emerge from the number of people with languages other than English entering the United States daily to start new beginnings. “In terms of total immigration to the United States, Latin American immigration numbers are higher than any other region in the world” (Aldrich, 2010, p. 3). Following this pattern between the years of 2008 and 2050 the Hispanic population is projected to reach 30% of the total U.S. population (Aldrich, 2010).

It is clear from these estimations that future generations in the United States will need to be capable of communicating effectively in a language other than English in order to function in a much more linguistically diverse society. Schools need to prepare their students for a diverse work force. Therefore, districts experiencing patterns of enrollment attrition in language courses need to evaluate the underpinnings of this occurrence as it is not reflective of the national trend.

The researcher’s interest in this area develops out of her experience as a foreign language educator at the middle school level. Upon entering middle school, students are suddenly thrown into a world of choice with the freedom to explore options beyond the required core curriculum. It is this choice from which the name “elective course” emerges, as students get to *elect* a small number of the courses in which they will enroll. Although they can only make a very limited number of selections at this level in their educational journey, the options they can choose from are plentiful, often encompassing courses in foreign languages, the performing arts, consumer sciences, leadership, industrial technology, computer technology, and artistic design. With so many choices, and only a few hours to fill in their day, a tough decision awaits every middle school

scholar as one hopes to select that perfect option that will be interesting, engaging, and fun.

As an introductory level Spanish teacher, I think it is important to get students involved in a program that will help them in a society which is growing more diverse daily. It is a well known fact that learning a foreign language such as Spanish offers an array of benefits (see ACTFL, 2010; Armstrong & Rogers, 1997; Bialystok, 1999; Cade, 1997; Cooper, 1987; Cunningham & Graham, 2000; Curtain & Dahlberg, 2010; Koning, 2009a; Koning, 2009b; Koning, 2010; Kormi-Nouri, Moniri, & Nilsson, 2003; Marcos, 1997; Marcos, 1998; Stewart, 2005; Weatherford, 1986). However, proficiency in a second language does not happen overnight. On the contrary, developing a level of proficiency that provides a minimal level of communicative ability for the learner takes many years of practice, study, and exposure to the language. This is why many of the larger districts across the U.S., including the Olathe District Schools, are adding a language course in the elementary years where students obtain instruction in a foreign language just like they would in music, art, or physical education.

#### The Olathe School District Elementary Foreign Language Program

The Olathe School District is the 2<sup>nd</sup> largest school district in the State of Kansas. In the 2006-2007 school year, they began the implementation of a video-mediated Spanish language program in grades K-5. As Olathe consists of 34 elementary schools, a phase-in period was proposed to gradually introduce the program to all of the elementary buildings. In the first year, 2006-2007, only eight elementary buildings received the program. In 2007-2008, six more were introduced. In 2008-2009, nine more elementary



schools received the program, and by the 2009-2010 school year, all elementary buildings were incorporating the Spanish program into their weekly schedule.

The video-based Spanish lessons are approximately 30 minutes in length and occur twice a week. Before each lesson, students are given a 6 page packet that is to be used during the video presentation. The first two pages consist of the vocabulary that will be presented as well as a warm-up activity and the objectives for the day. The third and fourth pages consist of a synopsis of the video segment that they will be watching. Finally the last pages in the packet are devoted to an activity over the lesson and any types of preparation needed to complete the activity. Therefore a typical lesson would be divided chronologically by the following:

- Warm-up using familiar material 3 minutes
- Review of material from previous lesson 5 minutes
- Presentation of video 12 minutes
- Change of pace and/or cultural activity 3 minutes
- Wrap-up/preview of next lesson 1 minute

The proposed outline adds to only 24 minutes. The remaining six minutes is used as transition time and also adds for an allowance of extra time in case any of the five sections of the lesson go longer than anticipated.

As indicated by the outline above, the video is very short in length. In it, a teacher, along with her puppets, greets the class. The puppets are then used to help convey the lesson and present the content to the students. In general, the video program instructor is very transparent and unauthentic in nature, a characteristic that is probably undetectable for very young children. However, as an adult, one can see that the content is presented in a manner that seems fake and unbelievable, as it is easy to identify the forced, over zealous nature of the instructor. Upon viewing the various grade levels and

the videos that are respectively shown at each level, it seems that minimal changes are made as to the way the content is presented. Even though the students are maturing, the presentation of the material throughout their K-5 sequence does not. Overall, the presentation comes across as very elementary in nature. As such, anecdotal evidence indicates that students in the upper levels of the elementary program may not have as much “buy in” as younger elementary students.

Pertaining to evaluation, formal assessment of material is undergone after each unit of vocabulary. Each assessment is very “elementary friendly” focusing on the auditory and visual learning of the Spanish vocabulary as it was presented in the video program. Many assessments are geared toward the child hearing a term and circling the correct picture. No written assessments are given. Strictly vocabulary identification and listening comprehension are tested in all units throughout all grade levels. As students progress through the grade levels, pictures are gradually replaced with matching items where students have to match questions with responses or English terms with their Spanish equivalents.

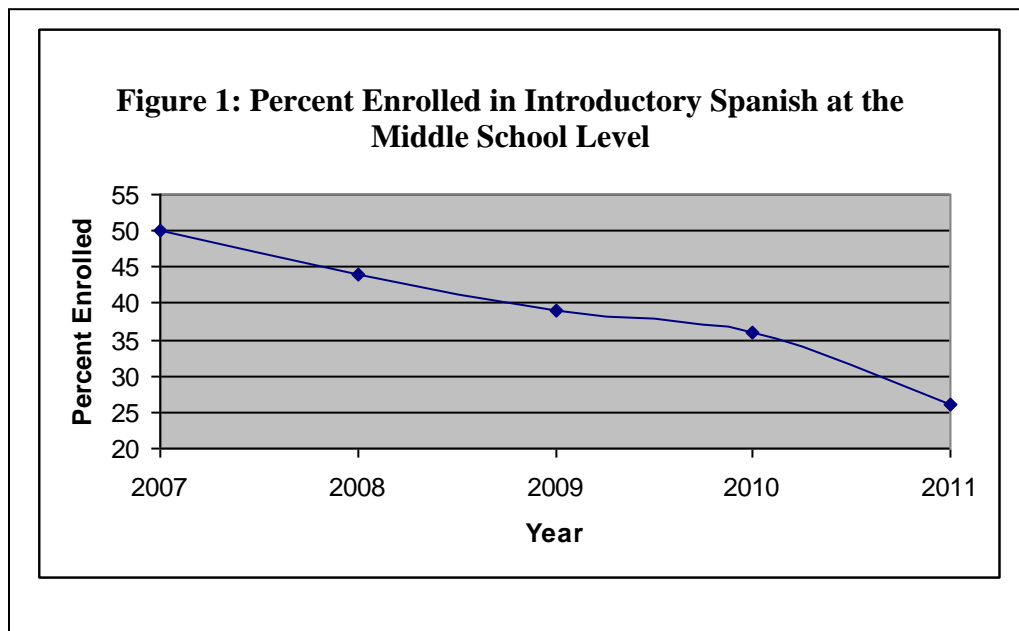
As budget constraints prohibited the hiring of more certified foreign language teachers, individuals were solicited to help facilitate the introduction of the video program. These facilitators were and still are not required to hold any type of degree in foreign language. Instead they only need to be able to run activities and the video program effectively. These international language assistants, or ILA’s as they are called, are trained for a day and a half before the new school year begins by the veteran ILA’s and the district foreign language coordinator. During this training session, classroom management, behavior supports, best practices, how to run the video program, and

classroom procedural items are covered so that each individual has minimal knowledge of what to expect before stepping into a classroom. They are also trained in how to informally and formally assess their students and signs to watch for throughout the video lesson to evaluate student engagement in the program.

One of the goals of this elementary Spanish program in the Olathe Schools is to teach students basic Spanish vocabulary and structures that are part of everyday communication as well as introduce customs and cultures of Spanish-speaking countries. This allows students to have a very introductory knowledge of the language by the time they leave elementary school. The idea is that by exposing students to a foreign language early on, when presented with electives in middle school, students will choose to continue in a Spanish course upon entering the 6<sup>th</sup> grade. This, in turn, enables them to enroll in more advanced language courses upon entering high school, thus leading to a better proficiency in the target language at an earlier stage in life. This idea has long been upheld by Krashen, Long, and Scarcella (1979) when they state that children learning second languages acquire higher levels of end proficiency than individuals who wait until adulthood to begin second language studies. Since then, several studies have shown similar findings (see Bialystok, 1997; Bialystok & Hakuta, 1999; Dominguez & Pessoa, 2005; Harley, 1986; Pufahl et al, 2001; Stevens, 1999; Wesche, Morrison, Ready, & Pawley, 1990).

It is therefore a concern when in spite of the implementation of the elementary language program in the Olathe School District, Spanish enrollment trends, at the middle school level, show a decline and continue in a similar pattern over the course of several years. Figure 1 is a graphic representation which shows the percentage of students

enrolled in introductory middle school Spanish courses for the Olathe School District from 2007 to 2011.



From 2007 to 2009 there was a district-wide 22% decrease in Spanish enrollment in the Olathe School District. This is vastly different compared to the national data, which showed a 5.1% increase in Spanish enrollment (MLA, 2010). For Olathe, this decline in enrollment continued from 2009 to 2011 with a 33% decrease in enrollment reported. Interestingly enough, these years of enrollment decline coincide with the introduction of the elementary Spanish program. As one of the goals of the program is to promote interest in foreign languages, it is odd that middle school numbers are indicating just the opposite. In fact, as more elementary schools were phased into the program, enrollment numbers did not improve, but instead, continued to get worse. When exploring French numbers (the only other language offered to students besides Spanish at the middle school level) enrollment declined as well, dropping from 25% in 2007 to 21% in 2011. So students are not choosing to simply explore a different language. Instead, they are

ending their language studies all together. With a newly implemented Spanish elementary program and numbers so different than those reported nationally, questions then arise as to what factors are contributing to such significant decreases in Spanish enrollment in the Olathe District. Why are students, upon entering middle school, choosing not to enroll in Spanish? In contrast, why are those few students who do enroll electing to continue?

### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate the influential factors of 1) motivation, 2) instruction, 3) academic success, and 4) anxiety, which are found in the literature related to foreign language program attrition, to determine whether any of these four variables could predict whether students continued or discontinued enrollment in Spanish upon entering their middle school years in the Olathe School District. One of the goals of this study was to offer suggestions, dependent on the findings, to the Olathe School District related to modifications that could be made to the current elementary Spanish program. The result of the implementation of these suggestions, based on the findings of this study, will hopefully lead to enrollment increases in Spanish at the middle school level.

Furthermore, although language course continuance and discontinuance factors have been explored at the high school and college levels (see Bailey, Onwuegbuzie, & Daley, 2003; Glatthorn & Edwards, 1967; Holt, 2006; Lima, 1973; Lucas, 1995; Massey, 1994; Minert, 1992; Mueller & Harris, 1966; Noels, Clément, & Pelletier, 1999; Pratt, Agnello, & Santos, 2009; Ramage 1990; Saito-Abbott & Samimy, 1997; Speiller, 1988), the research is virtually non-existent in the elementary/middle school years. This study

would add to the very limited body of literature on this topic at the elementary/middle school level (see Bartley, 1970; Clément, Smythe., & Gardner, 1978) and hopefully spark discussion on how these four factors play a role in a student's decision making process as it relates to language enrollment options.

### Conceptual Framework

The several studies that have been conducted on foreign language program attrition (see Mueller & Harris, 1966; Glatthorn & Edwards, 1967; Bartley, 1970; Lima, 1973; Clément, Smythe., & Gardner, 1978; Speiller, 1988; Ramage 1990; Minert, 1992; Massey, 1994; Lucas, 1995; Saito-Abbott & Samimy, 1997; Noels, Clément, & Pelletier, 1999; Bailey, Onwuegbuzie, & Daley, 2003; Holt, 2006; Pratt, Agnello, & Santos, 2009) have shown a connection between enrollment attrition and the following four areas: motivation, academic success, instruction, and anxiety.

As to motivation, several researchers have built on Gardner's definition which divides the construct into integrative motivation and instrumental motivation. What has been found is that more studies link continued enrollment in language programs to integrative motivation rather than to instrumental, although a few have shown the reverse. As attitude and motivation have been linked, attitudes have also been studied related to language program persistence. Results show that positive attitudes toward language learning lead individuals to continue enrollment.

In the studies on academic success, in general students who get higher grades and feel more successful in language courses tend to continue studying the subject. In contrast, those receiving poor marks elect to discontinue enrollment. Related to instruction, discontinuing students in several studies showed a dislike for teaching

methodologies. Furthermore, in some cases, even dislike of the instructor was a reason given by discontinuers for not enrolling in subsequent years.

Finally, anxiety is the last factor that has been explored in the area of foreign language enrollment attrition; however, the studies in this area are sparse compared with research related to the other three factors. Of the few studies that have been done, results show that students with higher levels of anxiety discontinue enrollment. What is clear is that there is more room for research in this area to further explore this link.

As the literature in the field is concentrated on these four areas, this study was centered on motivation, academic success, instruction, and anxiety as well, in order to determine whether any of these four variables could help predict whether students continued or discontinued enrollment in Spanish upon entering their middle school years in the Olathe School District.

### Summary

By studying a foreign language, students not only become able to communicate in more than one language but also can receive multiple personal, economic, and academic benefits. As the benefits of studying languages increase as one's proficiency does, it is important to get students involved in a language program at an early age and retain those individuals in the program over the years. Several studies have been conducted on foreign language program attrition (see Bailey, Onwuegbuzie, & Daley, 2003; Bartley, 1970; Clément, Smythe,, & Gardner, 1978; Glatthorn & Edwards, 1967; Holt, 2006; Lima, 1973; Lucas, 1995; Massey, 1994; Minert, 1992; Mueller & Harris, 1966; Noels, Clément, & Pelletier, 1999; Pratt, Agnello, & Santos, 2009; Ramage 1990; Saito-Abbott & Samimy, 1997; Speiller, 1988) and the following factors have been found to be

influential in a student's choice of whether to continue or discontinue enrollment in a language program: motivation, academic success, instruction, and anxiety. However, the majority of these studies focus on students in language programs at the high school or university level, with a significant gap in the literature occurring at the elementary/middle school years. It is therefore very valuable to the field to conduct research on young language learners in the very beginning of their language studies and explore how these factors are influential in their language enrollment decisions.

Currently, as the 2<sup>nd</sup> largest district in the state of Kansas, the Olathe District School is experiencing a trend of enrollment decline in introductory Spanish upon the transition from elementary to middle school. This is especially alarming as it does not follow the national trend, which indicates a 5% increase in Spanish enrollment over recent years. In fact, students are electing to quit language studies all together as French numbers are declining as well. This indicates that many of the students in the Olathe District are missing out on the many benefits that result from studying a foreign language. Interestingly, this enrollment decline coincides with the implementation of an elementary Spanish program, which should logically result in enrollment increases. This study was advantageous in many ways. The factors of motivation, academic success, instruction, and anxiety were explored to determine whether, at the transitioning years from elementary to middle school, any of these variables could help predict whether students continued or discontinued enrollment in Spanish. The findings will not only aid the Olathe School District in their quest of language learner retention, as solutions were offered based on findings, but also add to the literature on foreign language



enrollment attrition with this age group, where previous studies on this topic have been lacking.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### Benefits of Studying a Foreign Language

In the earlier years of foreign language education, many believed the only value of studying a language other than one's L1 was to increase an individual's "intellectual capacity" (Weatherford, 1986). Now, however, investigators have indicated that studying a foreign language can be beneficial in multiple areas and therefore goes well beyond the notion of mental discipline (see ACTFL, 2010; Armstrong & Rogers, 1997; Bialystok, 1999; Cade, 1997; Cooper, 1987; Cunningham & Graham, 2000; Curtain & Dahlberg, 2010; Koning, 2009a; Koning, 2009b; Koning, 2010; Kormi-Nouri, Moniri, & Nilsson, 2003; Marcos, 1997; Marcos, 1998; Stewart, 2005; Weatherford, 1986). Indeed, studying a foreign language has many personal, economic, and academic benefits as well.

#### *Personal Benefits*

When individuals decide to study a foreign language, they receive several personal benefits from that experience. Clearly, one of the advantages lies in the ability to communicate effectively in a language other than one's L1. Students learn to express their thoughts and feelings in multiple ways which allows them access to more avenues of opportunity when compared to their monolingual counterparts. According to the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Language (ACTFL), learning a second language expands children's communication abilities, thus enabling them to converse with more individuals than their monolingual peers (2010). Additionally, with this advanced ability to effectively communicate in more than one language comes the

capacity to be able to read published texts from different parts of the world and understand those texts in their native tongue as opposed to a translated edition (Marcos, 1998).

Foreign language study also opens the doors to more enhanced travel experiences. Advancements in transportation have made international travel more accessible than it ever has been before. Now people are able to hop on any one of numerous flights to go to international destinations around the globe. It is the difference upon arrival in that foreign destination that is noteworthy. Those individuals who have studied a foreign language do not view language as a barrier during their travel experience as they have acquired the ability to effectively communicate in multiple tongues. Multilingual individuals tend to have a deeper understanding of the target culture and therefore gain more from the travel experience overall when compared to their monolingual counterparts (Marcos, 1998). They are able to “understand and appreciate people from other countries” (ACTFL, 2010, p. 1). As Weatherford (1986) states, “every language Americans master will enhance their enjoyment and reduce their frustration and isolation as they travel around the world” (p. 2).

### *Economic Benefits*

According to Curtain and Dahlberg (2010), “language study has been related to the success of the United States in the international marketplace and to the skills required for happy and productive living in a future of increasing global interdependence” (p. 427). The world is increasingly becoming more interconnected. With that, the U.S. is finally recognizing that being able to converse in multiple languages is becoming a requirement to conduct business (Weatherford, 1986). Koning (2010) cites how “foreign

ownership of U.S. companies more than doubled between 1996 and 2005” (p. 46). Quoting Nido Quibein, president of Great Harvest Bread Company and successful speaker and consultant, “as our world becomes even smaller, given our communication media and technology, one can sell more, lead more, and inspire teams more with an appreciation for language skills” (Koning, 2010, p. 46). Links have been made that connect the ability to communicate in multiple languages and the development of a deeper cultural awareness and understanding (ACTFL, 2010; Marcos, 1997; Stewart, 2005). Students learn to value the cultures and customs of others around the world through their language learning (Marcos, 1998), thus giving them the added advantage of functioning in a diverse work environment. As Weatherford (1986) states, “the study of another language provides the most effective tool for penetrating the barrier of a single language and a single culture” (p. 2). It is clear that the current *advantage* of being fluent in an L2 is becoming an increasing *necessity*.

Studying foreign languages also has an economic advantage through its ability to increase career opportunities. As mentioned previously, statistics show that the U.S. is changing and becoming more linguistically diverse daily. Many areas such as governmental agencies, health care, and business institutions need individuals who are multilingual. In the area of governmental agencies, according to Koning (2009a), “the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), and National Security Agency (NSA) all hire hundreds of foreign language professionals each year” (p. 32). In fact the CIA offers a \$35,000 signing bonus to multilingual individuals for certain job openings (Koning, 2009a). Furthermore, in the U.S., many positions in the field of health care are posting language skills as a requirement for several positions, as

the necessity to communicate with non-English speaking patients is becoming a daily occurrence (Koning, 2009b). One of these jobs is in the area of medical interpreting. This particular position, within the health care field, is in increasingly higher demand as it is an attempt to combat medical errors committed due to the inability to communicate with patients from linguistically diverse backgrounds. In the business field, 42% of businesses reported considering language skills when hiring new employees (Koning, 2010). Even if not used to initially gain employment, those who are multilingual have reported increased promotion opportunities due to their linguistic skills as an added benefit (Weatherford, 1986). Individuals with language skills are truly at an advantage compared to their monolingual colleagues (Koning, 2010). By studying a foreign language, an individual is acquiring a skill that is and will be in even higher demand. The result of such an undertaking as becoming proficient in more than one language is increased job opportunities and the ability to be one step ahead in the competitive job market (ACTFL, 2010).

### *Academic Benefits*

One of the academic advantages related to foreign language study is the ability to increase test scores. Studies show that students who study foreign languages actually perform better on standardized tests than students who study in other areas (Marcos, 1997). Armstrong and Rogers (1997) tested third graders and compared scores on the Metropolitan Achievement Test between those receiving Spanish instruction and those who were not. The students in Spanish courses received significantly higher marks in both math and language on the test. Similarly, Cade (1997) found that students in language immersion programs receive cognitive benefits from their studies, such as

higher test scores and more divergent thinking abilities. In addition, Cunningham and Graham (2000) found that students in Spanish immersion programs significantly outperformed their non-immersion, English-speaking peers on the verbal test items, thus implying that positive transfer can occur between the two languages. This is insightful information in a time of high stakes testing and pressure to meet AYP.

Another added academic benefit to studying a foreign language is that it increases cognitive functioning. This idea is supported by ACTFL (2010), which cites some of the many benefits of learning a second language as “intellectual growth” and “flexibility in thinking” (p. 1). For example, Kormi-Nouri, Moniri, and Nilsson (2003) studied memory in bilingual and monolingual children. Their findings indicate that bilingual children can better organize information, thus aiding in memory. Bialystok (1999) found that bilingual students could solve more advanced problems that required selective attention than their monolingual peers. Similarly, she found that cognitive functioning is accelerated in bilingual individuals, thus facilitating problem solving abilities on certain tasks (Bialystok, 2005). With these mental flexibilities and more creative-thinking capabilities, resulting from language learning, students are more able to find solutions to problems. Their options become less limited in various fields through their foreign language studies as a result of their deeper understanding of people and cultures (Weatherford, 1986).

It is clear that there is an array of advantages that result from studying a foreign language that not only benefit the individual at a personal level but also can help advance him or her economically and furthermore provide an academic edge when compared to others who have not chosen to pursue the academic area of language study.

Unfortunately, many students are never able to see such beneficial gains due to their inability to begin foreign languages early and continue in such programs.

Pertaining to an early start, a decline in ultimate attainment in L2 proficiency has been linked to the age at which an individual begins learning a second language. This idea has long been upheld by Krashen, Long, and Scarcella (1979) when they state that children learning second languages acquire higher levels of end proficiency than individuals who wait until adulthood to begin second language studies. Similarly, Bialystok (1997) asserts that there is an inverse relationship found between the age at which a person begins language learning and the ultimate proficiency they attain. When exploring the age of arrival of Chinese and Spanish-speaking immigrants to the U.S., Bialystok and Hakuta (1999) reported that English proficiency declined steadily as immigrants' ages of arrival in the U.S. increased. Similar findings of attaining higher proficiency levels as well as having more confidence when speaking the L2 have been found by many researchers that support the notion that beginning younger is better (see Dominguez & Pessoa, 2005; Harley, 1986; Stevens, 1999; Wesche, Morrison, Ready, & Pawley, 1990). It is therefore not surprising when Pufahl, Rhodes, and Christian (2001), in their survey of 19 countries, revealed that foreign language educators promoted language learning beginning in the elementary years as participants felt that beginning early resulted in increased language proficiency.

However, beginning foreign language learning at an early age does not matter if students choose not to continue in their language studies. For example, although many foreign languages, like Spanish and French, have shown an increase nationally of approximately 5% in total enrollment since 2006, many students are choosing to

discontinue studies after only one year (Barnwell, 2008; MLA, 2010;). That does not include the more than 50% who reported not studying any language at all (Barnwell, 2008). College and high school institutions similarly show numbers higher in language introductory courses than intermediate or advanced (Aldrich, 2010). As Curtain and Dahlberg (2010) state, “one of the most important factors influencing the development of language proficiency is the amount of time spent in working with the language. When language learning begins earlier, it can go on longer and provide more practice and experience, leading ultimately to greater fluency and effectiveness” (p. 428). This failure to begin studying languages early and continue language program results in the loss of opportunities to gain any of its added advantages. In relationship to higher SAT scores, Cooper (1987) found that after 1 year of studying a foreign language, each subsequent half year revealed significant scholastic gains on the SAT. As Curtain (1990) states, “the economic, political, social, and intellectual benefits of foreign language proficiency are gained, in most cases, when students achieve advanced levels of language skill and cultural understanding” (p. 1). Therefore, the combination of an early start and continuance is a must.

Sadly, many students instead quit before reaching a high enough level of proficiency to take advantage of the benefits foreign language study has to offer. It therefore is troubling to see a declining trend in enrollment numbers in any foreign language program. If anything, in a society that is increasingly becoming more linguistically diverse daily, it is going to be essential that individuals develop proficiency in more than one language in order to become a fully educated person and be successful in the future job market. To develop a measurable proficiency in a second language,



students not only need to enroll in an early foreign language course but *continue* their enrollment in consecutive years. That is why it is important to investigate the reason why students are not choosing to enroll in such courses upon entering the 6<sup>th</sup> grade in the Olathe District, after having been introduced to the foreign language in their elementary years. The question that remains is: What are the distinguishing factors between continuing and discontinuing Spanish students in the Olathe School District?

### Video-Based Foreign Language Instruction

As this study centers itself on an elementary video-based foreign language program, it is important to briefly discuss research related to foreign language instruction through the use of videos and technology. Many instructors view videos as advantageous, believing that through the visual representation of content as well as exposure to native like dialogue, students will become more motivated to learn a foreign language (Herron, Morris, Secules, & Curtis, 1995a). When viewing videos, students are able to witness more authentic dialogue and interaction that is hard to create in a classroom setting (Secules, Herron, & Tomasello, 1992). In addition, videos can more easily explain vocabulary items that would otherwise be problematic to present in a normal classroom environment (Norum, 1997). There is evidence to suggest that one main advantage of video-based instruction is the increased listening ability in a foreign language. For example, in the Secules et al (1992) study, differences in traditional text-based foreign language instruction and instruction supplemented by video was studied among 52 randomly assigned college students. Results indicated that participants in the video enhanced course scored significantly higher on listening comprehension than those in the text-based course. Furthermore, no differences were found between groups in reading

and writing. This finding is additionally supported by Herron et al (1995a), where 28 French students enrolled at the University level were randomly assigned to a control group (where they encountered the traditional text-based foreign language instruction) and an experimental group (where students were instructed via video-program with supplementary workbooks). Students were then tested on reading, writing, grammar, speaking, and listening in the French language. Even though researchers had hypothesized that the control group would significantly outscore the experimental group on both the reading and writing assessments, results indicated that the only significantly different scores were found on the listening exam, with video-based instruction having the advantage.

Where video-based instruction becomes problematic is the extent to which it is used in place of a classroom teacher. As indicated by Herron et al (1995a), videos used within a classroom can be supplementary in nature, or can serve as the primary focus of the course being the main presenter of curricula. Hanley, Herron, and Cole (1995) caution educators about the heavy reliance on the use of videos as a sole instructional means, as increasing access to such technology “does not necessarily translate into more effective learning” (p. 58). Contrary to the evidence presented above, many instructors feel that primarily video-based language programs are lacking in that they will produce “passive language learners” with the inability to read or write in the target language nor function appropriately in a real-life, target setting (Herron et al, 1995a). When videos are used as the sole provider of instruction, teachers and students take a secondary role in learning. On the other hand, Cakir (2006) advocates for the use of videos along with activities that will engage the viewers and make them become actively involved in the

lesson. He states that a triangular relationship should exist between the video, teacher, and learner. Consequently, avenues have been explored in which the instructor plays an important role in the video-based classroom.

Secules et al (1992) emphasize the importance of the classroom teacher as an essential element to foreign language instruction, as a solely video-based curriculum cannot provide the variety of foreign language activities needed in reading, writing, listening, and speaking without teacher intervention. They found in a second experiment with college language students that vocabulary was better learned through teacher-led oral drills than video alone. Herron (1994) supported this finding with results that indicated college students' comprehensions of a video were enhanced by teacher intervention prior to the video being shown. In a similar study done by Hanley et al (1995), 5<sup>th</sup> grade elementary students were assessed on their reading comprehension in French through the use of differing advance organizers. The first group received the video presentation as a supplement to the reading passage while the second group listened to a teacher narrative of the passage along with pictures. Results indicated that students in the video group received significantly higher scores than those with the "pictures + teacher narrative condition" (p. 62). Additionally, Herron, Hanley, & Cole (1995b), found that college students benefited from "having the stage set" by a teacher presenting classroom pictures prior to the viewing of a video lesson (p. 393). Regardless of the results of these studies, it is interesting to note how each centers itself on the idea that the teacher should play a role in the instructional process. None of the studies advocate for an approach to video-based instruction where the teacher simply presses play and takes on a passive role in the instructional environment. Unfortunately, "the

video program model that is often used - and that is most appealing to administrators - is one in which the classroom teacher, typically not a speaker of the foreign language, facilitates the program while learning the language along with the students” (Rhodes & Puhfahl, 2003, p. 2). Experts indicate that the best video-based model is one where videos are used to supplement the existing curriculum in a classroom with a qualified foreign language professional (Rhodes & Puhfahl, 2003).

### Second Language Motivation Theory

The roots of research on factors relating to foreign language program attrition can be traced back to second language motivation theory. According to Dornyei and Ushioda (2011), “while intuitively we may know what we mean by the term ‘motivation’, there seems little consensus on its conceptual range of reference” (p. 3). Instead, motivation is viewed as a complex, “multifaceted” construct, thus making it practically impossible for anyone to offer even a simple definition of the term (Gardner, 2010). As such, researchers have focused their studies on what they feel are the various comprising components of motivation in attempt to uncover the pieces to the perplexing puzzle. In the field of foreign language, it has been no different. In fact, Dornyei and Ushioda (2011) identify how the history of second language motivation theory can be divided into the following periods: “the social psychological period (1959-1990),” “the cognitive-situated period (during the 1990’s),” and “the process-oriented period (the turn of the century)” (p. 39-40).

The social psychological period, as well as many of the current literature on second language motivation and second language program attrition, is grounded on the works of Wallace Lambert and Robert Gardner. As early as the 1950’s, these social

psychologists explored attitude, motivation, and aptitude as these factors relate to second language achievement. During this time, several important ideas emerged. The first was the concept of “orientation.” Gardner and Lambert’s (1959) investigation of high school French students first introduced the concept in terms of integrative and instrumental. According to Gardner and Lambert (1959), individuals with “integrative” aims study languages in order “to learn more about the language group, or to meet more and *different* people” (p. 267). In contrast, those with “instrumental” orientations choose to study languages for “the more utilitarian value of linguistic achievement” (Gardner & Lambert, 1959, p. 267). Their findings indicated that students with an integrative orientation were more successful than their instrumentally oriented peers (Gardner & Lambert, 1959).

This study served as the catalyst in the field. Since then, several researchers have conducted studies centered on the idea of identifying second language orientations (Belmechri & Hummel, 1998; Clément, Dornyei, & Noels, 1994; Clément & Kruidenier, 1983; Ely, 1986; Kimura, Nakata & Okumura, 2000; McClelland, 2000; Yashima, 2000; Warden & Lin, 2000). According to Gardner (2010), compilations of these researchers’ findings indicate that there could be over 50 orientations in total. However, he argues a misuse of the term “orientation” on part of the researchers as it was initially defined as “the overall aim, purpose, direction, and/or goal of [an] activity” and “not a group of reasons” (Gardner, 2010, p. 16). Therefore, he contends that many of the orientations identified by others can still be classified using the terms integrative or instrumental (Gardner, 2010).

During this period of second language motivation research, it was not until 1974 that Gardner and colleagues proposed the socio-educational model of second language

learning in a grant report (Gardner, 2010). The initial version of this model consisted of the grouping of variables into “group specific attitudes, course related characteristics, motivational indices, and generalized attitudes” (Gardner, 2010, p. 80). However, as research continued throughout the periods, alterations to Gardner’s initial model were a necessity. In fact, Dornyei and Ushioda (2011), state how the progression into the “cognitive-situated period” of second language motivational theory was characterized by the need to expand “the existing theoretical framework through integrating cognitive motivation concepts, rather than in terms of discarding social psychological perspective altogether” (p. 47). The result is the most recent version of the model shown below as it relates to learning the second language of French in Canada.

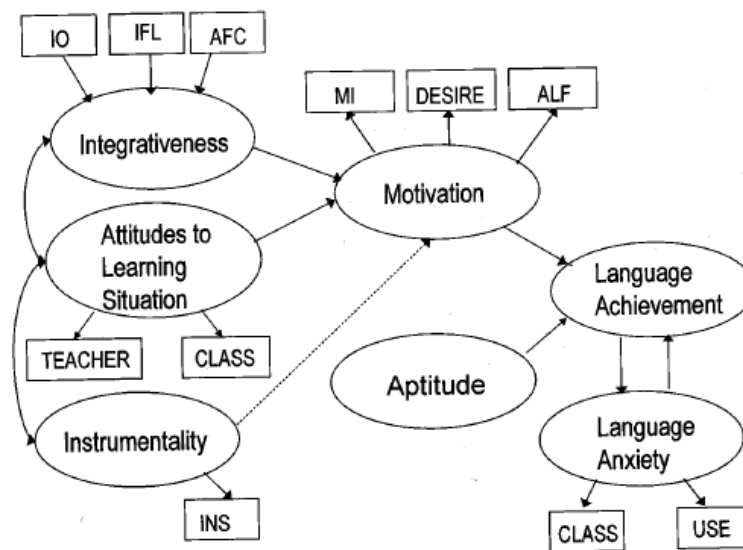


Figure 2. The socio-educational model from Gardner, 2010, p. 88.

There are several things that should be noted from the above model as its components resurface in the literature on foreign language enrollment attrition. First is the concept of “motivation.” Gardner (1985) asserts that motivation can be broken down into the components of effort or intensity, desire, and attitudes toward language learning.

These are denoted in the above diagram by MI, DESIRE, and ALF with “F” referring to French in this specific context (Gardner, 2010). According to Dornyei and Ushioda (2011), Gardner asserts that all three components must be considered together as all three are present in motivated individuals.

Second, the concepts of “instrumentality and “integrativeness” should be discussed. While “instrumentality” is derived solely from a subscale that deals strictly with an individual’s instrumental orientation, “integrativeness” is comprised of multiple components. As such, this variable in second language motivation theory has been misinterpreted as being a reference to the “integrative orientation” alone or “integrative motivation” (Gardner, 2010). To reinforce Gardner’s initial ideas, Dornyei and Ushioda (2011) assert that orientations should be viewed as goals which “help arouse motivation and direct it” (p. 41). However, the term “integrativeness” is much more complex and is made up of the following: “degree of integrative orientation” (IO), “attitudes toward the target language group” (AFC – as French Canadians were the target group in context of the above model), and “interest in foreign languages” (IFL) (Masgoret, Bernaus, & Gardner, 2001, p. 281). To expand the model one step further would be to incorporate what Gardner (2010) refers to as “integrative motivation” (not illustrated in the model depicted above) which incorporates the elements of “integrativeness, attitudes toward the learning situation, and motivation” (p. 91).

On the far right of the model, one can find “attitudes to learning situation.” Gardner (2010) argues that this variable can be described as “attitudes toward any aspect of the situation in which the language is learned” (p. 89). He cautions that it is unrealistic to think that an individual with a fairly positive attitude toward the learning situation will

like everything about a course. The intent of this variable is to simply identify the differences in overall responses of students to their learning environment (Gardner, 2010). Therefore, scores from subscales dealing with students' attitudes toward the class and instructor can be added together in order to obtain this measure (Gardner, 2010).

Finally are the variables of "language anxiety" and "language achievement." Gardner (2010) postulates that second language anxiety stems mainly from anxiety experienced from learning the target language (CLASS) and anxiety experienced while using it (USE). "Language achievement," therefore, is linked to a student's anxiety as well as aptitude. How a researcher assesses these measures is strictly context-dependent (Gardner, 2010).

As previously stated, Gardner and colleagues did not stop their second language motivation research in the 1970's. Instead they have been actively exploring the construct throughout the different periods. Early on, they realized that in order to explore the various components of a model, such as the socio-educational model, a scale related to the various dimensions of motivation that it assesses would have to be created. The result was the creation of the Attitude Motivation Test Battery (AMTB), which is now more commonly known as the socio-educational model's associated scale (Gardner, 2010). Tests to develop the initial version of the AMTB were conducted in London, Ontario with children at the primary and secondary school level (Gardner, 2010). However, since then, the scale has been adapted by Gardner and colleagues to meet their needs in various contexts (see Clément, Smythe, & Gardner, 1976; Gardner & Smythe, 1974; Gardner, Lalonde, & Moorcroft, 1985; Gardner & MacIntyre, 1993; Gardner, Smythe, Clément, & Glikzman, 1976; Gardner, Tremblay, & Masgoret 1997; Glikzman,



Gardner, & Smythe, 1982; Masgoret, Bernaus, & Gardner, 2001; Tennant & Gardner, 2004). Some of the highlights include a French version (Clément et al, 1976), a mini-version (Gardner et al, 1985; Gardner & MacIntyre, 1993), and a more recently adapted international version for English language learners (Gardner, 2010).

Pertaining to foreign language program attrition, it is the various comprising factors of Gardner's socio-educational model that should be noted. Gardner showed that integrativeness, instrumentality, academic achievement, attitude to learning situation, and language anxiety all play a role in student second language motivation. Interestingly, these same factors resurface in research related to foreign language program attrition. As this study focused on second language program attrition, attention will now be directed to studies that have built on Gardner's principles and additionally incorporated continuance and discontinuance factors.

#### Studies on Foreign Language Program Attrition

As language researchers, educators, and theorists alike have invested interests in the retaining of students in language programs, variables have been explored in order to determine what factors influence student choice of whether to continue or discontinue their studies in a particular foreign language program. Similar to the components in Gardner's socio-educational model, the results of researchers' efforts in the area of foreign language program attrition reveal an established link between foreign language program attrition and the following four factors: motivation, instruction, academic success, and anxiety. Wesely (2010), in her synthesis of the literature on the topic, adapted the work of Tinto (1975) and his research on dropout from higher education to give us a more coherent, graphical representation of these four factors and the role they

play in the decision of whether to continue enrollment in a particular language course. As Wesely (2010) states, “the point at which the institution and the individual interact is where the decision to continue is made” (p. 807).

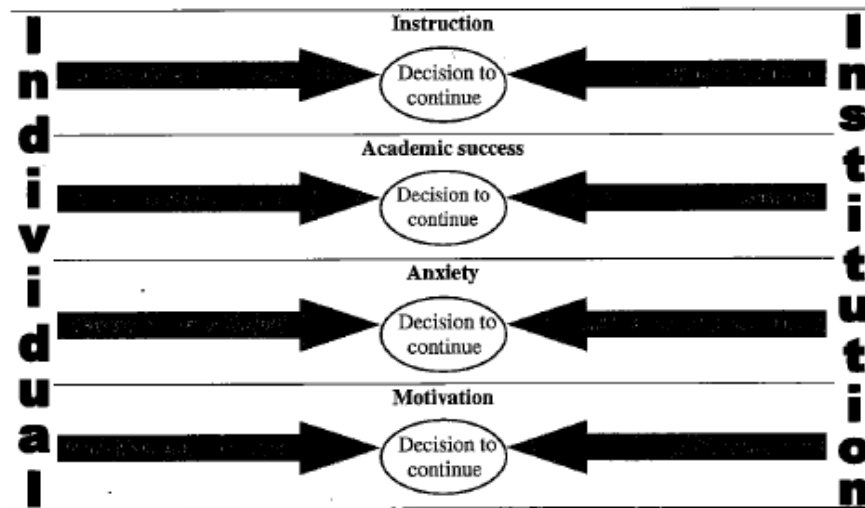


Figure 3. Factors in foreign language attrition from Wesely, 2010, p. 807

As these four areas are where the vast majority of the research related to foreign language program attrition lies, the following sections will explore the studies which add to the literature on the respective topics from the diagram above.

### *Motivation*

Motivation, as previously discussed, is a very complex construct, comprised of multiple influential factors. Referring to the socio-educational model, one would think motivation is a term that encompasses motivational intensity, the desire to learn a foreign language, and attitudes toward language learning (Gardner, 2010). Just as Gardner (2010) argues the misinterpretation of the terms integrative orientation, integrativeness,

and integrative motivation on the part of several researchers, likewise, one might say that Wesely's (2010) use of motivation in this context is a misuse of the term. Wesely (2010) claims that when reviewing the literature, several studies find a link between motivation and foreign language program attrition. However, the more appropriate terminology should be that there is a link between the type of motivation (integrative vs. instrumental) and the decision of whether to continue or discontinue enrollment in a particular language course. As aforementioned, integrative motivation is "the aggregate of integrativeness, attitudes toward the learning situation, and motivation." (Gardner, 2010, p. 91). Therefore, one can see how studies assessing participants' integrative motivation can yield attitude findings as well.

In foreign language program attrition, several studies have made the connection of positive attitudes and high levels of integrative motivation with persistence in foreign language programs. In 1970, Bartley used the Foreign Language Attitude Scale developed by Dr. Mary DuFort to investigate attitudes of eighth grade language learners at the beginning and end of the school year (Bartley, 1970). She found that discontinuing students had a significantly lower attitude score than the continuers on both test administrations. Furthermore, the attitudes of the discontinuers "not only started and ended the academic year with consistently lower scores than the continuing groups, but also their attitude significantly changed for the worse" (p. 391). She concluded that attitude played a very significant role in the "foreign language dropout problem." Clément, Smythe, and Gardner (1978) used the same methods as Bartley with Canadian students enrolled in French in grade 7-12. Similar findings were achieved indicating that students with more integrative orientations tended to persist in their language studies.

Ramage (1990) explored second level high school language continuing and discontinuing students to determine the characteristics of students in each of the groups. The findings indicated that the continuers almost all possessed a very strong intrinsic drive, a drive that Gardner would refer to as very integrative in nature. That is they “attributed low importance to fulfilling a requirement as a reason for taking a foreign language and instead indicated other reasons such as an interest in culture and an interest in attaining proficiency in all language skills” (p. 201). In addition, although both groups had fairly positive attitudes towards language learning, the teacher, and the course, (which was noteworthy as it was different than what previous studies had shown) continuers still showed more positive attitudes compared to the discontinuers. Likewise, Minert (1992) supported previous researchers’ notions that continuing German students’ motivations were more integrative. That is, they indicated wanting to obtain a level of usable proficiency in the target language and furthermore be able to use the language in a German-speaking country in the future.

However, there have been a handful of studies that have not established such a clear link between instrumental motivation and language program attrition. In the late nineties, Saito-Abbott and Samimy (1997) obtained interesting data when comparing results by the level of the language learner in their study on motivation and program attrition. Their findings showed that when addressing beginning and intermediate language learners, it seems it is the type of motivation that best predicts whether students will continue. “Beginning students with low integrative motivation were less likely to continue, while intermediate students with lower levels of instrumental motivation were less likely to continue” (Saito-Abbott & Samimy 1997 p. 45). That is, beginning students

who gave low importance to studying a language to gain knowledge of different cultures and become a part of that culture chose not to continue while intermediate students who dropped out gave low importance to factors like grades and the fulfilling of a requirement. In comparison, Holt (2006) and Speiller (1988) linked high instrumental motivation with continuance in a program.

As one can see, the type of motivation associated with continuance in a foreign language program is unmistakably arguable. The more common belief is that integrative motivation leads to foreign language persistence while instrumental does not. However, counterevidence to this claim does exist. There is no reason to believe that instrumental motivation will not result in continuance. It is still motivation. Additionally, if it is a high level of instrumental motivation, it might be a better mediator of continuance as opposed to a low/mid level of integrative motivation. However, identifying if continuers in a program show significantly higher numbers associated with either integrative or instrumental motives compared to discontinuers could be insightful information. Educators could then use that information to their advantage and incorporate lessons into a program playing to students' particular motivating drives. Regardless, the major studies on the topic have centered mainly on high school level students with the youngest learners surveyed being in the 7<sup>th</sup> grade. As elementary language programs are now a part of many language program sequences, more studies should be done with the young learners to see if the same factors associated with continuance and discontinuance in higher levels still operate at the elementary level.

*Academic Success and Instruction*

In addition to motivation and attitude, the degree to which students feel successful in a language program as well as their like of the teacher and/or teaching methodologies have been found to affect their decision of whether to continue enrollment in program sequence. This is directly related to what Gardner (2010) identifies in his socio-educational model as “language achievement” and “attitude to learning situation.” Some of the earliest studies on these topics in language program attrition date back to the late sixties and early seventies. Mueller and Harris (1966), in their study of beginning French students in a French audio-lingual program at the University of Akron, found that the manner in which content is presented impacts student attitudes and furthermore the decision of whether to enroll in a course in subsequent years. As to low achievement, Glatthorn and Edwards (1967), in their sample of high school students, found that the number one reason for discontinuing enrollment in a language course (47% of all respondents) was poor grades. Additionally, Lima (1973), in a comparison of two Utah school districts, identified the top two reasons for dropping-out of language courses as 1) dislike of teaching methods and 2) poor grades.

In the 90’s, multiple research studies indicated that both academic success and instruction were key factors in enrollment attrition. In Ramage’s study (1990), as described earlier, attitude and motivation were found to distinguish between continuers from discontinuers in a language program. However, grade level, final grade in the language course, as well as like of the course were also discriminating variables between the two groups. Continuers tended to be in their second year of language study in the ninth grade as opposed to eleventh and had received high marks in the language course.

They used adjectives such as “fun and challenging” to describe their current language courses (Ramage, 1990, p. 210). Likewise, Massey (1994) cited student reasons for continuing or discontinuing high school French as their perceived levels of success and their like of teaching methodologies and relationship with their classmates and instructors. Students who felt successful in the foreign language classroom tended to continue as well as students who enjoyed the way in which the material was presented. Among their dislikes were grammar-oriented exercises as well as their prior experiences with the FL program they experienced in the elementary years.

Minert (1992) also indicates that, at the secondary level, grades impact enrollment continuance in language courses. Several items on a questionnaire showed that “waning interest in German ... apparently occurred often in conjunction with low grades or fear of low grades” (p. 180). Saito-Abbott and Samimy (1997) explored college level participants and found among the many factors explored that sense of achievement was one of the top predictors of whether students continued or not. More recently, Pratt, Agnello, and Santos (2009) reported that the most important factor found among high school Spanish students affecting their decision to continue enrollment was their grades. As Prat et al state (2009) “validation of effort is of importance to the students, and the more successful they see themselves, the more motivated they become” (p. 809).

### *Anxiety*

Pertaining to anxiety, limiting the amount of it a student experiences in a language learning setting has been considered by many as a key factor in promoting a more positive language learning environment. Indeed, Krashen was a supporter of this notion as his fifth hypothesis speaks to the idea of keeping the “affective filter low,” claiming

that the acquisition of a language happens best in situations where there is minimal anxiety experienced by the learner (Brown, 2007). Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986) developed a reliable scale that measures the different types of anxiety a foreign language student might experience, called the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale or FLCAS. When administering the FLCAS to beginning language-level university students, Horwitz et al (1986) found that those with high anxiety in foreign language classrooms expressed fears of speaking in class, worries about peer image and intellectual capabilities, and fears of committing errors in the target language. The findings of their study contributed to the field, but more importantly by establishing reliability and validity of a scale, the FLCAS, it was now possible for further studies to be done in the foreign language field on this topic.

Compared to research in the second language field related to motivation (begun in the 1950's) and studies involving instruction and academic success (in the 1960's), research involving the possible link between anxiety and foreign language enrollment attrition have not been explored until rather recently. According to Wesely (2010), Lucas (1995) found that students with lower levels of anxiety chose to continue with their foreign language studies. Likewise, Noels, Clément, and Pelletier (1999), in their exploration of multiple factors related to enrollment attrition, found that higher levels of anxiety negatively affected enrollment intentions. Bailey, Onwuegbuzie, and Daley (2003) in their study with University Spanish, French, German, and Japanese students, determined that students who chose to discontinue enrollment in their language courses had statistically higher levels of anxiety than those students who chose to continue (Bailey et al, 2003). As their conclusions suggest, indicated anxiety level could indeed



be a predictor of future decisions on whether to continue enrollment in a particular language program (Bailey et al, 2003).

Although only a few studies have been done exploring this relationship between anxiety and its effect on enrollment in traditional language courses, results point to a possible connection that may exist between the two. Additional exploration of the topic could further solidify such a link or reveal new discoveries in the field. As Wesely (2010) states, “ultimately, there is still room for more research on how FL anxiety might relate attrition from FL programs” (p. 811). Therefore, including a factor such as anxiety when exploring elementary students’ decisions on whether to continue enrollment could be beneficial to the field.

#### Summary

It is becoming an increasing necessity to be able to communicate in more than one language in the United States. Demographics are changing rapidly and minority populations are quickly becoming the majority. The ability to interact and communicate with a linguistically diverse population will no longer be viewed as an advantage but a necessity. Enrollment in foreign language courses is on the rise nationally as individuals are seeing the many personal, economic, and academic benefits that result from study in that specific content area. However, many individuals are quitting their studies prematurely and therefore are not receiving many of the added advantages that come with study in an area as such. Therefore, this discontinuance in language courses has been the focus of the studies of many researchers over years in hopes to identify the underlying factors as to why some students choose to continue in the language studies while others quit. What has emerged is research that has linked motivation, academic success,

instruction, and anxiety to the decision of whether to continue or discontinue enrollment in a particular language program. Interestingly enough, these four areas are all linked to Gardner's socio-educational model of motivation theory.

As to motivation, several researchers have built on Gardner's definition which divides the construct into integrative motivation (centered on the ideas that individuals take a foreign language to learn about the target culture with the goals of being able to become a part of the culture someday) and instrumental motivation (individuals take foreign languages in order to fulfill a requirement, get a job, etc). What has been found is that more studies link continued enrollment in language programs to integrative motivation rather than to instrumental, although a few have shown the reverse. As attitude and motivation have been linked, attitudes have also been studied related to language program persistence. Results show that positive attitudes toward language learning lead individuals to continue enrollment.

In the studies on academic success, in general students who get higher grades and feel more successful in language courses tend to continue studying the subject. In contrast, those receiving poor marks elect to discontinue enrollment. Related to instruction, discontinuing students in several studies showed a dislike for teaching methodologies. Furthermore, in some cases, even dislike of the instructor was a reason given by discontinuers for not enrolling in subsequent years.

Finally, anxiety is the last factor that has been explored in the area of foreign language enrollment attrition; however, the studies in this area are sparse compared with research related to the other three factors. Of the few studies that have been done, results

show that students with higher levels of anxiety discontinue enrollment. What is clear is that there is more room for research in this area to further explore this link.

Interestingly enough, the overwhelming majority of the studies on this topic focus on high school and college levels pupils. The research is virtually non-existent for elementary language students. This is not surprising considering economic factors have caused the decline of public elementary and middle schools language programs therefore minimizing the sampling pool of language students in those particular age groups (Aldrich, 2010). Of the studies found, 7<sup>th</sup> grade is the youngest grade level of any participants surveyed such as those participants found in Clément, Smythe, and Gardner's study in 1978. Like the results of Saito-Abbott and Samimy (1997) suggest, findings may differ depending on the language learning level of the student. Furthermore, Ramage (1990) indicates that grade level of students has an effect on their continuance or discontinuance.

It is therefore valuable to the field to conduct research on young language learners in the very beginning of their language studies and incorporate the element of enrollment continuance and discontinuance. Currently, as the 2<sup>nd</sup> largest district in the state of Kansas, the Olathe District School is experiencing a trend of enrollment decline in introductory Spanish upon the transition from elementary to middle school. This is especially alarming as it does not follow the national trend, which indicates a 5% increase in Spanish enrollment over recent years, and furthermore shows that many of the students in the Olathe District are missing out on the many benefits that result from studying a foreign language. This study was advantageous in many ways. The factors of motivation, academic success, instruction, and anxiety were explored to determine

whether, at the transitioning years from elementary to middle school, any of the four factors could help predict if students continued or discontinued enrollment in the Spanish language. Identifying these differences will aide the Olathe School District in their quest of language learner retention as solutions were offered based on findings, but also add to the literature on foreign language enrollment attrition with this age group, where previous studies on this topic have been lacking. This could indeed spark the discussion of language enrollment attrition, with the emphasis being on language attrition at the *elementary/middle school* level.

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODS

#### Design

As there have been multiple studies done on foreign language attrition at the high school and university level (see Bailey, Onwuegbuzie, & Daley, 2003; Glatthorn & Edwards, 1967; Holt, 2006; Lima, 1973; Lucas, 1995; Massey, 1994; Minert, 1992; Mueller & Harris, 1966; Noels, Clément, & Pelletier, 1999; Pratt, Agnello, & Santos, 2009; Ramage 1990; Saito-Abbott & Samimy, 1997; Speiller, 1988), the goal of this study was to apply similar methods in order to gather data on language program attrition at the transitioning years from elementary to middle school. From the review of the literature, it is clear that the majority of the studies have implemented quantitative methods with the use of surveys as the preferred data gathering technique. Similarly, in this study, a survey was used to solicit responses from participants. Results were analyzed using the SPSS statistical software package and findings were reported.

#### Participants

As this study focused on the Spanish enrollment attrition that occurs in the Olathe District School introductory Spanish program, participants were drawn from the current 5<sup>th</sup> grade student population, as they are the ones that have the opportunity of enrolling in the introductory Spanish course upon entering the 6<sup>th</sup> grade.

Currently, the Olathe School District is comprised of 34 elementary, 9 middle, and 4 high schools. The Kansas State Department of Education 2010-2011 Report Card shows that, out of 27,358 students, the ethnic breakdown of the student population in the

Olathe District is as follows: 72.57% White, 12.55% Hispanic, 6.65% African American, and 8.24% other.

In this particular district, students in grades K-5 are introduced to the Spanish language through a mandatory twice a week Spanish video program. It is upon enrollment in the sixth grade that students are then given the option, but are not required, to enroll in the 6<sup>th</sup> grade introductory Spanish course. Therefore, participants were drawn from the 5<sup>th</sup> grade class in 33 of the 34 elementary schools as 1) participants were in their last year of the elementary Spanish language program and therefore had adequate exposure to instruction in a language course and 2) they had just recently enrolled in their 6<sup>th</sup> grade courses, which is their first non-mandatory opportunity to enroll in a language course.

#### Procedures

The purpose of this study was to investigate the influential factors of 1) motivation, 2) instruction, 3) academic success, and 4) anxiety, which are found in the literature related to foreign language program attrition, to determine whether any of these four variables could help predict whether students continued or discontinued enrollment in Spanish upon entering their middle school years in the Olathe School District.

Therefore the following research question was answered:

- 1) How do the areas of motivation, academic success, instruction, and anxiety contribute to students' decisions of whether to continue or discontinue enrollment in Spanish upon entering middle school.

In order to address the four areas of motivation, academic success, instruction, and anxiety, the mini-AMTB was adapted to meet the needs of this specific study (see

Appendix C). Before administration of any surveys, permission was gained from the Human Subjects Committee at the University of Kansas and the Olathe District Schools. Furthermore, a parent permission form was given to the participants to have signed and returned (see Appendix A). Since the International Language Assistants function as the participants' Spanish instructors, their help was solicited in the distribution of the survey. The ILA's collected the permission forms from the students and then the participants' verbal assent was obtained (see Appendix B). Any student not wishing to participate was not required to do so. Once all permissions were obtained, students were asked to complete the questionnaire.

#### Instrumentation

As this study aimed to solicit responses from students currently in the 5<sup>th</sup> grade, an instrument was needed with questions that were easily understood by older elementary children that assessed the four areas of motivation, academic success, instruction, and anxiety in a quick and accurate manner. As discussed in detail in the literature review, Gardner's AMTB has been tailored to meet the needs of various studies and their contexts, with one adaptation resulting in the creation of the mini-AMTB. The mini-AMTB is a shortened version of the original AMTB consisting of 11 items with the most recent addition of a twelfth item centering on parental support. As such, it is designed to assess participants' integrativeness, attitudes toward the learning situation, motivation, language anxiety, instrumentality, and parental encouragement on a scale from 1 to 7 (Gardner, 2010).

As this study was to assess 5<sup>th</sup> grade participants' motivation, academic success, instruction, and anxiety, in the context of foreign language program attrition, some slight

modifications were made to the mini-AMTB. Questions were added pertaining to the demographics of the students. Prior to this survey being administered, students in the Olathe District had already selected and enrolled in their courses for their sixth grade year. Therefore, participants were asked if they have elected to enroll in 6<sup>th</sup> grade Spanish. Additionally, it was imperative that students had received adequate instruction in the elementary Spanish program for a valid “instruction” reading on the survey. Those students who might have moved into the district mid-year would logically have a more limited exposure to the program. Therefore, participants were asked in regards to how many years they had been a part of the elementary Spanish program in Olathe. Two questions solicited the gender and home language spoken by the participants, and finally, a question asked if students had enrolled in French to determine whether students were choosing to continue their language studies in another area.

In addition, some minor alterations were made to the actual survey questions pulled from the mini-AMTB found in Gardner (2010). First, as this study did not deal with parental involvement, item number 12 of the mini-AMTB was eliminated as it dealt with parental encouragement. Furthermore, the mini-AMTB functioned in a context where English was the target language of the participants. Therefore, the word “English” was changed to “Spanish” as this study dealt with Spanish language learners. Additionally, the mini-AMTB does not include items that deal with academic success. As previously stated, Gardner (2010) asserts that how a researcher assesses language achievement and success is strictly context-dependent (Gardner, 2010). Therefore items assessing achievement, #12 through #15, were added for consistency reasons, where students marked how successful they felt in Spanish in the four areas of reading, writing,



listening, and speaking on a scale from 1 to 7. Finally, almost all questions were slightly reworded so that they read in a more child-friendly manner. This ensured that the survey was comprehensible for a child currently in 4<sup>th</sup> quarter of their 5<sup>th</sup> grade year. The mini-AMTB found in Gardner (2010) and the mini-AMTB with the aforementioned alterations can be found in Appendix C.

### Reliability and Validity

As previously stated, the mini-AMTB was developed as a solution to the long administration time of the original AMTB developed by Gardner and colleagues. As such, it assesses the same areas of the original AMTB with “Guilford style” questions rated on “7-point bipolar adjectival scales” (Gardner & Macintyre, 1993, p. 166). Since its inception, the mini-AMTB has been used in several studies (Baker & Macintyre, 2000; Bernaus & Gardner, 2008; Bernaus, Wilson, & Gardner, 2009; Gardner & Macintyre, 1993; Macintyre & Charos, 1996; Macintyre & Noels, 1996; Masgoret et al, 2001). Despite the possible problematic nature of the mini-AMTB containing single items to assess the areas of the original AMTB, Gardner & Macintyre (1993) showed that the mini version has concurrent and predictive validity that is acceptable. In addition, Cronbach’s Alpha was computed for the subscales of the mini AMTB and reported as follows: Integrativeness ( $\alpha=.86$ ), Motivation ( $\alpha=.65$ ), Attitudes toward the learning situation ( $\alpha=.89$ ), and Language anxiety ( $\alpha=.48$ ). Although the index for language anxiety might seem a bit low, still, Gardner & Macintyre (1993) assert that when looking at the reliability coefficients “correlations involving the Guildford measures tended to be higher than one might expect given that they are single-item scales” (p. 189).

## Analysis

This study was quantitative in nature. Data was gathered through the use of a questionnaire that was administered at the end of the 2011-2012 school year. After the data was collected, participants' responses were entered into the SPSS statistical software program. Using the SPSS statistical software package, scores for each group in the four areas were calculated using the following recommended by Gardner (2010) as a guide:

### Integrative Motivation

*(Integrativeness + Attitudes + Motivation):* Items 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 9, 11

Instrumentality: Item 7

Anxiety: Items 8, 10

Instruction *(Attitudes toward the learning situation):* Items 6, 9

Since items 6 and 9 are instructional in nature, they were removed from the integrative motivation category to avoid overlap. In addition, an aggregate total was obtained for academic success by totaling the score from items 12, 13, 14, and 15. Once aggregate totals were obtained for each category, a binary logistic regression analysis was performed in order to determine whether any of the five areas could help predict whether students continued or discontinued enrollment in Spanish upon entering middle school.

## CHAPTER 4

### RESULTS

#### Descriptive Statistics

Out of approximately 1800 5<sup>th</sup> graders in the Olathe school district, 560 surveys were collected and completed. This was an approximate 31% survey return rate.

#### *Gender and Home Language*

Of the 560 surveys that were collected, 280 girls and 280 boys participated. Of these students, 525 identified English as their home language while only 35 indicated they spoke a language other than English in their home.

#### *Schools*

Surveys were returned from 33 of the 34 elementary schools in the Olathe School District. One elementary school had no students that were willing to participate in the study. Schools were categorized into three groups based on the percentage of their population that was economically disadvantaged as reported by the Kansas State Department of Education 2011-2012 report card. This information can be found in Table 1. The upper third consisted of the 11 schools with the least proportion of economically disadvantaged students. The bottom third consisted of the 10 schools with the highest proportion of economically disadvantaged students, and the middle third consisted of the remaining 12 schools. It should be noted that fewer surveys were collected from the most economically disadvantaged schools. However, this comes as no surprise as lower SES schools typically have parents who are less involved. As a parent permission form was required to participate in this study, fewer forms were signed and returned from those respective schools.

Table 1

*Survey Data Collected Sorted by School*

	Number of Schools	Percentage of Population Economically Disadvantaged	Number of Surveys
Top-Third	11	1.63 - 13.97	233
Middle-Third	12	15.54 - 28.48	243
Bottom-Third	10	44.76 - 85.49	84
Total	33	1.63 - 85.49	560

*Years in the Elementary Spanish Program*

Due to the implementation of the program in phases throughout the district, participants in the study ranged in exposure to the Spanish program from 1-6 years. Table 2 shows the breakdown of participants based on years of language learning under the elementary Spanish program. It should be noted that the majority of the participants had either 3 or 4 years of previous instruction under the language program, making up approximately 60 percent of the total data gathered. The least represented group was comprised of students who had only one year of exposure to the district language program.

Table 2

*Survey Data Collected by Years in the Elementary Spanish Program*

Years in Program	Number of Surveys	Percentage of Total Data
1	27	4.8
2	34	6.1
3	160	28.6
4	181	39.5
5	63	11.3
6	95	17.0
Total	560	100.0

*Enrollment in Middle School Foreign Language*

Contrary to the Elementary Spanish Program in Olathe which is mandatory, upon entering middle school a student gets to elect whether to continue enrollment in a foreign language. Starting with grade six, there are several elective enrollment options from which a student can choose. Pertaining to languages, a student can enroll in Spanish only, French only, Spanish and French, or choose not to take any foreign language at all. The survey used in this particular study was administered after enrollment had occurred. Therefore, students were to mark what languages, if any, they had enrolled in for the subsequent year. In both Spanish and French, over half of the students indicated they had elected to take the course at the middle school level. Interestingly, only 35 out of the 560 participants did not enroll in any middle school foreign language course at all. Table 3 displays these data.

Table 3

*Student Enrollment in Foreign Languages upon entering the 6<sup>th</sup> Grade*

	Spanish Enrollment	French Enrollment
Yes	367	380
No	193	180

## Preliminary Analysis of the Data

Before formally analyzing the data, the researcher conducted a preliminary review of the data collected in order to identify any data entry errors. In addition to the demographic descriptive summaries described in Tables 1-3, aggregated totals were computed for each of the following variables that were gathered using the fifteen question survey that was administered: integrative motivation, instrumentality, anxiety, instruction, and academic success. Table 4 provides group descriptive statistics for the aforementioned five categories broken down by whether students chose to continue enrollment in Spanish upon entering middle school (Yes) and those who chose to discontinue enrollment (No).

Table 4

*Group Statistics of the Five Survey Variables Tested*

		Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation
IntegrMotive	Yes <sub>1</sub>	8.0	42.0	30.7	8.4
	No <sub>2</sub>	6.0	42.0	22.8	9.6
Anxiety	Yes <sub>1</sub>	2.0	14.0	6.6	3.4
	No <sub>2</sub>	2.0	14.0	8.0	3.8
Instrumentality	Yes <sub>1</sub>	1.0	7.0	5.0	1.9
	No <sub>2</sub>	1.0	7.0	3.7	2.1
Instruction	Yes <sub>1</sub>	2.0	14.0	10.8	3.1
	No <sub>2</sub>	2.0	14.0	9.1	3.0
Acad. Success	Yes <sub>1</sub>	4.0	28.0	15.3	6.2
	No <sub>2</sub>	4.00	28.00	12.8	6.7

*Note:* Yes<sub>1</sub>: 367 cases were reported. No<sub>2</sub>: 193 cases were reported.

These descriptive statistics were run to ensure that the data for the 560 surveys collected were entered correctly. Viewing the table from top to bottom each independent variable was comprised of 6, 2, 1, 2, and 4 survey questions respectively. As each question was scored on a 7-point Likert scale, plausible ranges of values were calculated for each variable by hand and then compared to the minimum and maximum scores reported to determine whether any errors may have occurred in the data entry process. No such errors were found.

To determine whether there were significant differences between the continuer and non-continuer groups in each of the five survey variables, t-tests were run. For all

dependent variables, significance levels were reported  $p < .001$ . Correlations were then run to further explore the relations between variables. In Table 5, the Pearson correlation values are reported. Strong, positive correlations were found between integrative motivation, instrumentality, instruction, and academic success. In fact, the Pearson  $r$  reported for each of these was very similar, ranging from .61-.68. Anxiety had the lowest correlation value reported, although still significant. All the negative correlations occurred between anxiety and the four other variables. However, this is seemingly logical as one could expect that as motivation, like of instruction, and academic success increase, anxiety would then decrease. Again, for all variables, these significance levels for these correlations were all  $p < .001$ .

Table 5

*Correlations between Integrative Motivation, Anxiety, Instrumentality, Instruction, and Academic Success*

	Integrative Motivation	Anxiety	Instrumentality	Instruction	Academic Success
Integrative Motive Pearson $r$	1				
Anxiety Pearson $r$	-.35	1			
Instrumentality Pearson $r$	.68	-.26	1		
Instruction Pearson $r$	.68	-.23	.49	1	
Academic Success Pearson $r$	.61	-.30	.43	.40	1



*Note.* For all correlations in the table,  $p < .001$

### Analysis of Data

A binary logistic regression was used to examine students' scores on the various scales of the mini-AMTB. More specifically, students' scores on the integrative motivation, instrumentality, anxiety, instruction, and academic success scales of the mini-AMTB could be useful in predicting enrollment continuance in the Spanish language upon entering the 6<sup>th</sup> grade.

According to Grimm and Yarnold (1995), "...a logistic regression is a statistical procedure used to estimate the relationship between one or more predictor variables and the likelihood that an individual is a member of a particular group" (p. 240). A logistic regression was chosen as opposed to a linear regression because the dependent variable in a logistic regression can be categorical (Grimm & Yarnold, 1995). In this study, the dependent variable was whether students chose to enroll in Spanish or not; therefore each individual would belong to either a "continuance" or "non-continuance" enrollment group, rendering the dependent variable dichotomous in nature with the calculating values that can "be interpreted as probabilities of membership in the target group" (Grimm & Yarnold, 1995, p. 241).

When initially run, anxiety, instrumentality, instruction, academic success, and integrative motivation were all entered as independent variables with continuance or discontinuance in Spanish enrollment as the dependent variables. The Enter method on SPSS was selected first as this took into account all independent variables when forming the regression model. When running this regression model the -2 log likelihood improved from 721.34 (intercept only model) to 628.28 (model with all independent variables).

Table 6 below summarizes the result of the model taking into account all independent variables and their respective logistic coefficient  $b$  values,  $p$  values, and odd ratios.

Table 6

*Variables in the Equation*

	B	Sig. (p-value)	Exp(B) (odd ratio)
Anxiety	.04	.16	1.04
Instrumentality	-.07	.24	.93
Instruction	-.01	.92	1.00
Academic Success	.03	.07	1.04
Integrative Motivation	-.09	.00	.91

Of the five independent variables, only integrative motivation was found to be significant while academic success was approaching significance. The table suggests that for every one unit increase in integrative motivation, the likelihood that a student will continue enrollment increases by a factor of .913. In other words, the higher the integrative motivation, the more likely students are to continue taking Spanish at the middle school level. Therefore, it seems that integrative motivation does add significance to the model, however does not substantially contribute since  $\text{Exp}(B) = 0.91$ .

In addition to the significance levels of each independent variable shown above, it is also worthy to note the classification table from the model, shown in Table 7 on the next page. Notice that 400 cases were predicted correctly while only 160 were not. Therefore, the model was able to accurately predict whether a student would continue enrollment in Spanish upon entering middle school with 71.4 percent accuracy.

Table 7

*Classification Table taking into Account all Independent Variables*

Predicted		Observed		
		Spanish Enrollment	Spanish Enrollment	Overall Percentage Correct
		No	Yes	
Spanish Enrollment	No	85.0	52.0	
Spanish Enrollment	Yes	108.0	315.0	
Percentage Correct		44.0	85.8	71.4

Since integrative motivation was the only independent variable found to be significant when including all independent variables in the regression model, a binary logistic regression analysis was run again, this time using a backward likelihood ratio method in order to determine whether a better model could be achieved. Under this method, variables were tested one-by-one. At each step, the variable showing the least significance was removed until only the variables meeting significance levels remained in the model (Grimm & Yarnold, 1995).

Again, integrative motivation was the only independent variable found to be significant. Under the new Backward Linear Regression model, the -2 log likelihood actually worsened from 628.28 (when all independent variables were included) to 634.45 (when integrative motivation was the only variable included). Furthermore, the  $\text{Exp}(B)$  of 0.91 as well as the logistic coefficient  $b$  of -0.09 for integrative motivation were both slightly lower than under the previous model, although significance still remained at the  $p < .001$  level. However, it is interesting to note that in the new model (with anxiety, instrumentality, instruction, and academic success excluded), the percent of cases

accurately predicted increased slightly from 71.4 to 71.8 percent. This difference (which was negligible) is the result of two more cases being accurately predicted in the new model when compared to the previous under the Enter method.

## CHAPTER 5

### DISCUSSION

The present study addressed the question of the extent to which the areas of motivation, academic success, instruction, and anxiety contributed to students' decisions of whether to continue or discontinue enrollment in Spanish upon entering middle school. A sample of 560 5<sup>th</sup> grade students from 33 of the 34 elementary schools in the Olathe School District was used. Once permissions were obtained, participants were asked to complete a 15-question survey derived from the mini-AMTB, created by Gardner (2010), which gathered responses pertaining to the areas of integrative motivation, instrumentality, anxiety, academic success, and instruction. A binary logistic regression was then run in order to determine whether any of the variables were significant factors in predicting enrollment.

When running the regression analysis, the base model was found to only accurately predict whether students would continue their enrollment in Spanish upon entering middle school 65.5% of the time. However, once all other variables were removed, with only integrative motivation remaining, the model's accuracy improved to 71.8%. Of the five variables tested, integrative motivation obtained significance at the  $p < .001$ . All other variables did not contribute significantly to the model. This means that integrative motivation does increase the accuracy of predicting whether a student will continue on in Spanish upon entering middle school. In other words, students who indicated they wanted to learn a foreign language in order to learn about the target culture and gain a level of proficiency to communicate with natives of that culture were more

likely to enroll in Spanish in subsequent years compared with their peers who viewed foreign language learning as simply the fulfillment of a requirement.

So why is integrative motivation the only variable in this study that seemed to help predict Spanish middle school enrollment? To begin, results could have been affected by the number of items associated with each of the variables. The following is an aggregate scoring guide that was used based on the suggestions made by Gardner (2010):

Integrative Motivation

*(Integrativeness + Attitudes + Motivation)*: Items 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 11

Instrumentality: Item 7

Anxiety: Items 8, 10

Instruction *(Attitudes toward the learning situation)*: Items 6, 9

Academic Success: Items 12, 13, 14, 15

When looking at the scales for each variable, integrative motivation had six questionnaire items associated with it, the highest when compared to the other four variables. With six items, there was room for variance of scores. With this allowance of variance came the potential of predictability. Items such as instrumentality, anxiety, and instruction were only comprised of one to two items. In essence, the range of possible scores on these variables was inadvertently restricted due to the limited number of questions associated with each one. This allowed for minimal variance and therefore poor reliability and predictability.

If examining the standard deviation column from Chapter 4, Table 4, one can get a sense of this phenomenon. Looking specifically at those students who indicated they

were continuing Spanish, integrative motivation had the highest standard deviation of scores with 8.4, followed by academic success (6.2), anxiety (3.4), instruction (3.1), and finally instrumentality (2.0). When examining the number of test items associated with each variable, the same order emerges: integrative motivation (6 items), academic success (4 items), anxiety (2 items), instruction (2 items), and instrumentality (1 item). This is not to say that integrative motivation had to be the only useful predictor in the study, nor that any of the other items could not have contributed to the overall model. However, integrative motivation did improve the base regression model by 6.3% while the others did not. This suggests that in this particular study, the number of items associated with each variable did seem to put constraints on the amount of predictability each variable could contribute. Although this was a concern at the onset of the study, Gardner & Macintyre (1993) showed that the mini version AMTB has concurrent and predictive validity that is acceptable regardless of the limited number of items associated with many of the variables. In addition, they assert that when looking at the reliability coefficients “correlations involving the Guildford measures tended to be higher than one might expect given that they are single-item scales” (Gardner & Macintyre, 1993, p. 189). Therefore, the researcher proceeded with the investigation.

Secondly, the overlapping of various independent variables in the study existed. This information is present upon examining Table 5 found in Chapter 4. Strong, significant correlations were noted between integrative motivation and the other variables assessed. This indicates that there was significant overlap between the instrumental scales used in this study. Therefore, knowing the nature of a regression analysis, as well as the high correlations between integrative motivation and the other variables, one

would not be surprised to find integrative motivation as the only variable to contribute significantly to the regression model. In essence, integrative motivation acted like the other variables. Therefore, once integrative motivation was added to the equation, in a sense all other variables were added as well. As a result, academic success, anxiety, instruction, and instrumentality were then rendered to make insignificant contributions to the model as integrative motivation was already accounted for.

As the researcher's question in this study centered on the ability to identify factors that could possibly predict middle school enrollment in Spanish, a regression analysis (with its results discussed above) was adopted. Nevertheless, a preliminary analysis of t-tests was run in order to identify whether there were group difference between continuers and non-continuers when examining the five variables. T-tests did show such differences. In fact, for all dependent variables, significance levels were reported  $p < .001$ . This means that continuers and discontinuers did have significantly different responses to the questions associated with each of the five areas of integrative motivation, academic success, anxiety, instruction, and instrumentality. While it cannot be determined if the differences in the instrument's scale scores caused students to either continue or discontinue in Spanish upon entering middle school, the scores between the two groups differed in such a manner to reach a very high level of significance. This warrants speculation that factors which cause a student to score differently on each of the instrument's variables may also be factors that cause them to discontinue enrolling in Spanish upon entering middle school.



## Suggestions for the Olathe School District

As previously stated, the researcher's interest in this topic evolved from her position as a middle school Spanish teacher in the Olathe School District and the observance of the significant decline in enrollment in the program over the years. The main purpose of this study was to determine whether any of the variables of integrative motivation, instrumentality, anxiety, academic success, and instruction played a role in students' decisions of whether to continue or discontinue enrollment in Spanish upon entering middle school. The main finding was that integrative motivation does seem to impact a student's decision of whether to enroll in Spanish in middle school.

Gardner and Lambert (1959) first defined having "integrative" aims as having the desire "to learn more about the language group, or to meet more and *different* people" when learning a new language (p. 267). Through the research of others, the term evolved to describe individuals who indicated wanting to learn a foreign language in order to effectively interact in the target culture and have a usable proficiency to communicate with natives within that cultural context (Ramage, 1990; Minert, 1992; Saito-Abbott & Samimy, 1997). This is very insightful in designing elementary Spanish lessons for the district and as such has several implications for various individuals within the Olathe School District.

### *Implications for the Superintendent*

Research indicates that foreign language video programs function best when a video is viewed as supplementary to a program and not as the sole provider of activities and information (Cakir, 2006; Hanley et al, 1995; Herron, 1994; Herron et al, 1995a; Herron et al, 1995b; Rhodes & Puhfahl, 2003; Secules et al, 1992). This implies that the

facilitator of a video-based language program should play a key role in running activities, clarifying content, and engaging students in the target language and culture. Currently, in the Olathe School District, video is being used as the main provider of information allotting for nearly half of the time spent with the students. According to Rhodes & Puhfahl (2003), “the profession agrees that a qualified language teacher is the single most important factor in an instructional setting” (p. 2). Qualified professionals in the field would have key knowledge about the targeted culture as well as a high level of fluency in the target language. With this background, such individuals could help better engage the students in the lessons focusing on their integrative needs.

Currently in Olathe, qualified individuals do not run the video-based program. In fact, facilitators of the program, known as ILA’s, are not required to hold certification in the field of foreign language education. This could be why such a sole reliance is placed on the video itself to convey the course content, as the facilitators may feel they lack sufficient training in the area. It is therefore recommended that the superintendent revisit the decision of having the program run in such a manner. With the addition of qualified teachers does come budget concerns. However, as opposed to having 34 ILA’s (one for each elementary school), the researcher would propose the hiring of a few qualified foreign language instructors to rotate between buildings to better serve the Olathe students. Additionally, the current program operates in 30 minute time segments twice a week. A better alternative would be to schedule an hour long language lesson that occurs only once a week. This would provide for fewer, more effective sessions over the course of a year while at the same time facilitating certified instructor rotations between

elementary schools as mentioned above. With the implementation of these suggestions, a shift from a video-centered to video-supplemented curriculum could occur.

*Implications for International Language Assistants (ILA's)*

It can be time-consuming and taxing for many individuals to receive new training in order to become qualified individuals that can effectively operate in a new working environment. Therefore, ILA's should reflect on the extent to which they hope to positively impact childrens' lives they encounter on a daily basis. The results of this study indicate that the current video-based curriculum needs to shift where a better balance is achieved between vocabulary and culture, with much more emphasis placed on the culture and customs of the targeted population.

Currently, a video is accounting for the majority of the interaction time with students and little emphasis is being placed on the cultural aspects of language learning. In order to help students become more integratively motivated, ILA's need to advocate for a more central role in the video-based program and specialized training to serve in a capacity as such. Many ILA's do not have sufficient training to effectively play an active role in the presentation of content. Therefore, a proactive approach should be implemented. ILA's need to meet with their foreign language coordinator and explore the options available for additional training in the field of foreign language education. Language programs in local colleges and universities should be investigated. The Olathe School District should be solicited to see if funding or partial funding is available to receive university training in foreign language education. ILA's should not be satisfied with such a passive role as their current one in the elementary video-based program.

Instead, they should seek out training so they can advocate for a more vital role in their students' language learning.

*Implications for the District Foreign Language Coordinator*

As stated at the beginning of the study, the main goal of this elementary Spanish program in the Olathe School District is to teach students basic Spanish vocabulary and structures that are part of everyday communication as well as introduce customs and cultures of Spanish-speaking countries. This is done through a video-based Spanish program with lessons that are approximately 30 minutes in length and occur twice a week. Now knowing that integrative motivation plays a role in enrollment continuance, it is noteworthy to once again look back at the time breakdown for each 30 minute lesson and to pay special attention to the piece of the lesson that would be what Gardner would consider “integrative” in nature.

- |                                           |            |
|-------------------------------------------|------------|
| • Warm-up using familiar material         | 3 minutes  |
| • Review of material from previous lesson | 5 minutes  |
| • Presentation of video                   | 12 minutes |
| • Change of pace and/or cultural activity | 3 minutes  |
| • Wrap-up/preview of next lesson          | 1 minute   |

It seems that the majority of the lesson is heavily “instrumental.” Vocabulary is presented during the video segment, which is unauthentic in nature, and students are assessed in an elementary friendly manner on their comprehension of these words. In contrast, only 3 minutes is allotted for a cultural activity, the portion of the lesson that would be considered more integrative in nature. Based on the findings of this study, one could suggest that this should be the reverse. Curricular changes need to occur that focus more on the target culture, people, customs, and traditions and less on the vocabulary and structures of speaking the language. This is not to say that vocabulary should be omitted

completely, as the development of a large basic vocabulary is a very important aspect when starting to learn a language and communicating with natives of a target population. There should just be a better balance between culture and vocabulary, as the results of this study indicate that students who become interested in languages in order to interact effectively within a target culture are more likely to continue their studies. In the current lesson breakdown above, cultural activities are viewed more as “add-ons” to each lesson within the current elementary program, with only 3 minutes allotted for such endeavors. How well can anything possibly be conveyed in such a short time span as 3 minutes? Instead, there should be a greater emphasis and focus on the exploration of the target culture during the time spent with the students with the learning of the target language seamlessly integrated throughout this cultural journey.

To accomplish this task would require the Olathe District to revisit their current elementary program lesson design and rethink the skewed emphasis being placed on the vocabulary aspect of their goal statement. In accordance to the findings of this study, more importance should be placed on the introduction of customs and cultures of Spanish-speaking countries and less on the structures and vocabulary of the Spanish language than what is currently being done. Therefore, one could suggest that a preliminary evaluation should be initiated to determine the amounts of cultural content students really are receiving through the passive viewing of the video. The foreign language coordinator should then meet with foreign language educators within the district and surrounding universities to explore options as to how to better incorporate culture at the elementary level, investigating more culture-focused curricula and determining when the current videos would be advantageous in helping supplement a curriculum as such.

In addition, the foreign language coordinator should work closely with the superintendent to advocate for such changes.

Furthermore, high levels of training with evaluation should be undergone by each ILA currently employed by the district in order to determine whether each individual has the necessary background knowledge to run a language program with high levels of cultural emphasis. If no such individuals are found, then the foreign language coordinator should advocate for hiring language professionals from the field to help fill the areas of need. Through these steps, the hope is that the current video-based program would gradually shift from an instrumental to more integrative focus. In this manner, students would have a more active role in their learning that would center on the target culture being studied with key vocabulary incorporated throughout each lesson. With qualified instructors an integrate part of the classroom environment, as well as a shift of focus to better feed each individual's integrative drive, the hope is that a positive chain reaction will begin. Students would hopefully once again become excited about learning Spanish, desire to want to meet people of the target culture, want to communicate with those people more effectively, and therefore become more "integratively motivated." In accordance with the results of this study, this should lead to a more likely enrollment continuance in Spanish upon entering middle school.

#### Limitations of the Study

One of the more obvious limitations of the study deals with the number of items associated with each individual variable in the mini-AMTB created by Gardner (2010). Tinkering with the original form of the AMTB to make it more suitable for elementary Spanish students could have affected the outcomes. As stated in Chapter 3, some minor

alterations were made to the actual survey questions pulled from the mini-AMTB found in Gardner (2010). The original mini-AMTB functioned in a context where English was the target language of the participants. Therefore, the word “English” was changed to “Spanish” as this study dealt with Spanish language learners. Items 6 and 9 (found in the original AMTB under both the integrative motivation and instruction scales) were removed from integrative motivation and retained under instruction to avoid the possible overlapping of variables. Additionally, the original mini-AMTB does not include items that deal with academic success. Since Gardner (2010) asserts that how a researcher assesses language achievement and success is strictly context-dependent, items assessing achievement were added for consistency reasons, where students marked how successful they felt in Spanish in the four areas of reading, writing, listening, and speaking on a scale from 1 to 7. Finally, almost all questions were slightly reworded so that they read in a more child-friendly manner. This ensured that the survey was comprehensible for a student currently in the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter of their 5<sup>th</sup> grade year.

How these minor alterations of the instrument affected the scales, their validity, or reliability is not known. In the beginning, what was known is that despite the possible problematic nature of the mini-AMTB containing single items to assess the areas of the longer version of the AMTB, Gardner & Macintyre (1993) showed that the mini version has concurrent and predictive validity that is acceptable. With Cronbach’s Alpha computed for the subscales of the mini AMTB, Gardner & Macintyre (1993) assert that when looking at the reliability coefficients “correlations involving the Guildford measures tended to be higher than one might expect given that they are single-item

scales” (p. 189). Therefore, the researcher proceeded in the current investigation despite the low number of items associated with some of the scales in the study.

Another limitation to this study was that it specifically addressed students in the Olathe School District. Therefore, the results obtained as to distinguishing factors between language continuers and discontinuers in the Olathe School District were not generalizable to any other school district. With that being said, if other school districts of similar characteristics are experiencing similar language program attrition problems, this survey could be administered to their student population in order to help determine distinguishing factors that play a significant role in their students’ decisions of whether or not to enroll in language courses.

Finally, this study focused specifically on five factors related to enrollment attrition. There could be other factors that exist contributing to the language program enrollment attrition in the Olathe School District. However, as past studies have indicated that these are the areas that have been most often identified as influencing factors in student decisions’ on enrollment in language courses, this was an adequate starting point for any study such as the one that was conducted.

### Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to investigate the influential factors of 1) motivation (integrative and instrumental), 2) instruction, 3) academic success, and 4) anxiety, which are found in the literature related to foreign language program attrition, to determine whether any of these four variables could predict whether students continued or discontinued enrollment in Spanish upon entering their middle school years in the Olathe School District. Previous research on the topic of foreign language enrollment



attrition has linked these aforementioned variables to whether students continue or discontinue enrollment in foreign language courses. However, the vast majority of these studies were done at the secondary and post-secondary levels. The youngest participants in any of the research can be traced back to Clément, Smythe, and Gardner's 1978 study with Canadian students enrolled in French in grades 7-12. Therefore, it is interesting to compare whether similar findings were reached with a foreign language enrollment attrition study done at the elementary level. Pertaining to the above study, Clément et al (1978) found that students with more integrative orientations tended to persist in their language studies. The results of this study support that finding. Saito-Abbott and Samimy (1997), in their study of both beginning and intermediate language students, found that "beginning students with low integrative motivation were less likely to continue" (Saito-Abbott & Samimy, 1997, p. 45). This also supports the findings of this study that showed that the higher student's integrative motivation, the more likely they were to continue. Like Saito-Abbott and Samimy, the converse of this statement would also be true. Likewise, Ramage (1990) reported among second level high school language students that continuers almost all possessed a very strong intrinsic drive, a drive that Gardner would refer to as very integrative in nature. Finally, Minert (1992) indicated similar findings among secondary German students.

When reviewing past literature on the topic (Clément et al, 1978; Saito-Abbott & Samimy, 1997; Ramage, 1990; Minert, 1992), it is not surprising that this study's results suggest that integrative motivation may be a significant predictor of whether students enroll in Spanish upon entering middle school. However, it is interesting to note that none of the other variables added to the regression model significantly, as the factors of

instrumentality, anxiety, academic success, and instruction have all been linked to foreign language enrollment attrition at the secondary and post-secondary levels. Whether this is a result of the age of the participants, the lack of variance found among some of the instrument's scales, or the significant overlap of variables cannot be determined at this time. Future research needs to take these areas into account before conducting a similar investigation.

Nonetheless, this study adds greatly to the field of foreign language enrollment attrition. Prior to this research, virtually no information had been gathered on foreign language enrollment attrition at the elementary level. Now, this research offers evidence that suggests that similar findings related to the literature on foreign language enrollment attrition at the secondary and post-secondary levels can indeed be found at the elementary level as well. More specifically, it seems that integrative motivation may play a significant role in students' decisions of whether to continue enrollment in Spanish upon entering middle school. More research needs to be done on this topic in other school districts in order to establish whether this link is indeed true. Districts experiencing similar problems in enrollment decline in language programs should explore the underlying causes behind that enrollment discontinuance followed by an extensive review, reflection, and possible revision of their current teaching practices in order to try and maintain student interest in studying foreign languages. After all, teaching is a reflective practice. So why not use this information to reflect, change, and grow?

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## *Appendix A*

### PARENT-GUARDIAN INFORMED CONSENT STATEMENT

Foreign Language Enrollment Attrition: Explore the key factors of Motivation, Academic Success, Instruction, and Anxiety at the Elementary Level.

#### INTRODUCTION

The Department of Curriculum and Teaching at the University of Kansas supports the practice of protection for human subjects participating in research. The following information is provided for you to decide whether you wish your child to participate in the present study. You may refuse to sign this form and not allow your child to participate in this study. You should be aware that even if you agree to allow your child to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time. If you do withdraw your child from this study, it will not affect your relationship with this unit, the services it may provide to you, or the University of Kansas.

#### PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to evaluate the factors of motivation, academic success, instruction, and anxiety and the possible role they play in the decision to continue or discontinue enrollment in middle school Spanish.

#### PROCEDURES

Each child will take a brief paper/pencil survey. Survey questions will be in Likert style format ranging from 1-7 and solicit responses related to students' motivation for learning a foreign language, like of current instructional practices, anxiety related to foreign language learning, and perceived success in language class. All information will be kept completely confidential.

#### RISKS

There are no risks anticipated with this study.

#### BENEFITS

There are several benefits of this study. I feel it is my calling as an educator in the Olathe School District and as a researcher to investigate the decline in enrollment in introductory Spanish upon entering the 6<sup>th</sup> grade. Studies in the area of foreign language program attrition are sparse at the elementary level. This study will therefore add the field in an area where a gap in the literature has occurred. Secondly, results of this survey will hopefully pinpoint distinguishing factors between those students who choose to continue learning Spanish in the 6<sup>th</sup> grade and those who do not, thus giving the Olathe District valuable information in how to combat the current enrollment decline. Any information

your child can provide will only directly benefit him/her as she hopefully continues learning foreign languages within the Olathe school district.

#### PAYMENT TO PARTICIPANTS

There will be no payment for participation in this study. Participation is strictly voluntary and can be withdrawn at any time.

#### PARTICIPANT CONFIDENTIALITY

Your child's name will not be associated in any publication or presentation with the information collected about your child or with the research findings from this study. Participation in this study will in no way positively or negatively affect your child's Spanish grade. Information will be kept completely confidential and will only be reviewed by the researcher. Permission granted on this date to use and disclose your child's information remains in effect indefinitely. By signing this form you give permission for the use and disclosure of your child's information, excluding your child's name, for purposes of this study at any time in the future. If you choose to withdraw consent throughout this study, participation will be terminated upon receipt of written notification of request to withdraw from study.

#### REFUSAL TO SIGN CONSENT AND AUTHORIZATION

You are not required to sign this Consent and Authorization form and you may refuse to do so without affecting your right to any services you are receiving or may receive from the University of Kansas or to participate in any programs or events of the University of Kansas. However, if you refuse to sign, your child cannot participate in this study.

#### CANCELLING THIS CONSENT AND AUTHORIZATION

You may withdraw your consent to allow participation of your child in this study at any time. You also have the right to cancel your permission to use and disclose further information collected about your child, in writing, at any time, by sending your written request to:

*Sarah Meyer*  
*18427 W. 154<sup>th</sup> Terrace*  
*Olathe, KS 66062*

If you cancel permission to use your child's information, the researchers will stop collecting additional information about your child. However, the researcher may use and disclose information that was gathered before they received your cancellation, as described above.

## QUESTIONS ABOUT PARTICIPATION

Questions about procedures should be directed to the researcher listed at the end of this consent form.

## PARTICIPANT CERTIFICATION:

I have read this Consent and Authorization form. I have had the opportunity to ask, and I have received answers to, any questions I had regarding the study. I understand that if I have any additional questions about my child's rights as a research participant, I may call (785) 864-7429, write to the Human Subjects Committee Lawrence Campus (HSCL), University of Kansas, 2385 Irving Hill Road, Lawrence, Kansas 66045-7568, or email mdenning@ku.edu.

I agree to allow my child to take part in this study as a research participant. By my signature I affirm that I have received a copy of this Consent and Authorization form.

_____	_____
Print Participant's Name	Date
_____	
Parent/Guardian Signature	

*[If signed by a personal representative, a description of such representative's authority to act for the individual must also be provided, e.g. parent/guardian.]*

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***Appendix B***

## MINOR ASSENT STATEMENT

I am interested in finding out why some students continue to take Spanish in the 6<sup>th</sup> grade and while other students do not. I would like for you to take a survey which asks you questions over why you feel studying Spanish is important, how anxious you feel in Spanish class, how successful you feel in Spanish class, and how well you like your current Spanish course. If you don't feel like answering any questions, you don't have to, and you can stop taking the survey at any time and that will be all right. Do you want to take part in this project?



*Appendix C*

The Mini-AMTB from Gardner 2010, pg. 132

**The purpose of this part of the questionnaire is to determine your feelings about a number of things. We want you to rate each of the following items in terms of how you feel about it. Each item is followed by a scale that has a label on the left and another on the right, and the numbers 1 to 7 between the two ends. For each item, please circle an one of the numbers from 1 to 7 that best describes you.**

1. My motivation to learn English in order to communicate with English speaking people is:

**WEAK \_\_\_1:\_\_\_2:\_\_\_3:\_\_\_4:\_\_\_5:\_\_\_6:\_\_\_7 STRONG**

2. My attitude toward English speaking people is:

**UNFAVORABLE \_\_\_1:\_\_\_2:\_\_\_3:\_\_\_4:\_\_\_5:\_\_\_6:\_\_\_7 FAVORABLE**

3. My interest in foreign languages is:

**VERY LOW \_\_\_1:\_\_\_2:\_\_\_3:\_\_\_4:\_\_\_5:\_\_\_6:\_\_\_7 VERY HIGH**

4. My desire to learn English is:

**WEAK \_\_\_1:\_\_\_2:\_\_\_3:\_\_\_4:\_\_\_5:\_\_\_6:\_\_\_7 STRONG**

5. My attitude toward learning English is:

**UNFAVORABLE \_\_\_1:\_\_\_2:\_\_\_3:\_\_\_4:\_\_\_5:\_\_\_6:\_\_\_7 FAVORABLE**

6. My attitude toward my English teacher is:

**UNFAVORABLE \_\_\_1:\_\_\_2:\_\_\_3:\_\_\_4:\_\_\_5:\_\_\_6:\_\_\_7 FAVORABLE**

7. My motivation to learn English for practical purposes (e.g., to get a good job) is:

**WEAK \_\_\_1:\_\_\_2:\_\_\_3:\_\_\_4:\_\_\_5:\_\_\_6:\_\_\_7 STRONG**

8. I worry about speaking English outside of class:

**VERY LITTLE \_\_\_1:\_\_\_2:\_\_\_3:\_\_\_4:\_\_\_5:\_\_\_6:\_\_\_7 VERY MUCH**

9. My attitude toward my English course is:

**UNFAVORABLE \_\_\_1:\_\_\_2:\_\_\_3:\_\_\_4:\_\_\_5:\_\_\_6:\_\_\_7 FAVORABLE**

10. I worry about speaking English in my class:

**VERY LITTLE** \_\_\_1:\_\_\_2:\_\_\_3:\_\_\_4:\_\_\_5:\_\_\_6:\_\_\_7 **VERY MUCH**

11. My motivation to learn English is:

**VERY LOW** \_\_\_1:\_\_\_2:\_\_\_3:\_\_\_4:\_\_\_5:\_\_\_6:\_\_\_7 **VERY HIGH**

12. My parents encourage me to learn English:

**VERY LITTLE** \_\_\_1:\_\_\_2:\_\_\_3:\_\_\_4:\_\_\_5:\_\_\_6:\_\_\_7 **VERY MUCH**

## Mini-AMTB (Adapted from Gardner, 2010)

In the following questions, please mark the response that best describes you.

1. What elementary school do you attend?

- |                                                  |                                                 |                                                |
|--------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Havencroft</b>       | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Mahaffie</b>        | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Bentwood</b>       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Arbor Creek</b>      | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Cedar Creek</b>     | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Ridgeview</b>      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Northview</b>        | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Westview</b>        | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Green Springs</b>  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Meadow Lane</b>      | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Tomahawk</b>        | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Briarwood</b>      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Central</b>          | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Madison Place</b>   | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Black Bob</b>      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Clearwater Creek</b> | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Brougham</b>        | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Woodland</b>       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Regency Place</b>    | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Washington</b>      | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Ravenwood</b>      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Pleasant Ridge</b>   | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Manchester Park</b> | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Rolling Ridge</b>  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Heritage</b>         | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Fairview</b>        | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Prairie Center</b> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Sunnyside</b>        | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Countryside</b>     | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Walnut Grove</b>   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Scarborough</b>      | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Heatherstone</b>    | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Indian Creek</b>   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Forest View</b>      |                                                 |                                                |

2. Have many school years have you been a part of the elementary Spanish program?

**1 year**    **2 yrs**    **3 yrs**    **4 yrs**    **5 yrs**    **6 yrs**

3. Did you enroll in Spanish for the 6<sup>th</sup> grade?

**Yes**                       **No**

4. Did you enroll in French for the 6<sup>th</sup> grade?

**Yes**                       **No**

5. Are you a boy or a girl?

**Boy**                       **Girl**

6. What language do you speak at home?

**I speak \_\_\_\_\_ at home.**

**The purpose of this part of the questionnaire is to determine your feelings about a number of things. We want you to rate each of the following items in terms of how you feel about it. Each item is followed by a scale that has a label on the left and another on the right, and the numbers 1 to 7 between the two ends. For each item, please circle one of the numbers from 1 to 7 that best describes you.**

1. I want to learn Spanish in order to communicate with Spanish speaking people.

**DISAGREE 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 AGREE**

2. I like Spanish speaking people.

**DISAGREE 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 AGREE**

3. I am interested in foreign languages:

**VERY LITTLE 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 VERY MUCH**

4. My desire to learn Spanish is:

**WEAK 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 STRONG**

5. I like learning Spanish.

**DISAGREE 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 AGREE**

6. I like my Spanish teacher.

**DISAGREE 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 AGREE**

7. My motivation to learn Spanish in order to get a good job someday is:

**WEAK 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 STRONG**

8. I don't like speaking Spanish outside of class.

**DISAGREE 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 AGREE**

9. I like my Spanish course.

**VERY LITTLE 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 VERY MUCH**

10. I don't like speaking Spanish in my class:

**DISAGREE    1    2            3    4    5    6    7    AGREE**

11. My motivation to learn Spanish is:

**VERY LOW    1    2    3    4    5    6    7    VERY HIGH**

12. I can speak and be understood in Spanish:

**VERY LITTLE    1    2    3    4    5    6    7    VERY MUCH**

13. I can write in Spanish:

**VERY LITTLE    1    2    3    4    5    6    7    VERY MUCH**

14. I can understand when I read in Spanish:

**VERY LITTLE    1    2    3    4    5    6    7    VERY MUCH**

15. I can understand when I listen to Spanish:

**VERY LITTLE    1    2    3    4    5    6    7    VERY MUCH**