

**FOREIGN LANGUAGE CURRICULUM
FOR QUEEN CREEK MIDDLE SCHOOL**

by
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**A Master's Research Project Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts**

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to develop a curriculum for foreign language in the Queen Creek Middle School before the 1996-97 school year.

What is the content of a curriculum for foreign language study in the Queen Creek Middle School?

In 1989, the Arizona legislature passed a law mandating instruction of a foreign language at the elementary school level. No specific guidelines were given, rather it was left up to the Arizona Department of Education and individual school districts to determine how this requirement would be implemented. Unfortunately, the lack of funding allocated for this program has forced school districts to use the program model least recommended by the State, the Foreign Language Experience.

Queen Creek Middle School has not yet developed a curriculum for foreign language and must do so during the 1996-97 school year. In order to determine what the content would be for a foreign language curriculum in the middle school, literature about language acquisition was studied; students, parents, teachers, and administrators were interviewed, and Arizona State law was considered. Other school district's curricula were analyzed and a curriculum was developed on the basis of these findings.

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CHAPTER 1

THE PROBLEM

Introduction

Historically, foreign language classes have been considered important in education. Modern languages have been part of the American high school curriculum since the early 1800s (Worldbook 1971). Currently, foreign languages are offered as elective courses in junior high and high schools in the United States, but generally not taught in grade schools and middle schools. In 1992, the Arizona legislature passed a new law requiring all Arizona public schools to provide foreign language instruction to all grades, 1-8, by 1999-2000 school year (Arizona Department of Education 1992). This mandate has no funding attached to it (Chambers 1996).

The Queen Creek Middle School has not yet developed a curriculum to implement the foreign language instruction. According to the plan Queen Creek School District developed to comply with this law, the Middle School will start foreign language classes during the 1996-97 school year. This study is to create a curriculum for foreign language instruction in the middle school using the regular classroom teacher as the instructor. Other school districts' curricula were reviewed, the language acquisition process was considered, and a curriculum was developed.

Generally, a positive attitude youngsters have about foreign language learning is

the key to a successful program. "Positive attitudes toward other culture groups, low ethnocentrism and low authoritarianism, empathy, tolerance of ambiguity, and field independence are variables that have shown a relationship with second language learning" (VanPatten, Dvorak, and Lee 1987, 153). A curriculum based on cultural enrichment and authentic speech will foster a more positive attitude toward cultural diversity and foreign language learning.

Development of the Problem

The need for foreign language skills is more evident than ever before. Over 20 percent of the gross national product is derived from international trade. Agriculturally, the United States economy is heavily linked to exports: 30 percent of U.S. grain production is marketed abroad; 40 percent of U.S. farmland grows crops for export. Our manufacturing economy is also tied to international trade: 20 percent of U.S. manufactured goods are sold abroad; one in six manufacturing jobs is related to international activities. In Arizona, the international market is even more significant as we are close neighbors with Mexico (Arizona Department of Education 1992).

Because of these statistics, the Arizona State Legislature felt compelled to require foreign language instruction in the lower grade levels of public school. "Foreign language instruction must be provided to our students in order to prepare them for survival in an increasingly interdependent world" (Arizona Department of Education 1992).

The Arizona legislature clearly states that for a program to be successful, a bilingual teacher should be hired to create and teach the program (Arizona Department of Education 1992). However, no additional funding was attached to this recommendation,

so schools clearly have no money with which to pay additional staff. Because of this lack of funding, most schools are using programs that satisfy the law, but do not really teach foreign language skills (Chambers 1996).

Need for a Study

Currently, Queen Creek Middle School has no foreign language program, and a curriculum must be developed before the 1996-97 school year. Queen Creek School District is a rural district comprised of many farms and little industry. The tax base is very limited. Many of the students attending Queen Creek Schools come from a low socioeconomic background, so money to support educational costs is difficult to obtain. It is hoped that by studying other districts' programs, talking to teachers and administrators, speaking to and observing students, and interviewing parents, a curriculum can be developed to satisfy the state mandate and to teach students to speak a foreign language.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to develop a curriculum for foreign language in the Queen Creek Middle School before the 1996-97 school year.

Research Question

What is the content of a curriculum for foreign language study in the Queen Creek Middle School?

Definition of Terms

Grade school - grades K - 8 (Arizona Department of Education 1992)

Middle school - grades 6 - 8 (Arizona Department of Education 1992)

Junior high school - grades 7 - 9 (Arizona Department of Education 1992)

High school - grades 9 - 12 (Arizona Department of Education 1992)

Language learning - a formal study of grammar structures and rules (Ovando 1985)

Language acquisition - gaining fluency in a language by communication and exposure
(Ovando 1985)

Immersion - living and communicating in the targeted language (VanPatten, Dvorak and
Lee 1987)

Submersion - using only the targeted language (VanPatten, Dvorak and Lee 1987)

Targeted language - the language being taught (Ovando 1985)

Bilingualism - the ability to communicate in two languages (VanPatten, Dvorak and Lee
1987)

Biculturalism - the ability to be comfortable in two cultures (VanPatten, Dvorak and Lee
1987)

Monolingualism - the ability to communicate in one language (VanPatten, Dvorak and
Lee 1987)

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

There is no doubt that the world is now a global community. Changes in the Japanese stock market directly influence stock performances in other major markets. War in the Middle East means direct involvement for the United Nations. Depletion of the rain forests in South America signals less oxygen for the rest of the world. These being the cases, it is imperative the citizens of this global community learn to bridge the barriers of culture and language that separate us from each other (Arizona Department of Education 1992).

This chapter examines second language acquisition and how languages are acquired. The ambiguity of Americans on the subject of bilingualism is discussed. Laws requiring foreign languages and cultures to be taught in public schools are examined and compared to English only laws which were passed to conduct all official business. Literature on the most current teaching methods is reviewed as it applies to foreign language learning. The law requiring foreign language in public schools as set forth by the Arizona Department of Education is presented.

Foreign language classes are being taught in public schools. However, more important than the language instruction itself, is the teaching of an understanding,

appreciation, and tolerance for cultural diversity. An instructional program should be geared toward cultural awareness rather than language instruction only (VanPatten, Dvorak, and Lee 1987).

In 1989, the Arizona legislature passed a law mandating instruction of a foreign language at the elementary school level. No specific guidelines were given, rather it was left up to the Arizona Department of Education and individual school districts to determine how this requirement would be implemented. Unfortunately, the legislature did not see fit to allocate any additional funding for the foreign language mandate. Neither was the Department of Education specific in its recommendations to school districts as to how to implement the mandate (Arizona Department of Education 1992). With or without a legislative mandate, foreign language instruction is more important today than ever, and should be continued. The emphasis should be placed on foreign exposure and cultural awareness (Ovando 1985).

Language Acquisition

All humans are programmed with a predisposition for language, but it has also been established that most language is acquired, not learned (Baruch 1978). This means that children pick up their primary language by hearing it and modeling what they hear. They utilize sounds and voice patterns to express thoughts. Meaning is much more important than grammatical correctness when acquiring a language. Second language acquisition takes place similarly to first language acquisition. During the acquisition process identical errors follow specific patterns, and are found in both, primary and secondary language. An example of an error is overgeneralizing the past tense by

mistakenly using the same ending on all past tense verbs, including irregular verbs (Hatch 1983).

Language learning requires a formal study of grammar structures and rules. Krashen's Monitor Theory, as found in Foreign Language Learning states that "grammar instruction is only marginally important to language learners and does not lead to acquisition" (VanPatten, Dvorak and Lee 1987, 8).

According to language expert J. Cummins, as reported in Bilingual and ESL Classrooms (Ovando 1985), it takes at least two years of total submersion in the targeted language to acquire it to the point of social fluency. It takes five to seven years of total submersion in the targeted language to acquire that language to the point of academic fluency.

Studies have shown that learning the principles of grammar in a language and being able to pass a written exam does not necessarily mean the student will be able to apply those same principles in oral speech (VanPatten, Dvorak and Lee 1987). An experiment on students studying Spanish at the University of California-Irvine was conducted using a grammar construction, the Spanish subjunctive mood. The subjects for the experiment had completed about one year of Spanish studies when this grammar structure was introduced. The subjunctive mood was carefully explained with practice drills and guided conversation to help the students learn this particular grammar structure. A written exam revealed a high success rate of using the subjunctive mood correctly on paper. Two weeks later, oral exams were given in a conversational approach. The subjunctive mood was used correctly less than twelve percent of the time (VanPatten,

Dvorak and Lee 1987).

Language learning is a formal study of language by grammar and rules. Language acquisition is learning to communicate in a language by exposure and communication (Ovando 1985). The California-Irvine data shows language learning took place, but the acquisition process did not. Acquisition is vital to fluency in a language. "It is interesting to note that this teach-the-entire-grammar-in-the-first-year tactic (language learning) in American colleges and universities is not often followed in other countries" (VanPatten, Dvorak and Lee 1987, 20).

College students who have a sound foundation in the grammar of their primary language find it difficult to learn a foreign language by practice, drills, and guided conversation. "Adults with a firm knowledge of their primary language can learn (language learning) a second language whereas children generally must acquire a second language in the same fashion as they acquired their first language" (Harding 1986, 64).

State law requires a foreign language to be taught in public schools. The confines of the classroom may limit foreign language exposure making the acquisition process difficult, but a negative attitude toward foreign languages and cultures makes the acquisition process impossible. Learning any discipline is a matter of motivation times opportunity. If one of these is missing the learning process becomes more difficult or is incomplete. In American public schools both ingredients are missing. The language acquisition process cannot be mandated by legislation, nor can a teacher force it upon a student (Harding 1986).

A person can learn to speak a foreign language in a classroom environment if he or

she is sufficiently motivated and invests enough time outside the classroom. Someone who is required to study a foreign language against his or her will, will never master or acquire said language and probably will be resentful that he or she was forced to study it (VanPatten, Dvorak and Lee 1987).

It appears that token efforts of forced language instruction, using traditional methods of practice, drills, and guided conversation, simply do not work. So what does work? A definitive answer cannot be given, for what works in one case may not work in another, and some people are able to acquire a second language in spite of the odds against them (Edwards 1986).

When it comes to learning a second language, not everyone is equally adept. Some of us have trouble making the different sounds required . . . Some of us have trouble hearing the difference between certain sounds. Others can't grasp the unusual system of grammar, or word order of tenses that do not occur in our native language. Some people, on the other hand, have 'an ear for languages'. They have a gift that is similar to being able to play a musical instrument by ear (Edwards 1986, 1).

Anyone can acquire a second language if they are totally immersed in it. Aptitude may be important in language acquisition, but more important is attitude or motivation (VanPatten, Dvorak and Lee 1987).

Bilingualism in the United States

America is a culturally diverse nation made up of immigrants. Even though American schools have recognized the need to offer instruction in foreign languages, the attitude of many United States citizens seems to be that ethnic minorities should leave their culture behind when they come to the United States and should become "Americanized" in every way as quickly as possible (Baruch 1978).

It seems that Americans are ambiguous on the subject of cultural diversity, having both encouraged and discouraged minority language and culture. Public schools require foreign languages to be taught, but discourage minority students from using their primary language at school. Americans embrace some aspects of a minority culture and borrow from non-English word-stocks, yet disregard other cultural traditions as objectionable and have viewed minorities with scorn and suspicion (Baruch 1978).

For example, one cannot imagine the Southwest without adobe construction, rodeo, tacos, burros, plazas, or Spanish place-names. Yet historically, Anglos have distrusted or discriminated against Hispanics to the point of having a dual wage system with lower wages for Hispanic workers and institutionalized discrimination which denied Hispanics access to equal education, entrance to theaters and restaurants, or to living in certain neighborhoods. Even today, after much progress has been made in the area of civil rights, many minorities still experience discrimination (Jimenez 1990).

In the United States the idea that some immigrant groups' cultural traits are undesirable dates back at least to the second half of the nineteenth century, when the country experienced an influx of foreign-born workers. In an effort to eliminate the undesirable traits, many public schools with large numbers of immigrant students made Americanization classes an integral part of the curriculum. These classes included instruction in dominant cultural values, practices, beliefs and traditions. (Ovando 1985, 115)

Trends in Bilingualism

Many Americans consider the United States a monolingual society. Attempts have been made to legislate monolingualism by establishing English-only laws. Backers of these laws insist they are not trying to stamp out other languages but want English-only for all official communications. Such laws have a chilling effect on minorities' use of their

language and deny them access to their government (Jimenez 1990).

Others feel it would be beneficial to students to become bilingual, but it is absolutely imperative in a culturally diverse nation to gain an understanding of and a tolerance for other cultures. However, it is futile to expect children to become fluent in a foreign language with even one full class period a day of instruction by a bilingual instructor. The language acquisition process requires a much greater time commitment than this (Baruch 1978).

Foreign language was introduced extensively in U.S. elementary schools in the 1900s as a means of exposing younger English-speaking children to foreign languages (Cohen 1976).

Typically, foreign language has been an add-on program, considered a nice but unimportant extra in the school curriculum, with lessons of 15 to 30 minutes 2 to 3 times per week. There is little evidence that this had any amount of success in bringing about a significant amount of foreign language acquisition among English-speaking children; in contrast, dramatic acquisition of a second language has been achieved with English speakers in two-way bilingual classes. (Cohen 1976, 65)

Two-way bilingual instruction, although difficult to implement, is the most efficient way to acquire a foreign language. Two-way bilingual instruction is derived by integrating English-speaking children with non-English speaking children, forming cooperative groups. Lessons in all subjects are taught in both languages and the students work together to do the assignments. Both English and non-English students do well and both ultimately become bilingual (Ovando 1985).

Another area of research of foreign language acquisition concerns the importance of a meaningful language environment.

Research to date . . . has addressed type, amount, and quality of real-life, meaningful interaction in the target language. It has been suggested that while grammatical and phonological instruction is insufficient for developing proficiency in the foreign language, communicative interaction is absolutely essential. Other research makes even stronger claims: that interaction with native-speaking peers is what is valuable in second language acquisition and that interaction with teachers or other authority figures does not promote success to the same degree. (VanPatten, Dvorak and Lee 1987, 11)

Two-way bilingual classes are difficult to find in American schools. Federal law dictates that bilingual courses must be offered in public schools if a specific number of non-English speakers are enrolled. Funding for these programs is also part of the federal legislation (Chambers 1996).

However, individual school districts choose the type of bilingual program they feel best meets the needs of the non-English speaking students. Most programs are geared solely to the teaching of English to the non-English speaking child rather than teaching fluency in both languages. Most schools use the federal money received to form English as a second language (ESL) classes. Most schools choose this type of program because it is difficult to obtain support of bilingual programs by monolingual English parents (Ovando 1985).

The greatest difficulty in using bilingual programs to provide second language instruction for English speakers is to convince parents of the value to their children of learning the particular minority language spoken in their community. (Ovando 1985, 41)

Instructional Methods

Short of converting school district by school district to bilingual education, what can be done to foster the acquisition of a second language? The answer seems to be to provide continued opportunities for students to enroll in foreign language classes, but also

a commitment to change attitudes and teaching methods to foster a more positive attitude toward cultural diversity. With an increasingly global perspective occurring in the United States, awareness of others' cultural traditions is a must, and this awareness can provide the impetus for language study. Rather than a foreign language mandate, the requirement should be for cultural awareness (Chambers 1996).

There is still much controversy over what is the best instructional approach when teaching a foreign language. Some educators still embrace the traditional teaching style of repetition and grammar, while others are implementing new methods, like thematic units, whole language, and multiple intelligence. Some negative situations that have occurred in language classrooms include the public school classroom itself, which can hinder the language acquisition process with its emphasis on achievement and grades (Ovando 1985).

Limited time for instruction is another obstacle teachers face. Grading performance and correcting errors also act as negative influences in foreign language acquisition (Ovando 1985). The term "socioaffective filter" is used to describe all negative social and emotional factors which effect the learner's acquisition of a second language. Ambivalence and hostility toward the culture of the targeted language can impede language learning. Studies have shown that low anxiety, high self-esteem and self confidence all positively influence the language process. An out-going personality and high motivation for practical use also positively affect language acquisition (Ovando 1985).

The environment of language classrooms in the United States must change from the traditional to a culturally rich environment where a positive attitude for cultural

diversity is generated. Students must be encouraged to communicate without criticism when errors are made. Because grading on grammatical form and correcting mistakes affect confidence and self esteem, a new method of evaluating students should be implemented. A second language is most easily acquired under conditions which closely approximate those found when acquiring a first language. When language is real and authentic it becomes more meaningful (Bishop 1992).

Thematic Units

Thematic units are an excellent way to keep language whole by providing opportunities for the integration of reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills. In this natural approach, the focus is geared toward the students' needs and desires (Ovando 1985).

Thematic units offer teachers a way to organize objectives around a theme and use various teaching materials to make learning meaningful to the student. Students usually assist in choosing topics to be learned, and the topics are taught across the curriculum. For example: if the topic is the environment, stories about different environments may be read in literature class, science class could look at the scientific aspects of the environment, history could discuss an historical perspective, and culturally, the students could compare perspectives of one culture versus another about environmental issues. Foreign language vocabulary could be introduced and reinforced throughout all the activities of the unit. Thematic units allow a breakdown of the artificial boundaries set by schools for compartmentalized learning, and they can be used to integrate all content areas (Van Patten, Dvorak, & Lee 1987).

Multiple Intelligence

Several new ideas concerning instructional methods and classroom environment are being tried in classrooms of all subjects. American society recognizes a need for educational reform and many schools are testing a new theory regarding intelligence called “Integrative Learning” (Gardner 1989). The human brain is complicated, and to date, knowledge of how it functions and of its capacity for learning is limited. It is known, however, that certain areas of the brain perform specific functions. The left hemisphere processes language, mathematics, and logical thinking, while the right side focuses on spatial manipulation, music, and imagery. Other portions of the brain house long term memory, emotion, and rational thought. Even though different functions can generally be located in a specific portion of the brain, these functions appear to be accessible at other locations, making the split brain holistic as well (Blythe and Gardner 1990).

The study of human intelligence has been a major focus of many psychologists and theorists for over a century. At one time intelligence was perceived as a narrow group of mental abilities measurable by an IQ test. This test supposedly measured a person’s “general intelligence.” Large scale testing was done in America and many other industrialized nations. As a result, whole groups of the population turned out to be not very intelligent or educable. Poor minorities made up the greater part of these groups (Winn 1990).

Recent research points to multiple intelligences and embraces a variety of teaching methods. Howard Gardner, professor at Harvard Graduate School of Education, explains: “Intelligence is the capacity to solve problems or to fashion products that are valued in

one or more cultural settings” (Gardner 1990).

Gardner also detailed the following set of criteria for what counts as a human intelligence, listing seven specific ones which form the basis for his “Integrative Learning System”:

Linguistic - - - - - Language and Words

Logical - - - - - Math, Abstractions and Organization

Musical - - - - - Pitch, Rhythm, Timbre and Emotion

Spatial - - - - - Visualization, Imagery and Metaphor

Kinesthetic - - - - - Muscles, Reflexes and Timing

Inter personal - - - - Sensitivity to others’ emotions and desires

Intra personal - - - - Sensitivity to self or self knowledge

Gardner’s Integrative Learning System incorporates instruction which utilizes all seven intelligences when teaching any subject. In schools where Integrative Learning has been applied, learning has increased forty to sixty percent with improvement in long term memory. These techniques were also found to increase self esteem and build in students a greater desire to learn. Diversity of human intelligence means strength in Gardner’s method of teaching, and cultural differences are considered assets (Blythe and Gardner 1990).

It is anticipated that by utilizing the integrative learning approach in foreign language instruction two positive reactions may occur. First, foreign language students may gain an appreciation for another culture while acquiring and retaining more of the language instruction presented. Second, minority children may gain an appreciation for

their heritage.

Children need to feel pride in their heritage, and recent evidence shows that a lack of roots or identity can actually impede the academic development of a child (Estrada 1990). “You have to know where you come from before you can know where you’re going,” said First Lady Barbara Bush, as quoted in Hispanic Magazine, when giving a speech to children at Longfellow Elementary School in Albuquerque, New Mexico (Estrada 1990).

Joseph Fernandez, Chancellor for New York City’s public schools, believes that curricula need to be revised to include greater recognition for people and accomplishments of other cultures (cited in Jimenez 1990). He organized the symbolic Blue Ribbon Committee for Racial Harmony. Fernandez, well known for his work in Dade County, Florida, where as Superintendent he turned around the entire school system, is trying to make changes in New York’s educational system. In an interview with Felix Jimenez of Hispanic Magazine, Fernandez is quoted as saying:

If I’m a student, and through my educational years --- from kindergarten through grade 12 - - there’s no mention of what my ancestors did to contribute to this country; if there’s no mention of the Mayans and their accomplishments in mathematics; if there’s no mention of our people fighting in World War II; if there’s no mention or indication of our many Hispanic writers, and I don’t know who Cervantes is, and only know about Shakespeare, what will I think of myself? (Jimenez 1990, 9).

Program Models

As stated in the Foreign Language Essential Skills handbook, published by the Arizona Department of Education in May 1992, all Arizona public schools will provide foreign language instruction to all grades by the 1999-2000 school year. A variety of

program models are outlined in this handbook and schools may choose which model they will implement according to the funds and staff available in their district (Arizona Department of Education 1992).

The first program model and most highly recommended is Immersion. Immersion is living and communicating in the targeted language. Students hear the foreign language all day, every day, and model what they hear. In order to communicate they must use the targeted language. Fifty to one hundred percent of the instruction is taught in the targeted language. In this setting students should become functionally proficient in the foreign language within three years (Arizona Department of Education 1992).

The second model is Partial Immersion, where approximately fifty percent of class time is spent in the targeted language. Partial Immersion is like Immersion, except some of the instruction is given in the student's primary language. The student hears and uses the targeted language for at least half of the school day. Once again, students should become bilingual within a few years (Arizona Department of Education 1992).

The third approved model is Two Way Bilingual. This model recommends that half the class be speakers of English and the other half speakers of the targeted language. Instruction is delivered in both languages equally at specific times. Students work together in bilingual groups. Fluency will be attained in both languages within a few years if the program model is continued (Arizona Department of Education 1992).

Model four is Foreign Language Classes given on a daily basis by a bilingual instructor. The curriculum is continuous, increasing student vocabulary and knowledge each year. Classes are taught much like a traditional foreign language class. Grammar

and rules are introduced with guided conversation practice. Students will obtain a limited fluency and will have some reading, writing, and listening skills. The foreign language should be a regular class such as math, science, or language arts (Arizona Department of Education 1992).

The last model and least recommended by the state Department of Education is the Foreign Language Experience. This is the only model that does not require a completely bilingual instructor and is the least expensive to implement. Classes are taught once or twice a week. The goal is to develop an interest in foreign language for future language study. Basic words and phrases are taught and cultural awareness is emphasized. Although this model is the least recommended, it is the most widely used. A regular classroom teacher with very limited foreign language skills can provide the instruction. There is no continuous curriculum from one grade to the next (Arizona Department of Education 1992).

Summary

Foreign language instruction is an important facet of public education. Although research has proven that the language acquisition process requires a much greater time commitment than what is available in school, research has also proven that a good cultural enrichment program can do much for the language process as well as benefit society as a whole (Ovando 1985).

A well developed foreign language curriculum with a strong emphasis on cultural enrichment will not only build student self esteem and promote racial harmony, but may create a greater student motivation to actually acquire a second language.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

As long as Arizona state law requires a foreign language to be taught in grades 1-8, all public schools must comply. Queen Creek Middle School is in need of a curriculum for a foreign language program that meets the requirement of the law, benefits students, and is inexpensive to implement. The purpose of this study is to create a curriculum for the Queen Creek Middle School before the 1996-97 school year.

Research Design

This project uses descriptive design research. Descriptive research is a commonly used method of research for social science. "Its purpose is to systematically describe the facts and characteristics of a given phenomenon, population, or area of interest" (Merriam and Simpson 1995, 61). This is an appropriate method for the development of a middle school curriculum because this project describes existing curricula and instructional methods, and identifies problems of current practice.

Sources of Data

Sources of data include the following:

1. Sample curricula from two urban Maricopa County school districts and one rural Greenlee County school district in Arizona.

2. Interviews with three teachers from two urban Maricopa County school districts and two teachers from the rural Greenlee County school district in Arizona assigned to teach foreign language classes.
3. One hundred student surveys of students participating in the language classes. Surveys were distributed and completed during class time.
4. Three classroom observations at an urban Maricopa County school. Instruction was by using a video foreign language program.
5. Administrator interview with principal of Queen Creek Middle School.
6. Ten one-to-one interviews with parents of children taking foreign language classes from an urban Greenlee school district.

Procedure

Data was collected over a period of four years, from 1992 to 1996. The sample curricula were requested and received from two urban Maricopa County school districts and one rural Greenlee County school district in Arizona. Five teachers were interviewed. Two were bilingual and have taught foreign language classes. Three were regular classroom teachers with no foreign language skills. All were Arizona certified teachers. Each responded to the following questions during an oral interview:

1. Who developed your curriculum and who decides what will be taught?
2. How do you teach the curriculum and what instructional methods are used?
3. Is there any continuity between grade levels?
4. What kind of budget were you given for the program?

5. Do you feel that the program is successful?
6. Do you have any suggestions for improvement?

One hundred students from sixth, seventh, and eighth grade levels in an urban Maricopa County school district completed a written survey about language acquisition.

The questions asked were:

1. Would you like to be able to communicate in another language?
2. Do you like school?
3. Do you feel these (videoed Spanish) classes have helped you to learn another language?

The researcher observed and evaluated three middle school classrooms during the foreign language presentation. The sixth grade class had 30 students. The seventh and eighth grade classes had 35 students.

Steve Chambers, Queen Creek Middle School Principal was interviewed. The interview included a discussion of budget restraints and priorities, the implementation of the foreign language curriculum, and implications of the law itself.

Ten parents were interviewed one-at-a-time and at-random. They were asked:

1. How important is foreign language instruction for your child
2. Do you like the current foreign language program at your child's school
3. Would you pay more money to improve the foreign language program at your child's school

Assumptions and Limitations

The researcher assumes all subjects and interviewees responded honestly. Because the

interview subjects chosen were selected unscientifically and the sample size was small this research project has inherent limitations. The researcher does not assume that the observations made and responses given by interview subjects are representative of other students, teachers, parents, and administrators throughout the state of Arizona.

Summary

The approach the researcher used to develop a curriculum for Queen Creek Middle School considered what has been written about foreign language acquisition, what has and hasn't worked at other schools, and limits on funding. The curriculum created is designed to be taught by the regular classroom teacher as a culture component. If actual foreign language is to be taught, a bilingual, foreign language instructor should be used.

A curriculum overview is found in Appendix A.

CHAPTER 4

PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

The purpose of this study is to develop a curriculum for foreign language in the Queen Creek Middle School before the 1996-97 school year.

Arizona school districts are trying to comply with Arizona State law. A variety of programs are being used to meet the foreign language mandate, however, both money and bilingual teachers are in short supply. Of the three school districts studied, only two had adopted written curricula.

One urban school district in Maricopa County has one bilingual instructor teaching foreign language classes for levels K-8 via closed circuit television. This program airs twice a week and the regular classroom teacher is instructed by the district to have the students watch this production. The program model for this instruction is the Foreign Language Experience. A topic is selected for each lesson and the televised instructor introduces the new vocabulary for that day.

A second urban school district in Maricopa County relies on the regular classroom teacher to implement a pre-set curriculum and provides in-service to help the teacher. The Foreign Language Experience model is used as the teacher tries to teach the children the vocabulary learned at the in-service. These classes are taught once a week.

A rural Greenlee County Arizona school district also relies on the regular classroom

teacher, but with no pre-determined curriculum. In this district, the teacher decides what materials will be used and when the instruction will be given.

Teacher Interviews

Five teachers were interviewed, three in an urban Maricopa County Arizona school district and two in a rural Greenlee County Arizona school district. Two were bilingual and had more input on what was to be taught. They designed their own lesson plans and used their own teaching strategies. The three regular classroom teachers who were not bilingual either relied on the televised program, or had a district curriculum to follow, with in-service help. All used a variety of teaching methods except the two using the video series. All five teachers felt a lack of continuity in their district's program between grade levels. The two bilingual instructors received some funding for bilingual materials from the district. All five teachers felt that foreign language classes were important, but did not care for the particular program being implemented in their school. All five teachers felt that their students had learned something from the foreign language programs, but that no degree of real fluency had taken place. All five teachers suggested that for improvement, foreign language classes should be taught by a bilingual instructor, face to face, with native speaker interaction. Regular classroom teachers should not be required to teach a language they do not speak, nor should language instruction come from a television.

Student Surveys

One hundred students from sixth, seventh, and eighth grades were surveyed. All were from an urban Maricopa County Arizona school district, and all were in classes using the televised foreign language video. Eighty-five percent of the students said they would like

to be able to speak another language. Twenty percent of the students admitted to liking school, and only two percent felt that the foreign language videos had helped them learn another language.

Classroom Observations

The three classrooms observed by the researcher were all of the televised Spanish lessons. In the first classroom, the regular classroom teacher turned on the TV and proceeded to grade papers while the students basically ignored the presentation. The presentation and observation lasted thirty minutes. In the second classroom observed, the teacher turned off the broadcast after only five minutes, stating that the material was too juvenile and a waste of time. The researcher observed for an additional five minutes as another subject was taught. The third class also ignored or made fun of the video presentation, which once again, lasted about thirty minutes. In all of the observations the observer was outside the classroom watching through a window. The teachers were unaware of the observations.

Administrator Interview

Steve Chambers, Queen Creek Middle School Principal, when interviewed, discussed at length the lack of money in school budgets today. "If foreign language classes must be taught, music, art, or P.E. must be cut," he stated. He felt parents did not wish to see cuts in these areas and that the law would have to be changed because many school districts were having difficulty finding and paying bilingual staff. "There is a shortage of bilingually certified teachers in the state, and many districts have been unable to find staff to teach their ESL classes, which is a federal mandate, and takes precedence over state law. There

is just no extra money for this program.” Mr. Chambers felt that either the law will have to change, or state money allocated, for this program to succeed.

Parent Interviews

Of the ten parents interviewed, all felt they would like their children to have foreign language exposure, but none wanted their child to be placed in a bilingual classroom. None of the parents felt foreign language classes should replace P.E., music, or art. All parents felt that geography or history classes could be modified to include cultural enrichment classes. No parent wanted to pay additional money to support a foreign language program.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

The purpose of this study is to develop a curriculum for foreign language in the Queen Creek Middle School before the 1996-97 school year.

What is the content of a curriculum for foreign language study in the Queen Creek Middle School?

In 1989, the Arizona legislature passed a law mandating instruction of a foreign language at the elementary school level. No specific guidelines were given, rather it was left up to the Arizona Department of Education and individual school districts to determine how this requirement would be implemented. Unfortunately, the lack of funding allocated for this program has forced school districts to use the program model least recommended by the State, the Foreign Language Experience.

Queen Creek Middle School has not yet developed a curriculum for foreign language and must do so during the 1996-97 school year. In order to determine what the content would be for a foreign language curriculum in the middle school, literature about language acquisition was studied; students, parents, teachers, and administrators were interviewed, and Arizona State law was considered. Other school district's curricula were analyzed and a curriculum was developed on the basis of these findings.

Conclusions

Although the schools studied have attempted various programs, it appears that school districts are concerned with compliance to the law but foreign language learning programs are not able to operate at full potential. The lack of continuity in the school's curricula accompanied by the inability of some instructors to speak the targeted language doom these programs from having any real success in teaching a foreign language. Districts are unable financially to create K-8 bilingual programs nor do they have parental support (Chambers 1996). The researcher expected to find school districts struggling to comply with State law because of this lack of support, however, the researcher also hoped to gain some insights as to how to implement an effective inexpensive program by utilizing ideas from other districts.

Some monolingual classroom teachers feel inadequate as foreign language instructors and resent being forced to teach a subject not within their expertise. Some bilingual teachers feel better prepared for the task, but feel that lack of funding is a problem. Three classroom teachers observed working with the televised foreign language programs felt these lessons were a waste of time and did not lead to language acquisition or cultural awareness. All five teachers interviewed demonstrated a willingness to teach cultural enrichment classes and thought the exploration of other cultures as valuable for students.

Even though a high percentage of students said they wanted to learn a foreign language, only 2 percent felt their school's current instructional method was helping them. The observations of the three classrooms by the researcher supports the student's feelings, as little actual Spanish was being used by the students in the classroom. The researcher

felt that virtually no language acquisition was taking place during the video lessons.

Authentic language practice and interaction with peers are vital to the language process, both were lacking in the observed video lessons. Most students were aware that their P.E. classes had been cut to accommodate the video instruction, and most students indicated a negative reaction to those cuts.

Parents, while not wanting bilingual classrooms for their children, did want the foreign language classes, but not at the expense of other programs, and not at an additional cost.

Apparently, the program model least recommended by the Arizona Department of Education, The Foreign Language Experience, is the model most supported by parents. The Foreign Language Experience is also the most affordable program model because of the non-requirement of a bilingual instructor. Although research shows that true bilingualism only comes through immersion into a targeted language, neither schools nor parents are willing to support this type of program. All have agreed however, that an increasingly global economy requires a more globally aware work force. Only further longitudinal studies will determine if the efforts of the Arizona legislature have been successful in helping students better function in a global society. As Queen Creek School District adopts a foreign language curriculum for the Middle School based on cultural enrichment, hopefully attitudes will change to enhance foreign language acquisition and to broaden student's perceptions of other cultures.

Recommendations

This researcher's preferred recommendation is for a comprehensive foreign language program consisting of language instruction and cultural awareness taught by a creative,

competent instructor in a dual language setting. Given that few districts have the resources or personnel to implement such a program, other options must be considered.

It is recommended that Queen Creek Middle School hire a bilingual instructor to teach the foreign language classes mandated by the Arizona State Legislature. If a bilingual instructor is not used, the regular classroom teacher could teach cultural enrichment classes. The classes should be taught by using a variety of teaching methods in a thematic approach.

It is also recommended that further research in the area of second language acquisition be conducted. In any event, cultural awareness should form the core of a successful program. Enrichment activities utilizing local resources would not be expensive. Some examples are cultural fairs, guest speakers, music, art, dance, foods, videos, and field trips to historical societies.

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APPENDIX A

FOREIGN LANGUAGE EXPERIENCE CURRICULUM

FOR QUEEN CREEK MIDDLE SCHOOL

Description of Course

Classes are to be held at least once a week. Classes will be taught mostly in English.

Class objectives are: to develop an interest in foreign language for future foreign language study; to learn basic words and phrases on an informal basis; to develop careful listening skills; to develop cultural awareness.

Scope and Sequence

Classes are designed for 6th, 7th, and 8th graders and are to be taught by the regular classroom teacher. Lessons may be taught at random and in a non-continuous format.

Thematic units or actual lesson plans will be developed by the instructor using a variety of teaching methods.

Foreign Language Essential Skills Goals

- Students will listen and comprehend
- Students will listen and communicate
- Students will read and comprehend
- Students will write and communicate
- Students will develop an awareness and respect for other cultures

Sample Curriculum for Middle School (grades 6, 7, and 8) Foreign Language Program

This model takes into account using a teacher with limited foreign language ability or training. Any ability or training in this area would be helpful. Student assessments could be made using a combination of examination and participation criteria. Given the limitations presented by Queen Creek Middle School, a pass/fail grading system is one possibility.

1. Spanish Place Names, Architecture, Foods, People, History

Any person living in the Southwest has come into contact with all of the above. Hispanic culture and influence is all around us. Students could learn about Spanish place names such as street signs, towns and cities, states, and geographic features. Spanish architecture and building materials could be studied, with pictures and/or videos used to show examples, or field trips to actual Spanish missions or other sites. Foods could be introduced and tried; students could cook from Hispanic recipes. Hispanic people of historic significance and historical events could be examined, such as Father Kino, Coronado, Cabeza de Vaca, the Mexican-American war, and the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo.

2. Cognates, Familiar Words, Borrowed Words

Many words exist in both English and Spanish that derive from a common root, when the two languages were one. Examples of these cognates, words with which students are familiar with in English, with their Spanish counterparts (many are spelled the same but are pronounced differently, so a pronunciation guide would be required for the non-Spanish speaker) should be studied. Simple specific vocabulary and simple phrases should

be introduced, such as names for days of the week, months, colors, numbers, objects in the classroom, body parts, and animals. Borrowed words include rodeo, arroyo, canyon, plaza, and many more.

3. Holidays and Traditions

Thematic units based on holidays and traditions should be taught throughout the year during their respective seasons. For example, the two Mexican independence days, September 16, and May 5, and their historical perspectives; the Day of the Dead (Dia de los muertos) Celebration with its American counterpart of Halloween; and Christmas traditions could be shared. The influence of Christopher Columbus could be studied around Columbus Day in October. Students could create Hispanic calendars listing all holidays and important dates.

4. Hispanic Literature, Art, Customs

Hispanic literature such as Don Quixote, Una Carta a Dios, Hispanic ghost stories, and many other stories either written by or about Hispanics could be utilized. Hispanic customs could be studied using texts, videos, or real-life examples. Hispanic art could be viewed and artists such as Diego Rivera, De Gracia, and Tomano studied. Students could create their own art and/or craft projects. Famous Hispanics in the entertainment industry such as Linda Ronstadt, Edward James Olmos, or Paul Rodriguez; sports stars like Fernando Valenzuela, Roberto Clemente, Pele; and historical figures such as Pancho Villa, Benito Juarez, and others could be introduced.

5. Geography

Countries and capitals in the Hispanic world, as well as other famous places, famous

landmarks, ruins, and vacation resorts should be studied. Travel films are readily available and would help students visualize places they have learned about. Research on the education, commerce, and government of various Hispanic countries should be conducted, either as group or individual projects. U.S./Mexico relations are of particular importance to Arizona residents, including immigration and the law, NAFTA, trade, and other exchanges. Many videos such as “A Million to Juan”, “Sweet Fifteen”, and “Maricela” deal with these issues on an adolescent level.

6. Careers

Students need to be made aware of the growing necessity for bilingual individuals in the workplace. Many career opportunities are available to those who can speak both English and Spanish, with the increased number of companies that conduct business on both sides of the border. Students will enhance their job skills and employability by learning a second language. Some areas are police work, education, health care, social work, personnel relations, and all occupations dealing with the public.

7. Suggested Activities

The following is a partial list of activities for student involvement: games, songs, choral speaking, videos, guest speakers, role playing, cartoons, comic strips, maps, plays, reports, biographies, movies, historic time lines, artwork/crafts, concerts, museums, field trips, art study, interviews, records, magazines, and correspondence.

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