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Linguistics, Language Acquisition



Foreign Language Elective Preferences of High School Students of St.

Scholastica's Academy Marikina _____

A Research Paper Presented to The Faculty of High School Department St.

Scholastica's Academy Marikina

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a world where globalization is the trend that dictates the many processes
around the world, it is necessary for countries like the Philippines to adapt.

International relations is a major aspect of everyday life, whether we notice it

or not. The need to communicate with individuals from different countries is
no longer a bleak possibility. We live in a world where talking to a person

from China or France occurs not every blue moon, but can happen in a

matter of seconds many thanks to the advent of modern technology. Many

processes over the world require the cooperation and relation between

countries of different languages, and in certain cases, a lingua franca such as

English, is not a possibility. Because of this, it is necessary for members of

the work force to be trained in case the need arises. With this in mind,

students should therefore be given the opportunity to learn foreign

languages, thus broadening their perspective of the world. Foreign language

acquisition not only increases job opportunities for students in the future, but

also aid in understanding foreign culture. Studies have also shown that the

acquisition of a foreign language enhances the overall academic

performance of students as well as improving brain activity. It is imperative that students be taught new languages at a young age in order for them to be able to get a better grasp of it, especially since the part of the brain responsible for language learning and acquisition is at its most malleable at this stage. The introduction of a foreign language in the school curriculum requires major consideration. Aside from the possible significance and use of said language in the future, the preference of the students should also be taken into account.

Background of the Study

The study will be used as a guide to aid the school [St. Scholastica's Academy Marikina] in choosing a foreign language which will be included in the high school department's current curriculum as an elective. The researchers will determine the language which the high school students will want to learn the most. Among the languages to be chosen from are the three from the top ten languages which are commonly taught around the globe. The foreign languages are French, Spanish and Mandarin. The study focuses on the relevance of adding a foreign language to the school curriculum. It will also cite the usefulness of learning a foreign language. Learning a new language at any age is an enormously rewarding experience in many ways. While language learning is an enriching experience for all ages, children have the most to gain from this wonderful adventure. Starting early offers the widest possible set of benefits and opportunities. Before the Spanish colonial period, the educational system was informal. Children learned more about skills rather than academics. During the Spanish period, the missionaries were educating the people and it was focused on religion. Only the elite people can attend school during this period. It was only after a decree was enforced where

there should be at least one primary school for boys and girls under the supervision municipal. But that only happened on the latter part of the Spanish period. The curriculum was limited. There are various languages that are used around the world. The three foreign languages that are mostly used are Mandarin, French, and Spanish. Knowing a foreign language can help us to be globally competitive. People who know a foreign language tends to earn more because they could be a company's asset. Therefore, it opens a lot of good opportunities when applying for a job. It gives the students a glimpse of another country's culture. Learning another language can also teach the students about discipline because it takes a lot discipline to master another language. Most people think that the language spoken by Chinese nationals is " Chinese", but in reality there in no such thing as the " Chinese" language. There are a lot of " Chinese" languages like Mandarin. Cantonese, Hakka and Wu, they are all collectively called " Chinese' languages but they are just all closely related dialects. Mandarin refers to a large group of dialects that in fact are a single language. The language Mandarin is also called Guoyu or Putonghua. It was the first universal standard language spoken by the officials and the nobles in traditional China during the Ming and Qing dynasty. The written language first started as simple images representing ideas although China has retained this style of writing.

Worldwide there are about 850 million people who speak Mandarin. Mandarin is spoken all throughout Northern and Southwest China. It is the official language of China, Singapore and Taiwan. It is also one of the official languages spoken by the United Nations. The French language is spoken by about 129 million around the world. It is originally called latin but people

started talking a dialect of Latin called French because the Francophiles speak the language. The language is considered as the official language in 33 countries. French is one of the official languages in various international organizations such as the International Olympic Committee, World Health Organization, and the United Nations. It is spoken widely in most countries in Europe and Africa. French is also a Romance language that descended from Latin. Spanish is called the Romance language. In Spain colloquially referred to as “español” when differentiating it with other languages such as English and French but it is called “castellano” when differentiating it to other languages being spoken in Spain such as Galician, Basque and Catalan. It is a part of the Indo-European family of languages which are spoken by more than a third of the world’s population. Spanish first started to surface in writing during the 11th century. Spanish is spoken by approximately 417 million people. 322 – 358 of which speak it as a first language. Spanish is spoken in Spain, Andorra, Argentina, Belize, Bolivia, Cayman Islands, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Equatorial Guinea, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay, the USA and Venezuela.

Statement of the Problem This study aims to find out which of the foreign languages is most essential for the high school of St. Scholastica’s Academy Marikina. Our research study which we aim to be used as a guide for the school to be able to determine which among the vast choices of foreign languages is most suitable to be incorporated in the curriculum of high school students as an elective. This study will follow the following questions in order to come up the most favorable option among all the possible

languages that can be taught: 1. What are the benefits of learning another language for the career of the students in the future? 2. What are the top three foreign languages in schools based on validated surveys and studies? 3. Among the top choices presented in the question above, which language is the most practical or essential? 4. Which foreign language electives are preferred by high school? a. Based on interest b. Based on practicality 5. What are the causes for this preference? 6. What are the possible disadvantages of teaching a foreign language on students? Significance of the Study The study concerning which of the foreign languages is the most essential can be used in determining which will be. It is necessary for us to know the best language for the electives so that the program will be effective. The students: This study will be beneficial to the students as they are the subject of the study. The result of the study might be incorporated in their curriculum. The application of this study will add to the students' credentials to compete in the international corporate arena. Being able to communicate also means being able to contribute to the world by sharing one's ideas. If the chosen language(s) is not preferred by the student body then the program will not interest them either. Thus they will tend to pass the opportunity to take up a foreign language. The students should have the curiosity with the language in order to be motivated to actually take up the extra class. If the students don't gain enough interest to patronize the program then it will just be wasted. Learning another language can also teach the students about discipline because it takes a lot discipline to master another language. Administration: Learning the great importance of having another language aside from your native tongue and English is also part of

its agenda. This study will be significant to the administration of St. Scholastica's Academy Marikina and other academic institutions as this study may be used as a reference to provide information and statistics about foreign languages. This may help them decide on whether to incorporate having foreign electives as an electives or not, and which language to incorporate in case they decide to do so. Teachers: Through this study, teachers may have a better understanding about the students in relation to foreign language electives. In case the electives apply, they might be able to think of a strategy in teaching the students based on their interest.

Scope and Delimitation The study focuses on the possible uses and significance of the integration of a foreign language into the school curriculum. A quantitative questionnaire will be made based on these aspects in addition to one question on the general opinion/views of the informant towards foreign language acquisition and its effects. The respondents of this survey will be from the high school body of St. Scholastica's Academy for they are the focus of this study. The researchers will limit the language to be argued as choices to French, Mandarin and Spanish which according to our background of the study are the top three favorite languages both to be learned and taught. However we will also include the German language as it is most popular in Europe and the Hindi language.

CHAPTER II REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE AND STUDIES

Foreign Study We currently live in a situation of the world wherein there is a vital need for students to acquire one or more foreign language to add in their native tongue in order to achieve success in the budding future of the global economy.

Communication and knowledge of the culture and customs of business

representatives from different states of the world is a critical and essential part of establishing successful business relations. There has been a good amount of important education and government organizations that recognized the magnitude of foreign language proficiency. According to the California Department of Education, U. S. students will have to compete with students from other countries who have been required to learn two or three languages. Also, according to a statement of the U. S. Congress “ Multilingualism enhances cognitive and social growth, competitiveness in the global marketplace.. “. Acquiring proficiency in one or more additional languages rewards into a variety of benefits which includes those that elevate job and career advancement, opportunities to travel abroad and broaden your understanding of the different cultures that exists in this world. These all fall under the personal benefits side, however there is also the benefit which occurs in academics that gains you achievement in education. The increasing amount of careers now results in the vitality of the knowledge of a second language. The increased activity in international business and increase in inflow of the foreign capital to the U. S resulted in an emerging need for individuals with both foreign language skills and technical training. Although it has been apparent that anyone can travel to any foreign country without pre-requisite knowledge of the language, it is still crucial to have even the least amount of skill in the language to provide efficiency in solving everyday travel problems and to provide a better experience and a broader understanding of the people and their culture (Weatherford). As an effect of the increasing levels of globalization and international business, there has been a far greater need for mutual understanding and efficient

communication between nations. Also, foreign language studies incline to help avoid and dissolve misconceptions and create. In addition, foreign language study tends to help dissolve misconceptions (Weatherford). Many have suggested that studying a foreign language provides benefits in terms of enhanced academic achievement in other areas. Numerous studies have identified positive correlations between foreign language study and performance on standardized tests; overall academic performance and college admissions test scores. These will be further discussed in later sections. There are still evident significant advantages still to those who study foreign languages despite the disadvantage of not being likely to develop high levels of proficiency and native-like pronunciation as students who begin language instruction at earlier grades. Examples of these include the fact that students who had taken a foreign language in high school had a significantly higher GPA in all high school subjects as well as in Freshman English courses in college (Weatherford). In addition to this, according to a study, it has been found that college students of Latin, French, German and Spanish who had studied foreign languages in high school all had significantly higher mean college GPAs than those students who had not studied foreign languages in high school (Olsen).

CHAPTER III Research Design and Methodology

Our aim in this chapter is to explain thoroughly the method of research that was used, our sources of data, and the instruments used to gather data as well as its procedure and how it will be treated statistically.

Method of Research Used

The structure that was engaged and put into action in order to meet the significance of the study was the descriptive method. The descriptive method was chosen as our primary

approach for our study. Our group wanted to know the perception of the students in our school (St. Scholastica's Academy Marikina) regarding having a foreign language of choice as an elective subject. A survey was conducted in order to collect basis for our data. Our respondents consisted of hails randomly selected students from the first year up to the fourth year. In addition to our primary approach method, the normative study was also applied to meet our aim to know which of the foreign languages provided does the majority of the students choose or prefer to learn. Respondents The main respondents for this study are made up of five students per class from the first year to the fourth year resulting to a total of one hundred forty respondents. The students were randomly selected to provide even representation of their whole class. These students were given the survey forms. Other sources of data included old studies regarding the benefits of foreign language, text books, the internet, statistical data, other texts et cetera. Research Instrumentation Our research group examined on what are the possible languages that our school would offer in lieu of the change in curriculum. In line with this, we used the following research instrumentation for our data. Survey We formulated a survey with questions related to our study for our respondents. Our respondents would be five students per class from first year to fourth year. Since we are given a small timeframe regarding our study, we did the survey within the first week of February. After we have retrieved the survey, we evaluated and interpreted the data that we have gathered. CHAPTER IV PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA This chapter presents, analyzes and interprets the data that the researchers have gathered through distributing survey

forms randomly. First the respondents were asked if they would want to learn a foreign language if they were given a chance. Almost all the students ticked 'yes'. 98% (137 students) said that they are willing to learn. While the other remaining 2% (3 students) were not open to studying any foreign language. FIGURE 1: If given a chance, would you like to learn a foreign language? Second, the respondents were asked what among the given choices, (Spanish, French, German, Mandarin, Hindi and other languages) would they best prefer to learn. Majority of the respondents- 69% (96 students) preferred to learn the German language. While, 18% (25 students) wanted to learn the Spanish language, 7% (10 students) the French language, and 6% (9 students) preferred the Mandarin language. And none, 0% of the respondents wanted to learn the Hindi language. FIGURE 2: Which of the following languages do you like the best? Third, the respondents were asked if which among the given languages, (Spanish, German, French, Mandarin and Hindi) they think, would be the most beneficial to their future careers. Most of the respondents said that the German language is the most beneficial among other languages- 60% (84 students). While, 32% (45 students) said French language is the most beneficial. 5% (7 students) said it is the Spanish language. While the remaining 3% (4 students) sees Mandarin as beneficial to their future. FIGURE 3: Which of the following languages do you think would be most beneficial to your future? Fourth, the respondents were asked which among the languages (Spanish, German, French, Mandarin and Hindi) would they be most interested to learn. Again, majority of the respondents- (65%, 91 students) said that they were mostly interested learning the German language. 18% (25 students) said they were interested

in the Spanish language; 11% (15 students) were interested in the French language; and the remaining 6% (9 students) were mostly interested in the Mandarin language. FIGURE 4: Which of the following languages would you be most interested to learn? Finally, the respondents were asked why they were interested to learn the (Spanish, German, French, Mandarin and Hindi) languages. Majority of the students, 75%, (105 students) answered that they were interested because they see its value for their college/future use. 14% (20 students) were interested to learn the language for personal benefit. 7%, (10 students) were interested to learn for travel purposes. And other remaining 4%, (5 students) were interested without any significant purpose seen, only just for fun. FIGURE 5: Why would you be most interested to learn the foreign language? CHAPTER V SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND

RECOMMENDATION Summary Embedding a foreign language into the curriculum will indeed be beneficial in the future for students in the high school department. Its benefits not limited to personal, travel and cultural understanding, as a vital asset in the near future, and for communication purposes. Being able to speak another language would therefore be an advantage for any chosen career especially if they choose to migrate to another country or have international business relations. According to previous studies and surveys, the top three foreign languages in schools are French, Spanish and Mandarin however we found out that it in this study we conducted that the respondents of St. Scholastica's Academy Marikina prefer a slightly different line up of foreign language choice. German was the primary choice of the students and closely followed by the Spanish language and then the French. Mandarin, was not a popular choice to learn among the

students of St. Scholastica's Academy. In terms of practicality, Mandarin should be a priority because there are many Chinese businesses afloat in the Global Economy and the German language is not quite popular in the radio and telecommunication waves. According to the surveys we conducted, the German language gained popularity on almost all the questions regarding what they would be most interested to learn, prefer to learn and most beneficial to learn. Although we had expected the French language to be the number one choice given its popularity, given the reason that the German language is seen to dominate most of Europe and French is leading only behind by a percentage. In addition to this, the German language is currently the most powerful language in Europe as they are one of the richest in all of Europe. There are many benefits in learning a foreign language however; there can be some slight disadvantages should it be decided to be taught among high school students. One of which is that learning a language in the latter part of a person's year is not really effective and will only provide the student the basics and not complete mastery of the language in the same level like when a kid would learn a language. Also, in addition to this, although the respondents have agreed to learn a foreign language should they be given an opportunity, the stress it would add up to the students would not be desirable given the fact that they would have 3 languages in the curriculum. Conclusion The findings clearly show that majority of the students is open and willing to learn new languages even though, these are foreign to them. The respondents even have their own preferences of foreign language that they consider as an interesting lesson that they must take. And at the same time, they see learning a new language as an important

factor in their future, most especially, in their college life and career. This implies that receiving an education to study foreign languages is not seen as a burden or a pain among the students. This then, led the researchers to conclude that the students were somehow open to having foreign language subject in their school's curriculum, because they have an interest to it; wherein, the students can choose their preferred foreign language.

Recommendation Different aspects may be further modified for those who wish to continue this study, such as expanding its time for researching of data through interviews, literary works and relevant mediums of information with regards to the topic. The researchers suggest that it would be ideal if the coverage of the research would be months long, three (3) months in specific, to gather and present sufficient data. Also, the study can further be improved if the questions in the survey would be more elaborated and clearly stated by the researchers. In this way, the respondents would be guided accordingly, and at the same time, the researchers could gather data more accurately and more systematic, producing a much more meaningful interpretation and analysis. Moreover, the research would yield better and more credible results if the number of respondents would be increased.

Lastly, it would be much better if the respondents were directly asked if they were willing to add another subject for foreign language in their school's curriculum. This is because interests and preferences are not that reliable to finally conclude that the students were open to having a foreign language subject. Bibliography Khodorkovsky, M. (2008 October 27). The 10 most useful languages to learn. Retrieved from <http://www.altalang.com/beyond-words/2008/10/27/the-10-most-useful-languages-to-learn/> DÃ°NÃ†AY, T.

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