

An Analysis of Elementary Foreign Language Immersion Education  
And its Effect on African American Student Basic Reading Skills and Attitudes of  
Milwaukee Spanish Immersion School 4<sup>th</sup> Graders Toward Academic and  
Recreation Reading

By

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ABSTRACT

The black/white reading achievement gap in Wisconsin is the highest in the nation. Comparison studies show that African American children, children from low socioeconomic households, children of average to below average intelligence, and English language learners close the achievement gap when exposed to foreign language study. The purpose of this study is to determine the effectiveness of foreign language immersion education on the reading skills of elementary African American children at Milwaukee Spanish Immersion School (MSIS). A second objective is to discover the attitudes of African American elementary students, from MSIS, toward the recreational and academic reading.

Reading score data, from Wisconsin Concepts Knowledge Exam (WCKE) and Terra Nova, was gathered, from the Milwaukee Public School system's (MPS) report card for MSIS, dated June 2004, and December 2006 and 2007, to compare percentages of African American students, from MSIS, MPS, and the state of Wisconsin, who scored at a level of proficient, or above. MSIS African American fourth graders achieved higher WCKE and Terra Nova reading scores than African American fourth graders statewide and in MPS. The Elementary Reading Attitude Survey (ERAS; Mc Kenna and Kear, 1990) was the instrument used to discover the attitudes of fourth grade MSIS African American pupils toward recreational and academic reading. Twelve fourth grade African American students from MSIS took part in the survey. The moderate 48% ERAS composite reading attitude result from the MSIS African American, fourth grade sample surveyed uncovered an apathetic attitude toward reading which may not align with ability.

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## Chapter I

### Introduction

According to the National Assessment of Educational Statistics (NAES) calculated by the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES), there is a 38 point gap in achievement scores between Wisconsin's fourth grade black students and its' fourth grade white students (2007). The NAES results released by the United States Education Department, in September of 2007, are considered, by experts, to be the best current, standardized tool for testing the nation's children for reading and math competence (Borsuk, 2007). A statistically reliable sample of approximately 350,000 children, from the nation's public and private schools, participate. The reading score range, for the 2007 NAES, is 1 to 500. Nationwide, fourth grade African American students average 203. Wisconsin's African American fourth grade students average 191 in contrast to Wisconsin's white fourth grade students' average of 229. Connecticut and Nebraska are states with black/ white reading achievements similar to Wisconsin's. Those states have a reading achievement gap score of 35 points. Thus the reading achievement gap in Wisconsin is the highest in the nation. Elizabeth Burmaster, Wisconsin superintendent of public instruction, insists that this education gap is the civil rights issue currently facing our country.

In the 1960s some of Canada's elementary schools began to use the French language as an instrument of instruction for students whose home language was English (Cummins, 1998). Canadians began to use the term, "immersion education," to describe the use of French to instruct English speaking students. Educators in the United States, desiring immersion education to enrich the educations of English speaking American



students, designed programs modeled after the Canadian French immersion model (Fortune & Tedik 2003).

Foreign language immersion programs in the United States (U.S.) most often use languages spoken by large populations of people such as German, Spanish or French to teach the curriculum (Fortune & Tedik 2003). U.S. Partial immersion programs use English to teach half of the time and the immersion language to instruct the other half of the time. The 50/50 method of providing instruction is maintained through all elementary grade levels. Full immersion programs in the U.S. instruct kindergarten and first grade students entirely in the immersion language. English language arts and reading are introduced in grades 2 and 3. As the students progress through to grade 5 more English instruction is added to the entire curriculum to attain an even distribution of both languages.

Comparison studies of foreign language immersion students and non – immersion students in various parts of the United States, including Milwaukee, show that immersion students perform at or above the level of non – immersion students on standardized tests of language arts after some instruction in English is added to the curriculum (Rubio 1998). According to David Downs Reid, Director of Immersion Education, Robbinsdale Language Immersion School, in Robbinsdale, Minnesota, comparison between immersion and non – immersion students remains positive when demographics are included (2000.) Karen Kodama, Principal of John Stanford International School suggests that immersion students' problem solving skills may be elevated from foreign language learning because they have to persevere in order to keep learning (2005).

Milwaukee Public School (MPS) system's Milwaukee Spanish Immersion School (MSIS) is a full immersion program in Milwaukee, Wisconsin ([www.2.milwaukee.k12.wi.us/spanish\\_imm/](http://www.2.milwaukee.k12.wi.us/spanish_imm/)). There are 600 enrolled students, in grades K4 through 5, who represent various socioeconomic backgrounds, learning abilities, and ethnic groups ([www.2.milwaukee.k12.wi.us/acctrep/rc07.html](http://www.2.milwaukee.k12.wi.us/acctrep/rc07.html)). The teaching staff encompasses a wide range of Hispanic backgrounds with native, as well as former non native, residents of Spanish speaking countries ([www.2.milwaukee.k12.wi.us/spanish\\_imm/](http://www.2.milwaukee.k12.wi.us/spanish_imm/)). Spanish is used as the medium to provide, English speaking pupils, the same curriculum as the rest of the MPS elementary school students. First grade pupils, at MSIS, learn to read in Spanish and are expected to communicate, all subjects in the classroom, in the immersion language. By balancing the amount of Spanish and English used to instruct Reading and Language Arts, MSIS provides its learners with the necessary Basic English skills, as the students progress through grades 3 through 5.

In 1965, as a result of growing national concern for the achievement gap between children of low socioeconomic (SES) in comparison to children of higher SES, Title I was created under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) (Ruskin, 2007). Nearly four decades later, in 2002, Title I was reauthorized as a part of the No Child Left behind Act (NCLB), to fund educational institutions with a high population of low income students. Funding provided by these acts enables much federal, state, and local arrangements to be constructed and carried out with the intention of diminishing the adversity faced by economically and socially disadvantaged children entering American public schools (Renchler, 1993). A monumental goal of NCLB is a pledge to eliminate

the white/black student achievement gap, and the poor/middle class achievement gap, by 2014 (Tough, 2006).

The 2007 Harvard School of Health Science (HSHS) Report, “Children Left Behind: How Metropolitan Areas are Failing America’s Children,” affirms that black and Hispanic children are more likely to live in poor neighborhoods, and come from families whose income falls below the poverty line (Acevedo – Garcia, McArdle, Osypuk, Lefkowitz & Krimgold, 2007). The study, conducted by the Frank Porter Graham (FPG) Child Development Institute and the School of Education at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, concludes that, upon examining the reading development of 1,913 low SES children from kindergarten through third grade, economically disadvantaged students from schools with a minority population exceeding 75% are highly likely to read below grade level.

A 1997, large-scale, national, longitudinal study entitled "Prospects: The Congressionally Mandated Study of Educational Growth and Opportunity," by Puma, Karweit, Price, Riciutti, Thompson, & Vaden – Kiernan imparts statistics with similar results. The Prospects study reveals that in schools where over 75% of the students receive free or reduced lunch the mean reading score for first graders falls in the 44<sup>th</sup> percentile compared to the national sample mean score of first graders at the 50<sup>th</sup> percentile (Snow, Burns & Griffin, 1998). Snow, et.al. relate that an earlier report, the Coleman report of 1966, offers comparable conclusions.

According to Blair Hamilton Taylor, President & CEO of the Los Angeles Urban League (2006), America’s prosperity is integrally linked to countries around the world and this reality of a condensing globe is magnified for African Americans. If African

Americans do not swiftly advance toward participation in the global economy the impending result may be tragic. Black children in America, as a group, must read well, or they have no future (Jackson, 2008). The comparison of importance is no longer one of Black American students to White American students. All American students are competing educationally against the world's most outstanding students to insure their economic futures.

Early foreign language instruction endows students with an understanding of other societies in an extraordinary way (McLean & Boss, 2007). It uniquely strengthens student's cultural competency skills. African American children, children from low socioeconomic households, children of average to below average intelligence, and English language learners close the achievement gap when exposed to foreign language study.

#### *Statement of the Problem*

There is a need for an educational solution, or solutions, toward reading instruction which will increase reading competency of African American elementary students.

#### *Purpose of the Study*

The purpose of this study is to determine the effectiveness of foreign language immersion education on the reading skills of elementary African American children at Milwaukee Spanish Immersion School. A second objective is to discover the attitudes of African American elementary students, from Milwaukee Spanish Immersion School, toward the reading instruction they are receiving.

### *Research Questions*

To determine whether foreign language immersion education is an alternative solution for increasing the basic reading skills of African American elementary students the ensuing research questions are:

1. What do previous studies reveal about the impact of foreign language immersion education on the basic reading skills of African American elementary school children?
2. How does the reading achievement of African American students at Milwaukee Spanish Immersion School compare to reading achievement of African American children in the Milwaukee Public, and Wisconsin Public school systems?
3. What are African American Milwaukee Spanish Immersion School students' attitudes toward recreation and academic reading?

### *Importance of the Study*

This study is important because:

1. If it can be determined that foreign language immersion education can positively impact the reading abilities of African American elementary students, more resources may be directed toward further study and implementation of foreign language immersion education to assist African American students with reading.
2. The attitudes of the African American Milwaukee Spanish Immersion students, about their reading instruction experiences, can help to discern areas of focus for further observation for Milwaukee Spanish Immersion School and other immersion programs.

### *Limitations of the Study*

The following are limitations to the study:

1. The sample size of this study is small. The study involves only one foreign language immersion elementary school with African American students within the student body.
2. The survey may be incorrectly answered. Misunderstanding, disinterest, or lack of frankness is conceivable reason for error in the survey results.
3. There may be a limited amount of literature on the subject of foreign language immersion and its affect on the reading competency of African American elementary students.

### *Definition of Terms*

For clarity, the following definitions of terms are provided:

Achievement Gap: It refers to the observed disparity on a number of educational measures between the performance of groups of students, especially groups defined by gender, race/ethnicity, ability, and socioeconomic status. It can also be observed on a variety of measures. ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Achievement\\_gap](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Achievement_gap))

African American Vernacular English (AAVE): Any of the nonstandard varieties of English spoken by African Americans.

(<http://www.encyclopeida.com/doc/AFRICANAMERICANVERNACULARENGLISH>)

Control Group: A group that serves as the control in a scientific experiment; specific, such a group that does not receive the substance, drug, treatment, etc. being tested.

([http://www.bartleby.com/cgi-bin/taxis/webinator/sitsearch?FILTER=&query+control group](http://www.bartleby.com/cgi-bin/taxis/webinator/sitsearch?FILTER=&query+control+group))

Experimental Group: A group of subjects exposed to the variable of an experiment, as opposed to the control group.

(<http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Special:Search&search=Experimental+group&fulltext=Search&ns0=1&redirects0>)

Longitudinal Study: A study that involves the repeated observation or examination of a set of subjects over time with respect to one or more studies of property that may have different values in various cases. ([http://www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Longitudinal Study](http://www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Longitudinal_Study))

Magnet School: A public school which offers innovative courses specialized training, etc. in order to attract students from a broad urban area and thereby help to bring about desegregation. ([http://www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Magnet School](http://www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Magnet_School))

No Child Left Behind education law (NCLB): A United States federal law (Act of Congress) enacted on January 8, 2002, to expand choices for parents, focus resources on proven educational methods and provide accountability (schools, states, and parents) for results. ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/No\\_Child\\_Left\\_Behind\\_Act](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/No_Child_Left_Behind_Act))

Reading: The act or activity of a reader. An official, or public, recitation of written material (such as a book, newspaper, letter, etc.). The specific form of a particular passage in a text. (<http://www.bartleby.com/cgi-bin/texis/webinator/sitesearch?FILTER=&query=reading>)

Socialism: A social system in which the means of producing and distributing goods are owned collectively and political power is exercised by the whole community. (<http://www.bartleby.com/cgi-bin/texis/webinator/sitesearch?FILTER=&query=socialism>)

Stanford Achievement Test, Intermediate Level 2 : The Stanford Achievement Test, Ninth Edition (Stanford 9), is a national test that was administered annually to students in grades 2 through 11 as part of California's Standardized Testing and Reporting (STAR) program. It was replaced in 2003 with California's own norm-referenced test, the California Achievement Test, Sixth Edition (CAT/6).

(<http://www.encyclopedia.com/searchresults.aspx?q=standard+achievement+test>)

Terra Nova: The Terra Nova test measures achievement in Reading, Language, Mathematics, Social Studies, and Science. Although the test is not an end-all for measuring student learning, it is one of the tools that we use to gauge each child's progress, as well as the effectiveness of our school's curriculum.

([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/TerraNova\\_\(test\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/TerraNova_(test)) )

Wide Range Achievement Test (WRAT): It is a screening test that can be administered to determine if a more comprehensive achievement test is needed. Achievement tests refer to skills that individuals learn through direct instruction or intervention.

(<http://www.encyclopedia.com/doc/1G2-3405700410.html>)

Wisconsin Knowledge and Concepts Examinations (WKCE): A required test by law (Chapter 118.30, Wisconsin Statutes), measure what students know and are able to do in the academic subjects of reading and mathematics in grades 3, 5, 6 and 7. Students in 4, 8, and 10 were tested in reading, mathematics, and language arts, science, social studies and writing. Mostly multiple choices with some short answer questions. These tests measure how well students have mastered Wisconsin's Model Academic Standards. (WKCE, Great Schools, Understanding Your Child's Test Results, 2002-2008)



## Chapter II

### Literature Review

This chapter will discuss the black – white achievement gap in reading for elementary school children in the United States. An overview of immersion education will be given, as well as an introduction to the Milwaukee Spanish Immersion School. A major focus of discussion will be on current research relating to the effect of elementary foreign language immersion education on reading achievement.

#### *The Black – White Achievement Gap*

Holly K. Craig, Professor of Education, Institute for Human Adjustment; Director, University Center for the Development of Language and Literacy; Ph.D., University of Michigan (2007), describes the term, "Black – White Achievement Gap," in reference to the long standing disparity of educational achievement between African American students and their non – Hispanic White counterparts, as evidenced by performance on academic competency tests. Historically, Georgia's 1910 Census makes inquiry into the literacy of children between the ages of 7 and 12 years old (Fishback & Baskin, 1991). Assessment of the Black – White Achievement Gap continues presently via national and state testing tools such as the National Assessment of Educational Statistics (NAES) and the Wisconsin Knowledge and Concepts Examinations (WKCE).

*National standardized evaluation.* In 2003, establishment of the No Child Left Behind education law (NCLB) changed states' participation, in the NAES, from optional to required (Borsuk, 2003). The NAES is a nationwide, continuous surveillance of American students' achievement in math and reading (Donahue, Voelkl, Campbell, & Mazzeo, 1999). It provides an average score, based on a 0 – 500 point scale, for the

nation's, state's, and city's students, from grades 4, 8, and 12. The NAES assessments further present student outcomes relating to percentage of students reaching the achievement levels of Basic, Proficient, and Advanced, as prescribed by the National Assessment Governing Board, as well as outcomes associated with background information such as race, and ethnicity (U.S. National Center for Education Statistics 2007). Descriptions of the NAES achievement levels are:

- Basic – partial mastery of grade specific, fundamental, prerequisite knowledge and skills.
- Proficient – demonstration of solid academic competency over challenging, grade specific subject matter.
- Advanced – superior performance.

The 2003 NAES exposed a large reading gap between the nation's white and black students (Borsuk, 2003). According to a graphic created by Alfred Elicierto (2003), the national reading gap, between black and white fourth graders, was 30 points (as cited by Borsuk, 2003). Wisconsin's fourth grade white - black reading gap was 25 points. The 2007 NAES reported a reading gap of 27 points between the nation's white and black fourth grade students (U.S. National Center for Education Statistics 2007). Wisconsin's fourth grade white - black reading gap was 38 points. The 38 point, Wisconsin, reading gap was the largest in the nation. Since 1992, the size of the national NAES black - white reading gap has varied but it has not changed substantially as shown in Table 1.

Table 1

*Students Assessed in Fourth-Grade NAEP Reading, by Race/Ethnicity from 1992 – 2007*

Race/Ethnicity	1992	1994	1998	2000	2002	2003	2005	2007
Black	224	224	226/225	225	224	229	229	231
White	192	185	193/193	190	199	198	200	203
Gap	32	38	33/32	34	30	31	29	27

*State standardized evaluation.* The Wisconsin Knowledge Concepts Examinations (WKCE) are Wisconsin's standardized tests designed to meet the NCLB requirement to measure the academic performance of all students from grades 3 through 8, and grade 10 (Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction 2008). The WKCE places students into categories of Advanced, Proficient, Basic, or Minimal Performance based on their performance. Descriptions of the WKCE Proficiency Categories are (Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction 2006):

- Advanced – shows depth in comprehension of tested academic knowledge and skills.
- Proficient – shows competency in tested academic knowledge and skills.
- Basic – shows some tested academic knowledge and skills.
- Minimal Performance – shows very limited tested academic knowledge and skills.

The 2006 WKCE exposed a large reading gap between the state's white and black students in grades 3 through 5 (Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction 2006). A comparison of percentages of black and white students assessed as proficient and advanced in reading, revealed gaps of 28 points for third grade, 29 points for fourth grade, and 30 points for fifth grade students. Since 2005, the first year of NCLB required testing; the WKCE reading gaps remained essentially unchanged as shown in Table 2 (Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction 2008).

Table 2

*Percent of Students Scoring Proficient and Advanced in Reading*

Years	Black students	White students
2005-2006	55	87
2006-2007	57	88
2007-2008	56	88

*Implications.* The NAES and WKCE assessments illustrate that the black – white reading gap, one of the problems NCLB was designed to address, remains an issue that we can not abide by in the state of Wisconsin or the nation (The Aspen Institute 2007). An increase in achievement for all American children, and elimination of the discrepancy between white students and black, is needed to insure their success, and the success of the United States, in the world economy. Upon considering the results of the 2007 WKCE, Elizabeth Burmaster, Wisconsin superintendent of public instruction, insists that the state of Wisconsin must continue to direct its efforts to terminate the achievement gaps and

advance educational attainment for all of the state's students (Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction 2008).

### *Immersion Education*

Educators began to use the term, "immersion education," in the 1960's to describe the use of the French language to teach elementary school students whose home language was English (Cummins, 2000). American foreign language immersion teachers are required to be certified in elementary education and be native, or near – native speakers, readers, and writers of the foreign language (Met, 1993). In the classroom, the teacher speaks to the students using the immersion language as the vehicle to instruct regular curricular activities. For example, reading is taught via instruction in the immersion language placing the emphasis on the subject of reading, not the immersion language. The most commonly used immersion languages, in the United States, are those spoken by large populations such as German, Spanish, Cantonese, or French (Fortune & Tedick, 2003).

According to Helena Curtain, director of the ESOL and Foreign Language K-12 teacher certification program at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee (personal communication, May 2008), most U.S. immersion schools are a type called early immersion. Early immersion programs begin students in kindergarten (K) or grade 1 and progress through grade 5. Parents can choose between two types of early immersion programs: total immersion, and partial immersion (Lenker & Rhodes, 2007). Total early immersion programs instruct K through 2 students, all subjects, entirely in the immersion language. English instruction is introduced in grade 3. As the students progress through grades 3 – 5 the amount of English instruction increases gradually up to 20% - 50%.

Partial early immersion programs use the immersion language to instruct the students 50% of the time regardless of the grade level. Initially, reading may be taught using the immersion language, or English, or both languages. Immersion schools use many instructional techniques similar to those recommended for students who are struggling (Fortune & Tedick, 2003). According to Genesee, immersion education is effective academically for students of diverse socioeconomic and ethnic backgrounds (as cited by Fortune & Tedick).

*Early immersion history.* Canada's St. Lambert school, in Quebec, opened in 1965 as the country's first public immersion education program (Garcia & Baker, 1995). It provided instruction in French, to English speaking students, in response to the growing need to be bilingual in English and French in Canada. Long term research and evaluation obtained from the Canadian – French immersion school programs resulted in consistent findings that showed students gaining French language and literacy skills with no loss of English language and literacy skills on standardized tests (Cummins, 2000). However, the standardized tests were not able to evaluate all facets of English academic levels.

*U.S. immersion history.* The United States has a history of teachers using English in tandem with other foreign languages to teach students (Matusov, 1999). Pre – American Revolution primary school teachers commonly used Dutch, French, Swedish, and German to instruct. In the early 1900's German was the predominant minority language in the U.S. It was used to deliver a portion of class instruction to no less than 4% of American elementary school children. "English – only," became the standard of American instruction during World War I, as concerns arose regarding the allegiances of

non – English speakers in the nation, and continued to be the model until Congress passed the Bilingual Act in 1968 and then the Equal Educational Opportunity Act of 1974.

Early U.S. immersion schools used the Canadian – French programs as a blueprint (Fortune & Tedick, 2003). Culver City, California started the first U.S. foreign language immersion program in 1971 (Alexander & Winne, 2005). Helena Curtain (personal communication, May 2008) said that the number of immersion schools in the U.S. expanded gradually adding schools in Montgomery County, Maryland and Cincinnati, Ohio in 1974; Plattsburgh, New York in 1975; and the Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS) in 1977.

*Milwaukee immersion history.* According to Helena Curtain (personal communication, May 2008), in the mid 1970s, Milwaukee Public Schools' Language Curriculum Specialist, Anthony Gradisnik, suggested Milwaukee create a German immersion magnet school in response to court ordered integration. With support from the German community, and the German Department of the University of Wisconsin – Milwaukee, a citywide specialty school, Milwaukee German Immersion School became Milwaukee's first elementary immersion program. The Milwaukee Public Schools expanded their immersion school offerings in 1978 with French immersion, and in 1980 a Spanish immersion program was initiated. MPS researcher, Dr. Marco O'Brien did a comparison study of student achievement between immersion and non immersion MPS students in the late 1980's. His study matched students in areas such as gender, race, and free/reduced lunch. The data, from his seven years of longitudinal study, measured immersion student's achievement to be equal to that of non – immersion students through

grade 5, and showed that by grade 7 immersion students achieved compelling improvement compared to the non - immersion students. Dr. O'Brien's research was never published as his position was eliminated before the end of the study.

### *Milwaukee Spanish Immersion School*

Milwaukee Public School (MPS) system's Milwaukee Spanish Immersion School (MSIS) is a full immersion program ([www.2.milwaukee.k12.wi.us/spanish\\_imm/](http://www.2.milwaukee.k12.wi.us/spanish_imm/)). It is located at 2765 South 55<sup>th</sup> St., in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Yvette Martel is the principal of the 600 enrolled students, in grades K4 through 5, who represent various socioeconomic backgrounds, learning abilities, and ethnic groups. The student body is 44% male, and 56% female ([www2.milwaukee.k12.wi.us/acctrep/rc07.html](http://www2.milwaukee.k12.wi.us/acctrep/rc07.html)). The ethnic representation is 2% Asian, 1% Native American, 25% African American, 45% Hispanic, and 23% White. Free/Reduced Lunch is taken by 53% of the student population. Two Special Education classes are provided for orthopedically impaired/cognitively disabled students ([www.2.milwaukee.k12.wi.us/spanish\\_imm/](http://www.2.milwaukee.k12.wi.us/spanish_imm/)). The teaching staff encompasses a wide range of Hispanic backgrounds with native instructors from Mexico, Colombia, Nicaragua, Puerto Rico, and Ecuador, as well as former non native residents of Chile, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Mexico, Perú, and Spain.

The MSIS curriculum provides the same study of reading and language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies as the rest of the MPS elementary schools ([www.2.milwaukee.k12.wi.us/spanish\\_imm/](http://www.2.milwaukee.k12.wi.us/spanish_imm/)). However, MSIS uses Spanish to instruct English speaking pupils in most subjects. Non Spanish speaking educators teach Art, Music, Physical Education, and a violence prevention program called, "Second Step." Kindergarten teachers use Spanish throughout regular kindergarten activities. The



kindergarteners are encouraged to speak Spanish, in the classroom, though they may speak in English as well. The children develop a large Spanish listening vocabulary as they move on to first grade. First grade pupils learn to read in Spanish and are expected to communicate, all subjects in the classroom, in the immersion language. Parents of first graders are instructed to encourage children interested in reading in English to do so at home. Thirty minutes of Reading and Language arts instruction in English is added daily for students in the second grade. MSIS provides its learners with the necessary English skills, as they progress through grades 3 through 5, with a balance of approximately 80% instruction in Spanish and 20% in English. Reading and Language arts skills constitute the bulk of the 20% instruction using English as the medium.

#### *Early Research of Foreign Language Study and Student Achievement*

Since the 1960's, researchers have conducted studies to compute, and validate, the effect of foreign language learning upon the basic skills of elementary school children (Armstrong & Rogers, 1997). In 1961 and 1963, in Champaign, Illinois, Johnson, Ellison, and Flores conducted two small studies of grade 3 pupils comparing an experimental group of students, who experienced Spanish instruction during 1959, against a control group of students who did not. Results revealed that the students given Spanish instruction displayed English reading skills equal or greater to the students who had not. Leino and Haak did a large, longitudinal study in the Saint Paul, Minnesota Public School System in 1963 with similar results. Their study showed that the students with one year of foreign language instruction had substantially higher reading scores than the students without foreign language instruction. Three studies from the 1970's compared the basic skills of elementary school children learning Latin to similar students

not receiving such instruction. Offenburger completed a large scale study in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, in 1971, as did the District of Columbia Schools in Washington, D.C. Sheridan completed a similar study of students, in Indianapolis, Indiana, in 1976. All three, of the aforementioned studies, confirmed that the study of Latin increased the basic skills of the elementary students. During the mid 1980's Rafferty completed a large scale longitudinal study of elementary school immersion students in Louisiana. Her research showed that foreign language immersion students, regardless of race, gender or scholastic level, out performed non foreign language students. She concluded that low performing readers, as early as third grade, should be encouraged to participate in the study of a foreign language.

#### *Recent Research of Foreign Language Study and Student Achievement*

Garfinkel and Tabor (1991) conducted a study with the purpose of comparing the English reading scores of 672 sixth grade students, from the Ludington, Michigan school system. The Ludington schools provided a nine week; twenty minutes per day; twice a week introduction to all of the students in grades 3 and 4. Students entering grades 5 and 6 were given the option of taking further Spanish instruction for one or two full years. The final analysis included 513 children; 389 students who did not continue with Spanish instruction, 47 students who chose to continue Spanish instruction for one year, and 77 students who continued with their Spanish instruction for two years. When Garfinkel and Tabor compared the student's reading scores, from the Stanford Achievement Test, Intermediate Level 2, they looked at the level of intelligence of the subjects as well as whether or not a student did or did not extend their study of Spanish. In so doing they found a correlation between improved reading scores for children of average intelligence

and taking a full year or two of foreign language which was statistically significant. Their results also illustrated a compelling distinction in sixth grade reading achievement among low ability readers who did extend their study of Spanish in comparison to those low ability readers who did not.

Thomas, Collier, and Abbott (1993) conducted a study with the purpose of comparing the English reading scores of 2039 students in grades 1, 2, and 3, from the Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS) Fairfax, Virginia. 719 students attended the Japanese, Spanish, or French partial immersion program; the remaining 1320 students attended non immersion schools in the FCPS system. The immersion students' parents volunteered their children for the study. The non immersion students were carefully selected by matching cognitive scores, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, and primary language to the immersion group in an effort to avoid bias. The Metropolitan Achievement Test, a national standardized norm – referenced test of English language arts achievement, was used to compare the performance of the immersion group to the non immersion group. Thomas et al. (1993) study results indicated that the second and third grade immersion students significantly outperformed the control group of non immersion students as well as the FCPS average.

D'Agiulli, Siegel, and Serra (2001) performed a small study involving 81 Canadian students, between the ages of 9 and 13, from one school in Toronto, Canada. All of the students were born in Canada, had parents of Italian origin, came from middle class families, and both Italian and English was spoken in their homes. The children were primarily instructed in English, but spent 35 minutes per school day attending Italian classes. 220 English speaking, monolingual students, from the same geographical

area as the 81 bilingual students, taught with the same methods, and of comparable socioeconomic status, were selected from a larger sample of previous studies to compare against the 81 bilingual pupils. The bilingual children and the monolingual English children were divided into age groups of 9 – 10 year olds, and 11 – 13 year olds. Each age group was divided into two groups revealing students whose Wide Range Achievement Test (WRAT) scores fell at or above the 30<sup>th</sup> percentile - defined as skilled readers, and those students whose WRAT scores fell below the 30<sup>th</sup> percentile - defined as less skilled readers. The data demonstrated that both levels of readers in the bilingual group performed better than both levels of readers in the monolingual English group. D'Agiulli et al. (2001) concluded that children ages 9 to 13 benefited from exposure to a second language with an increase in their development of cognitive and phonological skills. They conclude that their study shows that learning Italian can benefit children who are learning to read English.

### *Metalinguistic Abilities*

Kenji Hakuta (1990) defines the term metalinguistic ability as the ability to think flexibly, and abstractly, about language. When children make judgments about the grammar of sentences, and appreciate plays on words in jokes, they are demonstrating metlinguistic ability. It is theorized that all children develop metalinguistic ability to an extent, but the bilingual experience fine tunes the control children have over their mental processes. Since research literature of monolingual children links metalinguistic ability to the development of early reading skills, Hakuta believes it is reasonable to deduce that bilingual children should have an edge in learning the basics of reading. D'Agiulli et al. (2001) support metalinguistic ability as a possible explanation for the benefit to English

skills displayed by the bilingual students in their study. Thomas et al. (1993) conclude that their research supports other studies which show that students developing bilingualism become metalinguistically aware at an earlier age and use that ability to analyze their own first language.

Many urban African American children enter kindergarten using a dialect termed African American Vernacular English (AAVE) which differs from School English (SE) (Charity, Scarborough, & Griffin 2004). AAVE is no longer considered a weaker form of Standard English. It is now considered to be a separate, complex, system equivalent to SE but with alternative syntactic and semantic rules. Though there is not yet evidence to definitively confirm it, this dialect difference may be a cause of reading achievement difficulty for some African American children. One of the interventions Charity et al. (2004) offer is to increase the metalinguistic ability of these children.

#### *Critical Analysis and Conclusion*

Immersion programs in the U.S. provide the possibility of bringing black, white, and ethnic minority children together around a common interest of learning in a language other than English (Holobow et al, 1987). Fortune and Tedick (2003) hypothesize that students from diverse socioeconomic and ethnic backgrounds may profit from the level playing field which is created when every pupil operates in a second language. However, the benefit of foreign language immersion education on the basic skills of students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds needs to be substantiated with more detailed and widespread investigation (Taylor – Ward, 2003).

## Chapter III

### Methodology

#### *Methods and Procedures*

The purpose of this study was to examine the effect of Elementary Foreign Language Immersion Education on the basic reading skills of fourth grade African American students at the Milwaukee Spanish Immersion School (MSIS). The objectives of the studies were:

1. To compare WCKE and Terra Nova reading scores between fourth grade African American students at MSIS, MPS, and the state of Wisconsin.
2. To determine the attitudes of fourth grade African American MSIS students toward recreational and academic reading.

This chapter will report on the methods of study, sample selection, instrumentation, procedures followed, method of analysis, and the limitation.

#### *Methods of Study*

For the purpose of comparing WCKE and Terra Nova reading scores, for fourth grade African American students at MSIS, MPS and the State of Wisconsin, cross sectional data was collected, from the Milwaukee Public School system's report card for MSIS dated June 2004, and December 2006 and 2007. The information illustrated MSIS reading proficiency for the 2000 – 01 through the 2006 – 07 academic school years. The Elementary Reading Attitude Survey (ERAS; Mc Kenna and Kear, 1990) was the instrument used to determine the attitudes of fourth grade MSIS African American pupils toward recreational and academic reading. A national sample of over 18,000 first through sixth grade children was used as the normative frame of reference (Mc Kenna &

Kear, 1990). Validity and reliability of the instrument were based the national sample. Reliability coefficients ranged from .74 to .89 using Cronbach's alpha (<http://www.ats.ucla.edu/stat/Spss/faq/alpha.html>). Validity for the recreational subscale ( $p < .001$ ) was gathered by comparing mean recreational scores, within the normative group, for those who had a library card, those who checked out books from their school library, and those who watched less than 1 hour of television per day, against students who did not fall into these categories. The academic subscale's validity ( $p < .001$ ) was evaluated by scrutinizing the parallel between academic reading scores and reading competency. No permission was required to use the ERAS. Jim Davis, the creator of Garfield, agreed to create the four pictorial images for the instrument free of copyright so that educators could copy and use the survey easily and legally.

### *Sample Selection*

A statistically reliable sample of approximately 350,000 children, from the nation's public and private schools, participate in the NAES which is considered, by experts, to be the best current, standardized tool for testing the nation's children for reading and math competence (Borsuk, 2007). In 2007, Wisconsin's African American fourth grade students average 191 in contrast to Wisconsin's white fourth grade students' average of 229, for reading, earning Wisconsin the highest reading achievement gap in the nation. There seems to be a need for an educational solution, or solutions, toward reading instruction which will increase reading competency of African American elementary students. Many studies confer; African American children, children from low socioeconomic households, children of average to below average intelligence, and

English language learners close the achievement gap when exposed to foreign language study (McLean & Boss, 2007).

The researcher chose the fourth grade African American pupils at MSIS as the population for the study because foreign language instruction was an integral part of their curriculum, and there was current reading proficiency data available to scrutinize. In addition, permission was also granted, from Cindy Raven, Ph.D., Research Specialist of Milwaukee Public Schools Division of Research & Assessment, to conduct the study survey.

Milwaukee Public School (MPS) system's Milwaukee Spanish Immersion School (MSIS) is a full immersion elementary program ([www.2.milwaukee.k12.wi.us/spanish\\_imm](http://www.2.milwaukee.k12.wi.us/spanish_imm)). It is located at 2765 South 55<sup>th</sup> St., in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. The student body is 44% male, and 56% female ([www2.milwaukee.k12.wi.us/acctrep/rc07.html](http://www2.milwaukee.k12.wi.us/acctrep/rc07.html)). African American students represent 25% of the population. At the time of the survey there were 63 students divided into two fourth grade classrooms at MSIS (Martel, Y., 2008). Parental permission was required for each student participant. Twelve fourth grade African American students from MSIS took part in the survey. The 12 African American students in the sample made up 19% of the fourth grade population at MSIS. The sample population was 75% female and 25% male with 9 African American girls and 3 African American boys.

### *Instrumentation*

On October 13, 2008, the researcher received written permission, from Cindy Raven, Ph.D., Research Specialist of Milwaukee Public Schools Division of Research & Assessment, to conduct the study survey. A copy of the letter of affirmation to conduct



research is in Appendix A. The device used to survey the fourth grade African American students of MSIS was the Elementary Reading Attitudes Survey. The ERAS is a public domain instrument consisting of 20 questions to assess attitudes towards reading in children from grades 1 through 6 (Kush, Watkins, Mc Aleer, & Edwards, 1995). The survey asked 20 questions comprising 10 short questions related to academic reading and 10 short questions related to recreational reading. Upon being asked a question from the survey the respondents were asked to choose, and circle, one of four pictorial answers available to them. The pictures showed Garfield the cat displaying emotions from very happy to very sad. For a copy of the ERAS please look in Appendix C.

#### *Procedures Followed*

In October, 2008, the researcher sent a letter to the parents of the students requesting permission for their child to volunteer for the ERAS. Permission request forms were put in the children's homework folders to be discovered and reviewed by parents, then returned to school. The request for parental consent letter may be found in Appendix B. On November 5, 2008, the 12 MSIS students with parental permission to volunteer to take the ERAS sat at tables in the school cafeteria. Each student was equipped with a pencil and the survey. The researcher explained to the students that there were no right or wrong answers to the questions and that each question would be read aloud followed by a short amount of time for the respondent to scan the pictures of Garfield, looking very happy, happy, sad, and very sad, and circle his or her answer to express how he or she felt in response to the question. Thirty minutes were used to complete the survey. Afterward, the researcher thanked the children, collected their surveys and gave each of them a goody bag.

### *Method of Analysis*

Reading score data, from WCKE and Terra Nova, was gathered, from the Milwaukee Public School system's report card for MSIS dated June 2004, and December 2006 and 2007. The data compared percentages of African American students, from MSIS, MPS, and the state of Wisconsin, who scored at a level of proficient, or above, during the academic years from 2000 through 2007. The researcher compiled the information in a chart and compared the percentages.

Information from the completed ERAS was sorted and analyzed according to the responses to the questions. For each of the 20 questions the study participants answers were tallied and response percentages were calculated based on those tallies.

Recreational, academic, and total reading attitude scores were calculated for each respondent by assigning points to each pictorial answer. A choice of Very Happy, Happy, Sad, or Very Sad earned four, three, two, or one point respectively. Individual attitude scores were summed up and averaged to derive a sample group recreational, academic and total score. The resultant sample group scores were converted to a percentage value to allow comparison to the four nodes of the survey. The percentage ranges were evenly dispersed among the four nodes with 0 – 25% for Very Sad, 26 – 50% for Sad, 51 – 75% for Happy, and 76 – 100% for Very Happy.

### *Limitations*

The limitations to the methodology of the study were:

1. Examination and comparison of WCKE and Terra Nova reading competency scores included only one Wisconsin public school system (MPS) and the state of Wisconsin.

2. Distribution of the survey was limited to fourth grade Spanish immersion students at MSIS.
3. The sample size was small as it was limited to students whose parents returned the consent form in time for their child to participate.

## Chapter IV

### Results

The purpose of the study was to examine the effect of Elementary Foreign Language Immersion Education on the basic reading skills of fourth grade African American students at the Milwaukee Spanish Immersion School. The objectives of the studies were:

1. To compare WCKE and Terra Nova reading scores between fourth grade African American students at MSIS, MPS, and the state of Wisconsin.
2. To determine the attitudes of fourth grade African American MSIS students toward recreational and academic reading.

#### *WCKE and Terra Nova*

The researcher compiled data on WCKE and Terra Nova tests to examine the reading proficiency of African American fourth grade Spanish immersion students at MSIS as compared to non immersion, African American, fourth grade students in MPS, and the State of Wisconsin. MSIS African American fourth graders achieved higher WCKE and Terra Nova reading scores than African American fourth graders statewide and in MPS for every academic year from 2000 - 2001 to 2006 - 2007. Since 2000, 18 – 43% more MSIS African American fourth graders, than similar MPS students, scored at proficient or above. Additionally, 15 – 40% more MSIS grade 4 African American students achieved reading scores at or above proficiency level than did similar Wisconsin state students.

Table 3

*WCKE and Terra Nova Reading Scores Showing Percent of African American Students Scoring Proficient or Above*

Year	State	MPS	MSIS
2000-01	52	48	75
2001-02	54	51	69
2002-03	61	58	82
2003-04	64	62	83
2004-05	60	57	79
2005-06	59	54	76
2006-07	60	57	100

*Elementary Reading Attitude Survey*

To explore the attitudes of African American fourth grade students at MSIS toward academic and recreational reading, the researcher dispensed the ERAS to 12 MSIS, fourth grade African American pupils. The nine female and three male respondents participated voluntarily and with parental permission. Four pictures were available for the volunteers to choose: Very Happy; Happy; Sad; and Very Sad. Respondents answered the questions by circling the Garfield picture which best described their own feelings.

Table 4 shows survey question data in percentages to recreational reading.

Table 4

*Survey Question Data by Percentage of Response*

Survey Question	Very Happy	Happy	Sad	Very Sad
#1	0%	83%	8%	8%
#2	8%	33%	42%	17%
#3	8%	0%	25%	67%
#4	16%	16%	50%	16%
#5	25%	0%	33%	42%
#6	67%	25%	8%	0%
#7	8%	0%	8%	83%
#8	8%	8%	25%	58%
#9	67%	25%	8%	0%
#10	67%	16%	16%	0%
#11	16%	33%	42%	8%
#12	42%	25%	16%	16%
#13	16%	50%	25%	8%
#14	25%	8%	33%	33%
#15	50%	25%	16%	8%
#16	8%	33%	33%	25%
#17	25%	33%	33%	42%
#18	50%	25%	8%	16%
#19	42%	16%	16%	25%
#20	16%	16%	16%	25%

*Survey Questions.*

Question 1: How do you feel when you read a book on a rainy Saturday?

Respondents clearly showed a positive attitude with 83% indicating happy and only 17 % indicating sad or very sad.

Question 2: How do you feel when you read a book in school during free time?

Respondents showed a negative attitude with 42% indicating sad and 17% indicating very sad and only 33% indicating happy and 8% indicating very happy.

Question 3: How do you feel about reading for fun at home?

Respondents showed a negative attitude with 67% indicating very sad and only 8% indicating happy.

Question 4: How do you feel about getting a book for a present?

Respondents showed a negative attitude with 50% indicating sad and only 16% indicating very happy, or happy.

Question 5: How do you feel about spending free time reading a book?

Respondents showed a negative attitude with 42% indicating very sad, and 33% indicating sad and only 25% indicating happy.

Question 6: How do you feel about starting a new book?

Respondents showed a positive attitude with 67% indicating very happy and only 8% indicating sad.

Question 7: How do you feel about reading during summer vacation?

Respondents showed a negative attitude with 83% indicating very sad and only 8% indicating very happy.

Question 8: How do you feel about reading instead of playing?

Respondents showed a negative attitude with 58% indicating very sad and only 8% indicating very happy.

Question 9: How do you feel about going to a bookstore?

Respondents showed a positive attitude with 67% indicating very happy and only 8% indicating sad.

Question 10: How do you feel about reading different kinds of books?

Respondents showed a positive attitude with 76% indicating very happy and only 16% indicating sad.

Question 11: How do you feel when a teacher asks you questions about what you read?

Respondents showed a negative attitude with 42% indicating sad and only 33% indicating happy.

Question 12: How do you feel about reading workbook pages and worksheets?

Respondents showed a positive attitude with 42% indicating very happy and only 16% indicating very sad.

Question 13: How do you feel about reading in school?

Respondents showed a positive attitude with 50% indicating happy and only 25% indicating sad.

Question 14: How do you feel about reading your school books?

Respondents showed a negative attitude with 33% indicating sad and very sad and only 25% indicating very happy.



Question 15: How do you feel about learning from a book?

Respondents showed a positive response with 50% indicating very happy and only 16% indicating sad.

Question 16: How do you feel when it's time for reading in class?

Respondents showed a negative attitude with 33% indicating sad and 25% indicating very sad and only 33% indicating happy.

Question 17: How do you feel about stories you read in reading class?

Respondents showed a mixed response with 42% indicating sad and 33% indicating happy, and 25% indicating very happy.

Question 18: How do you feel when you read out loud in class?

Respondents showed a positive response with 50% indicating very happy and 16% indicating very sad.

Question 19: How do you feel about using the dictionary?

Respondents showed a positive attitude with 42% indicating very happy and only 25% indicating very sad.

Question 20: How do you feel about taking a reading test?

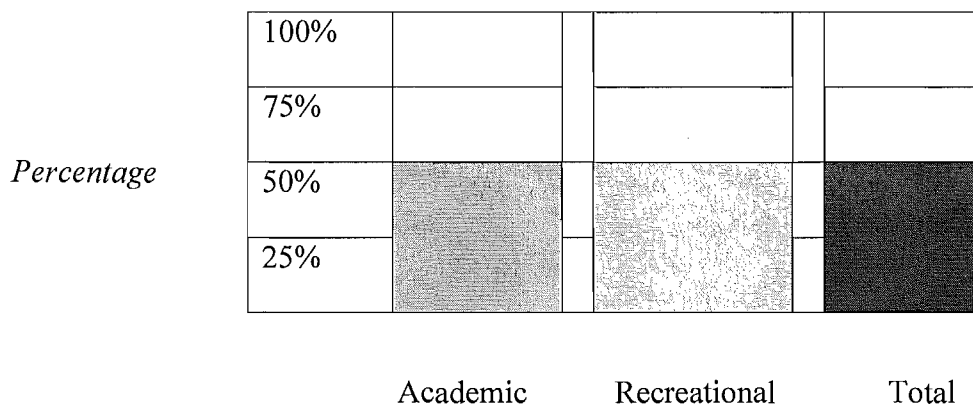
Respondents showed a negative attitude with 50% indicating very sad with only 16% indicating very happy.

*ERAS scores.* Very happy was assigned a point value of four, Happy was assigned three, Sad was assigned two, and Very Sad was assigned one point. Three scores for each of the fourth grade respondents were achieved by adding up the points which corresponded to their answers. A group score was calculated by adding up all twelve individual scores. An average was computed for each score to obtain the group value.

The first 10 questions provided the group recreational reading attitudes score of 19 points. The second 10 questions provided the group academic reading attitudes score of 19 points. A third score of 38 finalized the total composite score of reading attitudes for the group of volunteers. The researcher computed percentages for each score. The result was 48% for all three of the attitude scores. Next each node was assigned a range of 24 percentage points with 0 – 24% for Very Sad, 25 – 49% for Sad, 50 – 74% for Happy, and 75 – 100% for Very Happy. The sample's total composite score of 48% fell near the middle of the scale revealing an apathetic attitude toward academic and recreational reading. Table 5 illustrates the total ERAS percentage scores for the 4<sup>th</sup> Grades MSIS African American Sample.

Table 5

*ERAS Academic, Recreational and Total Attitude Reading Scores for 4<sup>th</sup> Grade MSIS African American Sample Population*



### *Summary*

During the academic years from 2000 – 2001 through 2006 – 2007, a large percentage of MSIS fourth grade African American students achieved or surpassed proficiency on the WCKE and Terra Nova reading tests. Statewide 3 – 5% more African

American fourth graders scored at proficient or above than did similar students in MPS. Moreover, 15 – 40% more MSIS grade four African American students achieved reading scores at or above proficiency level than did similar Wisconsin state students.

Several questions on the ERAS revealed a strong percentage of consensus among the sample respondents. How do you feel when you read a book on a rainy Saturday earned 83% Happy? How do you feel about reading for fun at home earned 67 % Very Sad? How do you feel about getting a book for a present earned 50 % Sad? How do you feel about starting a new book earned 67 % Very Happy. How do you feel about reading during summer vacation earned 83 % Very Sad? How do you feel about reading instead of playing earned 58 % Sad? How do you feel about going to a bookstore earned 67 % Very Happy. How do you feel about reading different kinds of books earned 67 % Very Happy? How do you feel about reading in school earned 50 % Happy. How do you feel about learning from a book earned 50 % Very Happy. How do you feel when you read out loud in class earned 50 % Very Happy? How do you feel when you read out loud in class earned 50 % Very Happy? How do you feel about taking a reading test earned 50 % Sad. The sample population as a whole scored at 48% on the attitude scale for recreational and academic reading. The composite reading attitudes score was also 48%.

## Chapter V

### Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations

This final chapter recaps the purpose of the study. The researcher will summarize the study; make conclusions based on the results, and make recommendations.

#### *Summary*

The purpose of this study was to determine the effectiveness of foreign language immersion education on the reading skills of elementary African American children at Milwaukee Spanish Immersion School. A second objective was to discover the attitudes of African American elementary students, from Milwaukee Spanish Immersion School, toward academic and recreational reading.

The researcher compiled data on the WCKE and Terra Nova tests to examine the reading proficiency of African American fourth grade Spanish immersion students at MSIS as compared to non immersion, African American, fourth grade students in MPS, and the state of Wisconsin. The data compared percentages of African American students, from MSIS, MPS, and the state of Wisconsin, who scored at a level of proficient, or above, during the academic years from 2000 through 2007. Grade four African American students at MSIS achieved reading scores at or above proficiency level 15 – 40% more than did similar Wisconsin state students, and 18 – 52 % more than their MPS counterparts.

To explore the attitudes of African American fourth grade students at MSIS toward academic and recreational reading, the researcher dispensed the Elementary Reading Attitudes Survey (ERAS) to 12 MSIS, fourth grade African American pupils. The nine female and three male respondents were required to have parental permission to

take the ERAS for the study. The survey asked 20 questions comprising 10 short questions related to academic reading and 10 short questions related to recreational reading. Individual attitude scores were summed up and averaged to derive a sample group recreational, academic and total score. The resultant sample group scores were converted to a percentage values to allow comparison to the four nodes of the survey. Several significant responses, from the study sample, were divulged from the ERAS for both recreational and academic reading attitudes. Most compelling were the responses to the recreational reading attitudes questions. Respondents gave strong positive responses toward recreational reading activities such as reading a book on a rainy day, starting a new book, going to the bookstore, and reading different kinds of books. However, strong negative responses were given for recreational activities such as reading for fun at home, getting a book for a present, and reading during summer vacation. Forceful academic reading attitude responses were fewer and mostly positive. Participants responded solidly positive to academic reading activities such as reading in school, reading aloud in class, and learning from a book. One clear negative response to taking a reading test presented itself for academic reading.

### *Conclusions*

Each research question will now be restated and answered.

1. What do previous studies reveal about the impact of foreign language immersion education on the basic reading skills of African American elementary school children? Since the 1960's, researchers have conducted studies to compute, and validate, the effect of foreign language learning upon the basic skills of elementary school children (Armstrong & Rogers, 1997). In 1961 and 1963, in Champaign, Illinois,

Johnson, Ellison, and Flores conducted two small studies of grade 3 pupils. Their results revealed that the students given Spanish instruction displayed English reading skills equal or greater to the students who had not. Leino and Haak did a large, longitudinal study in the Saint Paul, Minnesota Public School System in 1963. Their study showed that the students with one year of foreign language instruction had substantially higher reading scores than the students without foreign language instruction. Offenburt completed a large scale study in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, in 1971, as did the District of Columbia Schools in Washington, D.C., and also Sheridan, in Indianapolis, Indiana, in 1976. All three, of the aforementioned studies, confirmed that the study of Latin increased the basic skills of the elementary students.

During the mid 1980's Rafferty completed a large scale longitudinal study of elementary school immersion students in Louisiana. Her research showed that foreign language immersion students, regardless of race, gender or scholastic level, outperformed non foreign language students. Garfinkel and Tabor (1991) conducted a study with the purpose of comparing the English reading scores of 672 sixth grade students, from the Ludington, Michigan school system. They found a statistically significant correlation between improved reading scores for children of average intelligence and taking a full year or two of foreign language. Results of their study also illustrated a compelling distinction in sixth grade reading achievement among low ability readers who extended their study of Spanish in comparison to those low ability readers who did not. Thomas, Collier, and Abbott (1993) conducted a study with the purpose of comparing the English reading scores of 2039 students in grades 1, 2, and 3, from the Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS) Fairfax, Virginia. Results indicated that the second and third

grade immersion students significantly outperformed the control group of non immersion students as well as the FCPS average. D'Agiulli, Siegel, and Serra (2001) performed a small study involving 81 Canadian students, between the ages of 9 and 13, from one school in Toronto, Canada. Their study concluded that children ages 9 to 13 benefited from exposure to a second language with an increase in their development of cognitive and phonological skills and that learning Italian can benefit children who are learning to read English.

2. How does the reading achievement of African American students at Milwaukee Spanish Immersion School compare to reading achievement of African American children in the Milwaukee Public, and Wisconsin Public school systems? MSIS African American fourth graders achieved higher WCKE and Terra Nova reading scores than African American fourth graders statewide and in MPS for every academic year from 2000 - 2001 to 2006 – 2007. Since 2000, 18 – 43% more MSIS African American fourth graders, than similar MPS students, scored at proficient or above. Additionally, 15 – 40% more MSIS grade 4 African American students achieved reading scores at or above proficiency level than did similar Wisconsin state students. Since the fourth grade African American students attending MSIS are achieving reading proficiency above that of similar students, in MPS and throughout the state of Wisconsin, foreign language immersion education must be serving them well.

3. What are African American Milwaukee Spanish Immersion School students' attitudes toward recreation and academic reading? Recreational reading responses from the sample population are incongruous. The respondents showed positive attitudes toward recreational reading activities such as going to the bookstore, reading different

kinds of books, starting new books, and reading on rainy days, but showed negative responses toward reading a book during free time at school, and family associated reading activities such as reading at home, getting a book for a present, and reading during summer vacation. However, MSIS survey respondents showed positive responses toward many academic reading activities such as using the dictionary, reading in school, working on workbook sheets, learning from a book, and reading aloud in class. The respondents showed negative responses toward reading a book during free time at school, reading school books, being asked questions about what they read, and taking reading tests. The moderate 48% ERAS composite reading attitude result from the MSIS African American, fourth grade sample surveyed may reveal an attitude toward reading which may not align with ability.

### *Recommendations*

The results of the study were focused on fourth grade African American students in one public foreign language immersion elementary school, from the Milwaukee Public School system in the state of Wisconsin. To conclude this chapter, the researcher would like to make some recommendations.

#### *Recommendations related to this study.*

1. Upon examination of the recreational reading attitudes of this study, MSIS teachers may search for ways to increase positive reading experiences for their students and their families outside of school.
2. Upon examination of the academic reading attitudes of this study, MSIS teachers may build upon those areas where ERAS positive academic attitude



scores are strong to increase positive reading experiences for their students during school hours.

*Recommendations for further study.*

1. Enlarge the study to include more grade levels at MSIS. Give the ERAS to all African American students at MSIS each time they are WCKE or Terra Nova tested. Examine WCKE and Terra Nova scores by grade level and compare with current ERAS academic and recreational reading attitude scores.
2. Conduct the study using all of the language immersion elementary schools in the Milwaukee Public School system. There are four elementary language immersion schools in the MPS system.

([http://mpsportal.milwaukee.k12.wi.us/portal/server.pt?open=512&objID=315&&PageID=38622&mode=2&in\\_hi\\_userid=2&cached=true](http://mpsportal.milwaukee.k12.wi.us/portal/server.pt?open=512&objID=315&&PageID=38622&mode=2&in_hi_userid=2&cached=true)). In addition to MSIS there is Milwaukee French Immersion, Milwaukee German Immersion, and Victory School (Milwaukee Italian Immersion program). Give the ERAS to all African American students at MPS elementary language immersion schools each time they are WCKE or Terra Nova tested. Examine WCKE and Terra Nova scores by grade level and compare with current ERAS academic and recreational reading attitude scores.

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Appendix A:  
Letter of Confirmation



**MILWAUKEE PUBLIC SCHOOLS**  
**DIVISION OF RESEARCH AND ASSESSMENT**  
5225 W. Vliet Street Room 217  
Milwaukee, WI 53208  
414-475-8258 Fax: 414-475-8261

October 13, 2008

Ms. Trisha Gee  
6748 N. 53<sup>rd</sup> St.  
Milwaukee, WI 53223

Re: Research Proposal

Dear Trisha:

Thank you for submitting the requested changes to your research proposal entitled "An Analysis of Elementary Foreign Language Immersion Education and Its Affect on African American Students Basic Reading Skills and Attitudes of Milwaukee Spanish Immersion School 4<sup>th</sup> Graders Toward Academic and Recreation Reading" to our office in such a timely fashion. The Proposal Review Committee (PRC) met to reconsider your research request in light of the revisions you submitted and I am pleased to inform you that you have been granted district-level approval to conduct research in MPS in accordance with the methodology outlined in your revised proposal. You are free to begin.

Please recall that despite having obtained district-level approval to conduct this research study in MPS, you must also obtain the permission of the school principal in order to be able to conduct this study in his/her building. We suggest that you provide the school principal with a copy of this letter as evidence that you have secured district-level approval to conduct research in MPS.

We would like to thank you for your interest in conducting research in the Milwaukee Public schools and wish you success with your project. If you have any questions regarding the proposal review process or require additional assistance, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

*Cindy Raven, Ph.D.*

Cindy Raven, Ph.D., Research Specialist  
Division of Research & Assessment  
475-8225

Cc: Dr. H. Lee

Appendix B:  
Letter Asking for Parental Consent

### **Parent Consent to Participate in Research Survey**

Hello, my name is Trisha Gee. I am a graduate student in the Career and Technical Education Program at the University of Wisconsin-Stout. To complete my thesis, on the affects of foreign language immersion education on student's basic reading skills and their attitudes toward recreational and academic reading. I am interested in conducting a survey with the 4<sup>th</sup> grade students of Milwaukee Spanish Immersion School.

I wish to request parental permission to survey the attitudes of students about reading at Milwaukee Spanish Immersion School. The survey will take approximately ten minutes to complete. Children are asked to read the questions and chose the answer which describes him/her best. The surveys are handled with strict confidentiality.

Participation in the survey is voluntary and requires permission from a parent or guardian. Even though your child's name is on the consent form and survey their names will not be used at all for privacy rights of that child. This is only for the teacher to know who is going to be completing the survey. If at any time, your child wishes not to continue the survey he/she may put down his/her pencil and stop.

Please feel free to contact myself or my research advisor if you have any questions, comments, or concerns.

Investigator  
Trisha Gee  
6748 N. 53<sup>rd</sup> Street  
Milwaukee WI, 53223  
(414) 358-3749  
geet@uwstout.edu

Advisor  
Dr. Howard Lee  
140 Vocational Rehabilitation Building  
P.O. Box 790  
Menomonie, WI 54751-0790  
(715) 232-1251  
leeh@uwstout.edu

Thank you,

Trisha Gee.

Please sign and return to your child's teacher at Milwaukee Spanish Immersion School.

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ my son/daughter \_\_\_\_\_ has permission to participate in the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey.

No \_\_\_\_\_ my son/daughter \_\_\_\_\_ does not have permission to participate in the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey.

Appendix C:  
Educational Research Assessment Survey

## Elementary Reading Attitude Survey

School \_\_\_\_\_ Grade \_\_\_\_\_ Name \_\_\_\_\_

Please circle the picture that describes how you feel when you read a book.

1. How do you feel when you read a book on a rainy Saturday?



2. How do you feel when you read a book in school during free time?



















3. How do you feel about reading for fun at home?



4. How do you feel about getting a book for a present?



Please circle the picture that describes how you feel when you read a book.

5.	How do you feel about spending free time reading a book?			
				
6.	How do you feel about starting a new book?			
				
7.	How do you feel about reading during summer vacation?			
				
8.	How do you feel about reading instead of playing?			
				



Please circle the picture that describes how you feel when you read a book.

9. How do you feel about going to a bookstore?



10. How do you feel about reading different kinds of books?



11. How do you feel when a teacher asks you questions about what you read?



12. How do you feel about reading workbook pages and worksheets?



Please circle the picture that describes how you feel when you read a book.

13.

How do you feel about reading in school?



14.

How do you feel about reading your school books?



15.

How do you feel about learning from a book?



16.

How do you feel when it's time for reading in class?



Please circle the picture that describes how you feel when you read a book.

17. How do you feel about stories you read in reading class?



18. How do you feel when you read out loud in class?



19. How do you feel about using a dictionary?



20. How do you feel about taking a reading test?

