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Cross-Cultural Understanding in Immersion Students: A Mixed Methods Study

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This mixed methods study explored the development of cross-cultural understanding in a unique population of students in the U.S.: English-dominant students who had attended French or Spanish elementary immersion schools. Despite the fact that immersion schools have as a goal cross-cultural understanding and appreciation and affirmation of diversity, research has shown that this goal is not always met. This study featured 131 students from five immersion schools who responded to surveys, and 33 of those students who were interviewed. Data analysis procedures included a theme analysis of the interviews, a statistical analysis of the surveys, and an integrated consideration of the findings. It was found in both the quantitative and the qualitative data that the successful development of cross-cultural understanding in these immersion students was not necessarily a function of school activities. These students did not receive the same messages about the target culture(s), nor did they understand the concept of culture in the same way. However, cross-cultural understanding was certainly attainable, particularly with extracurricular exposure to the target language and culture, like living with members of the target culture(s) or undertaking meaningful travel experiences.

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INTRODUCTION

Foreign language immersion programs represent 14% of public elementary school foreign language program types in the United States at present (Rhodes & Pufahl, 2010), and their growth has been exponential, with nearly 700 programs of various types currently in existence in the U.S., compared with fewer than 50 in the 1970s (Center for Applied Linguistics, 2006, 2007). Immersion programs have been identified as the most effective language learning program models in schools (Genesee, 1987; Lyster, 2007). Early total one-way immersion programs, the particular type of immersion program investigated in this paper, are a subset of those programs which serve majority language students (in the United States, English) who are taught academic subjects and literacy skills through a second language as well as through their native language (Genesee, 2008). With a unique ability to help students develop high levels of functional language proficiency, immersion programs also aim to support academic achievement, provide cognitive benefits to students, and positively influence attitudes and beliefs about language and culture learning (Fortune & Tedick, 2008; Genesee, 1987, 2004). Thus, immersion education programs offer Americans,

and indeed citizens of all countries, a prime opportunity to answer the call to be more adept in navigating other languages and cultures, as well as their own.

Although immersion schools have as a goal cross-cultural understanding and appreciation and affirmation of diversity, research has supported the contention that cross-cultural understanding is not a consistent outcome of immersion education. Met and Lorenz explained this phenomenon in their 1997 retrospective on two decades of U.S. immersion programs, where they stated:

> Most immersion programs do not have an organized sequence of objectives to ensure that students leaving a program have received instruction that includes a well-balanced continuum of age-appropriate learning experiences about the cultures of people who speak the immersion language (1997, p. 259; see also Lyster, 2007).

Because of the emphasis on content teaching in immersion education, and the prevailing concerns about how to incorporate instruction in target language features in this context, the fact is that culture teaching is always at risk of taking a backseat or no seat at all in immersion programs. In the next section, we will identify some ways that culture knowledge and cross-cultural understanding have been addressed in the literature about foreign language and immersion education.

THE LITERATURE: CULTURE KNOWLEDGE AND CROSS-CULTURAL UNDERSTANDING IN FL AND IMMERSION EDUCATION

Language learning motivation research and culture

The theoretical framework for this study is the socio-educational model, originally conceptualized as a general model for language acquisition (Gardner, 1985a), but used more consistently in the literature as a model for second language (L2)[1] learning motivation. The socio-educational model has been praised as one of the first models of motivation that took into account the idea of the cultural and social setting where learning takes place (MacIntyre, MacKinnon, & Clément, 2009). One concept that is key to the idea of cross-cultural understanding in the socio-educational model is the notion of "integrativeness":

> …an individual's openness to taking on characteristics of another cultural/linguistic group. Individuals for whom their own ethnolinguistic heritage is a major part of their sense of identity would be low in integrativeness; those for whom their ethnicity is not a

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[1] *The terms of foreign language (FL) and second language (L2) are not interchangeable. Generally speaking, FL learning refers only to the learning of a language in a community where it is not the majority language spoken. In this paper, in order to reflect the use of the term in the L2 learning motivation literature, L2 learning will encompass FL learning, as well as the learning of a language in a community where it is the majority language (for example, English language learners in the United States).*

major component, and who are interested in other cultural communities would be high in integrativeness. (Gardner, 2005, p. 7)

Integrativeness is thus a complex of attitudes rather than a simple reason for studying the language; integrativeness relates not just to attitudes about the target culture, but to all other cultures and to the individual's own ethnic identity. On the instrument most commonly associated with the socio-educational model, the Attitude/Motivation Test Battery (AMTB), integrativeness has been measured by items from three separate subscales: *Attitudes toward the target community*; *Integrative orientation*; and *Interest in world languages* (adapted from Gardner, 2001, p. 10). Gardner and his colleagues have argued repeatedly that learners who show motivation related to integrativeness tend to experience more positive outcomes in achievement and other aspects of language learning (Clément, Gardner & Smythe, 1977a, 1977b; Gardner, Day, & MacIntyre, 1992; Gardner & Lambert, 1959).

Results about integrativeness from beyond the work of Gardner and his associates have been mixed. Some scholars have supported this connection between integrative motivation[2] and achievement in the language classroom (Csizér & Dörnyei, 2005; Dörnyei & Clément, 2001). However, others have suggested that having an integrative orientation was a minor or insignificant indicator of attitude and motivation, or that it did not significantly enhance language acquisition. Studies featuring these findings have investigated, for example, students of English as a Second Language in Canada (Belmechri & Hummel, 1998; Clément & Kruidenier, 1983), students of Arabic in Israel (Kraemer, 1993), and students of foreign language in Hungary (Nikolov, 1999). Singh (1987) argued that the implication that positive attitudes toward the target community (an indicator variable for integrativeness) are linked to achievement only works in bilingual community contexts, such as the Canadian context where the original 1959 study took place. In monolingual contexts like those considered in the present study, there has not been shown to be a consistent correlation.

Research associated with the socio-educational model thus identifies integrativeness as a trait of the learner, something that they either have or do not have, which can then be correlated with other aspects of their attitudes and motivation. There is little to no consideration of how cross-cultural understanding is taught or developed in language learners in this framework. This study, in looking at the cross-cultural understanding in a specific group of learners, takes this framework as a starting point. Two other models for understanding culture in FL education will provide a more complete picture of the process of developing cross-cultural understanding in the FL classroom: The ACTFL National Standards (ACTFL, 1999), and the notion of intercultural competence (Byram, 1997).

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[2] *The terms "integrativeness," "integrative orientation," and "integrative motivation" are distinct terms in the literature written by Gardner and his associates. I have used the terms referenced by the researchers whose work I am citing; if that work is completed by someone outside of Gardner and his associates, the distinctions are rarely key to an interpretation of the study. When possible, I have used the terms as defined in Gardner 2005.*

Other models for understanding culture in FL education

The ACTFL National Standards. A framework for culture in FL education has been created, promoted, and adopted by many members of the foreign language education community in the United States, particularly at the K-12 level (Arens, 2010). The *Standards for Foreign Language Learning in the 21st Century* (ACTFL, 1999) have, in the words of Schulz (2007), "given cultural learning a prominent place in U.S. foreign language education" (Schulz, 2007, p. 10). The National Standards include "Cultures" as one of the "5 Cs" which provide the proposed framework for language study in the United States, defining culture as encompassing "the philosophical perspectives, the behavioral practices, and the products—both tangible and intangible—of a society" (ACTFL, 1999, p. 47). This tripartite (products, practices, and perspectives) definition of culture in the foreign language classroom goes beyond what Mantle-Bromley (1995) has called the "traditional definition of culture," which consists of the fine arts, geography, and history. It includes what people have, what they do, and what they think or are. Note that the ACTFL definition of culture is purely focused on the identification of culture as a topic of study; as regards the present study, it can provide a framework for defining what is understood across cultures when we speak of "cross-cultural understanding."

Byram's Intercultural Competence. The terms "intercultural" and "cross-cultural," often used interchangeably in the general research on foreign language education, reference the idea of approaching and seeking ways "to understand the Other on the other side of the border" (Kramsch, 1998, p. 81). Intercultural competence, in Byram's model, involves attitudes, knowledge, skills of interpreting and relating, skills of discovery and interaction, and critical cultural awareness (Byram, 1997). Knowledge of the students' own culture(s) are key to this type of competence, and the goal is to develop an individual who is "able to see relationships between different cultures - both internal and external to a society - and is able to mediate, that is interpret each in terms of the other, either for themselves or for other people" (Byram, 2000, para. 9). Note here the echo of the notion of integrativeness, grounded in "openness" and "interest" relating to other cultures (Gardner, 2005). Yet the notion of intercultural competence also differs from integrativeness, particularly in Byram's criticism of the "native speaker model" of culture learning. He has explicitly argued that, for a learner to become interculturally competent, they should not seek to acquire a new sociocultural identity; indeed, he has stated that this would be damaging to them (Byram, 1997). Kramsch (1993; 2009), Risager (2007), and others have expanded on this objection, advocating for a more complex interpretation of the tensions involved in understanding across cultures.

From their inception, immersion education programs have borrowed from many of these frameworks to articulate their goals with regard to culture. In the next section, these goals will be reviewed and contextualized in the research.

The goals of immersion education and culture

Immersion educators have long identified notions related to cross-cultural understanding as goals of immersion education. One of the earliest comprehensive studies about immersion education, the St. Lambert experiment, took place in the Canadian context of Quebec, where English-speaking and French-speaking communities lived in what Lambert and Tucker (1972) called a "bicultural and bilingual society." The authors explained that the immersion program was designed to promote bilingualism and biculturalism in the students, with the hope that the students would someday further the cause of "democratic coexistence that requires people of different cultures and languages to develop mutual understanding and respect" (1972, p. 3). This early identification of the goal of "biculturalism" for immersion students in Canada was modified and expanded in later publications by leaders in the field of immersion research. For instance, in 1984, Genesee formalized Lambert and Tucker's findings by stating that the fourth of four goals of immersion education was: "Positive attitudes toward the students' home language and culture as well as toward the target language and culture" (Genesee, 1984, p. 52). Clearly, positive attitudes about the target culture(s), or as Lambert (1984) called them "sociocultural attitudes" (p. 15), were one of the main desired and expected outcomes of immersion education in the first decades of the formalized establishment of the program model in Canada (see also Swain, 1984).

Research and theoretical works about immersion education in the United States have refined the wording of this goal further. Early research in one-way Spanish immersion schools in southern California identified the goal of "developing positive attitudes toward representatives of the Spanish-speaking community while maintaining a positive self-image as representatives of the English-speaking community" (Campbell, 1972, cited in Campbell, 1984). Not all U.S. immersion schools have been located near communities where the target language is spoken, however, echoing the challenge faced by connecting integrativeness with achievement in the socio-educational model. In these cases, researchers have articulated their goals slightly differently. For instance, Met and Lorenz (1997) stated that one of the four principal goals of immersion programs in the United States has been that "students learn about and understand the culture(s) of the people who speak the immersion language" (p. 259). Fortune and Tedick (2008), focusing on a general definition of immersion applicable in all U.S. contexts, phrased the corresponding end goal of immersion education as a desire for "enhanced levels of intercultural sensitivity" (2008, p. 10; see also Kearney, 2010). I have been influenced by these phrases, as well as by the literature on culture in FL education in the field, in wording this goal in the present study ("developing cross-cultural understanding in immersion students").

The reality of immersion education and culture

Carey (1987) pointed out that it has in fact been difficult to trace precisely the path of students' integrative orientations in immersion education, since chances are that the student

population already had a positive attitude toward the target culture, as evidenced by their desire (or their family's desire) to enroll in the program in the beginning (Carey, 1987). In an early study on French immersion education in Canada by Swain and Lapkin (1982), the authors also concluded that, although some early total French immersion students may have changed some of their attitudes toward French-Canadians, the roots of these changes could not be attributed conclusively to their participation in the immersion program (see also Lapkin, Swain, & Shapson, 1990). This work thus suggests that claiming cross-cultural understanding as a goal of immersion education is moot.

Looking at the issue from a different angle, other studies have supported the notion that immersion programs have simply not been successful in developing cross-cultural understanding in their students. Dagenais, in her work with multilingual students in Canadian French immersion schools, has argued that students in immersion schools, particularly those speaking only in English with their families, cannot be assumed to be developing language awareness or critical consideration of the roles that languages play in society (2005, 2008). One study in the Canadian context showed that students who participated in an immersion program had better opinions about the target culture in comparison to non-immersion students only in the abstract, when actual interaction with the target community was not possible (Van der Keilen, 1995). Researchers have also found that students who chose to leave an immersion program did not necessarily have negative attitudes about the target culture, less motivation, or less of an integrative orientation than students who did not leave (Campbell, 1992; Morton, Lemieux, Diffey, & Awender, 1999). Moving beyond the Canadian context to an American two-way immersion program, a study by Bearse and de Jong (2008) used Norton's (2000) notion of investment to explain how students who had English as their L1 did not consider themselves to be bicultural, while students who were L1 Spanish in the same program did consider themselves to be bicultural (Bearse & de Jong, 2008).

These few studies comprise the body of research on the development of cross-cultural understanding in immersion students; clearly, there is room to do more to investigate this important topic, particularly in the one-way immersion setting in the United States. Previous research situated in non-immersion environments has been more extensive, suggesting consistently that foreign language students and teachers have trouble defining culture (Chavez, 2002; Schulz, 2007), and that the notion of culture learning in the classroom is often seen as ancillary to the central pursuit of the study and acquisition of language structures (Byram & Estarte-Sarries, 1991; Byrnes, 2008; Chavez, 2002; Scarino, 2010). These issues will be discussed in this study as well.

THE CURRENT STUDY: OBJECTIVES AND METHODS OBJECTIVES AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study was crafted as an exploration of the nature of immersion students' language learning motivation. As such, the dominant theoretical framework reflecting this construct, the socio-educational model, was selected as a point of departure for the design of the study

and organization of the findings. As noted above, issues related to culture figure into this model, and thus the topic of culture was an important line of inquiry in data collection and analysis. Investigating this attribute in an integrated manner with qualitative findings is also revealing, because addressing questions of identity and cross-cultural understanding can be a very different enterprise in surveys and in interviews (see for example Bonilla-Silva & Forman, 2000; Byram & Estarte-Sarries, 1991).

The primary objective of this paper is thus to explore and explain the nature of immersion students' cross-cultural understanding in the framework of their language learning motivation. The two central research questions for this analysis are the following:

Q.1. What does an examination of the second language (L2) learning motivation of early adolescent immersion graduates reveal about the development of cross-cultural understanding in immersion students?

Q.2. How do the data collected through student interviews compare to the data generated by the results of the Attitude/Motivation Test Battery?

Mixed methods study design and purpose

This mixed methods study features a modified explanatory design (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007). In this design, qualitative methods are used to expand upon or elaborate on quantitative data. The purpose of this mixed methods study, termed "initiation" by Greene, Caracelli, and Graham (1989), is both to address issues already discussed in the literature about L2 learning motivation and culture, and also to contribute to the knowledge base in an exploratory manner; to seek new perspectives and frameworks, possibly through the identification of paradox and contradiction in the two types of data. As such, my philosophy of mixed methods research corresponds with the dialectic thesis, where opposing viewpoints of different methods and their interaction can create tension and be revealing in their own ways (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2003).

# Students (Grades)	Free/Red. Lunch %	White %	Black %	Hisp. %	Asian %	American Indian %
School A (Urban, Spanish)						
713 (K-6)	44	37.7	12.8	45.9	2.0	1.7
School B (Urban, French)						
449 (K-6)	22	67.5	15.4	8.5	8.0	0.7
School C (Suburban, French)						
622 (K-5)	0	90	1.0	2.9	6.1	0.0
School D (Suburban, Spanish)						
578 (K-6)	7	78.9	8.5	8.5	4.2	0.0
School E (Suburban, Spanish)						
623 (K-5)	8	81.2	5.6	9.2	3.4	0.6

Table 1: Program Demographics

Note. This information is based on 2007-2008 reported statistics from 2008 School Report Cards and district demographics, available on State Department of Education website. To protect the anonymity of the schools, this is all that I can reveal about this source.

METHOD

Participants

The target population of this study was the 358 sixth and seventh graders (early adolescents aged 11-13) who had graduated from one of five one-way early total immersion programs in French or Spanish in the previous spring of 2007. Table 1 summarizes the general characteristics of the five schools. This includes information about the students' socio-economic status (SES) as represented in the first column by the percentage of students receiving free and reduced lunch (FRL) in each school. Note the differences between Program A (44% FRL), Program B (22% FRL), and the other three programs in the study, which had much lower percentages of students receiving FRL at the elementary level, including Program C with no students receiving FRL in that particular year. Because I contacted all 2007 graduates, the target population included both students who chose to continue in the immersion continuation program in their district and students who chose to pursue other educational options like a monolingual English curriculum or homeschooling.

My initial contact with the target population was made via postal mail or school handout addressed to the parent/guardian of the 2007 elementary immersion school

graduate. Each packet contained a cover letter, consent form, parent survey, and student survey. The surveys were sent out from January, 2008 through April, 2008, and responses were received from January, 2008 through July, 2008. One hundred thirty-one students and their parents responded to surveys (36% response rate), and 33 of those students were interviewed for this study. For the 33 interviews, I selected from the students whose parents had indicated on their surveys that they could be interviewed. I selected these interviewees with a combination of convenience sampling technique and modified stratified sampling of the population (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2000), in order to interview at least one continuing and one non-continuing student of each gender from each school. As such, I interviewed 20 continuing students and 13 non-continuing students starting in late February, 2008, and continuing through early June, 2008. A statistical comparison of the survey results of the interviewees and the non-interviewees revealed no significant differences in their responses.

Instruments

The primary instrument was a student survey, of which the main part was 40 Likert-scale questions adapted from the AMTB. My adaptations to the AMTB aimed to encourage the most accurate student responses, given the context of early adolescent immersion graduates. This type of adaptation has been encouraged by Gardner and his colleagues, who have stated, "People are encouraged not to simply take a set of items [off of the AMTB] and administer them unthinkingly in any context" (1985b, p. 525). In this paper, I am focusing on results related to the notion of integrativeness; items on the modified AMTB relating to the notion of integrativeness correspond with one of three subscales: *Attitudes toward the target community* (8 items; sample item: "I like the [target language]-speaking people"); *Integrative orientation* (3 items; sample item: "Studying [the target language] can be important for me because it will help me to talk to different kinds of people"); and *Interest in world languages* (7 items; sample item: "I would really like to learn a lot of world languages") (Gardner, 1985a; see also Gardner, 2001). This last subscale, *Interest in world languages*, is the particular focus in the quantitative analysis in this paper. Students were asked to select one of five responses to each item: "Really disagree," "Sort of disagree," "Neutral," "Sort of agree," and "Really agree."

As a secondary source of information, the parent survey, was designed to elicit information about the students' home exposure to other languages and cultures, and other pertinent home background characteristics. The questions for this instrument were based in part on selected factors investigated by studies that have linked home background characteristics with language learning motivation (see for example Dagenais & Day, 1999; Gardner, Masgoret & Tremblay, 1999).

The final data source was the interviews. These interviews were semi-structured and lasted from 15 to 35 minutes. I asked students both to reflect generally on their language learning experiences, and to address motivational factors in the socio-educational model. These questions included inquiries specifically designed to elicit commentary on other

cultures (whether students knew members of the target culture; what they thought of them; how French or Spanish-speaking people or culture is different from American, English-speaking culture; if students were interested in studying other languages). Many other responses also addressed or reflected a cross-cultural understanding (or lack thereof), even though that was not the topic of the question per se.

DATA ANALYSIS

I began data analysis by taking informal notes on ideas and themes that emerged during the interviews. Then, as I transcribed the interviews, I marked statements in the texts that seemed to me to be particularly insightful or potentially useful in answering my research questions. I wrote short annotations next to these moments, attempting to answer the question: "What does this moment show about how this student is motivated - or not motivated – to learn language?" I made no overt attempt to connect these annotations with concepts from the literature. After this first phase of qualitative analysis, I wrote a master list of inductive and deductive codes. The list of inductive codes stemmed from the notes that I had taken during the interviews and the comments that I had written during the transcription process. Most of these codes were interpretive, for instance, if a student made an observation about the target culture or other cultures that was untrue or incorrect, I coded it as "miss-culture," because it was a motivational factor that indicated misunderstanding about culture (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The deductive codes were based on the concepts in the socio-educational model like attitudes about language learning, the people in the target culture(s), and other factors (Gardner, 1985b, 2001). I then coded the interviews by marking chunks, which were words, phrases, or passages, which I felt should be associated with a code or codes. I recorded the code or codes next to the highlighted chunk. Many of these chunks mirrored the insightful statements that I had identified during transcription, but I also allowed myself to identify other important chunks in the transcripts. Many chunks had two or three different codes associated with them, particularly in this first iteration.

After this initial work with the qualitative data, I turned to the quantitative data, which I analyzed using the statistical software program SPSS. I began my statistical analysis with two important procedures. First, I converted the responses to the Likert-scale items comprising each subscale to numeric values (e.g. entering -2 for a "really disagree" response, -1 for a "sort of disagree" response, etc.). I then took the sum of all items for each subscale, which was the basis for my analysis; there were no missing items in this part of the survey, and therefore no accommodations needed to be made in that regard. This calculation resulted in a coarse interval scale, or what Turner (1993) has called "interval-like data" for the responses; this conversion is generally assumed to allow parametric analyses when accompanied by a satisfactory calculation of Cronbach's alpha for each subscale, which was also accomplished (Allen & Seaman, 2007). Additionally, normality was assessed for each subscale, in order to further meet assumptions that allowed for some parametric analyses (see also Velleman & Wilkinson, 1993).

Next, in order to measure the extent to which different home background characteristics overlapped, cross-tabulations of relevant characteristics were made, and the Cohen's kappa coefficient, a measurement of agreement, was calculated for each pairing. Subsequently, I conducted t tests in order to identify associations between the home background characteristics and the student survey responses on specific subscales. If the t test revealed a significant statistical difference between groups of students with different home background characteristics on the subscale, I conducted two different calculations to address that relationship. First, the adjusted coefficient of determination (R^2) statistic was calculated to indicate the percentage of the variance in the subscale responses that could be explained by the home background characteristic. In other words, if some students responded differently on a certain subscale when they had a certain home background characteristic, this calculation helped to explain the extent to which that characteristic was related to their responses. Finally, I calculated Cohen's d in order to offer a standardized effect size, the difference between the means divided by the pooled within-group standard deviation.

In the next phase of analysis, I returned to the interview transcripts and codes in order to further develop and verify the initial codes and themes. Although allowing myself to refer back to previously coded documents, I also checked that those codes actually reflected the participants' statements. I modified and redefined some codes to more accurately reflect the nature of the statements; and I combined and/or eliminated codes that seemed to have little support in the transcripts (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). Finally, the last stage of analysis was an exploration of the integrated findings, through reviewing and reconsidering the themes that had emerged in the qualitative analysis together with the findings from the statistical analyses. This led me to understand how to refine, combine, and organize the presentation of my findings. In an effort not just to focus on areas where the two data sources were congruent, I also looked at areas where one data source revealed an important finding that was not there in the other source.

Paraphrased Questions	Choices with Percentage of Corresponding Responses				
What was the parent/guardian's highest degree in education?	H.S.	2-yr	4-yr	Grad	
	9.9	3.8	45.8	39.7	
What is the parent/guardian's level of proficiency in the target language [of the immersion program]?	None	Novice	Intermed.	Advanced	Fluent
	21.4	53.4	12.2	4.6	8.4
	Yes		No		
Has the student's parent/guardian lived outside of US for 3 months?	32.1		67.9		
Are languages other than English spoken in the home?	21.4		78.6		
Does the student have family who live outside of the U.S.?	29.8		70.2		
Has there been a guest in the home from a target country?	60.3		39.7		
Has the student's parent/guardian traveled outside of the U.S. with the student once or more?	70.2		29.8		
Has the student's parent/guardian lived outside of the U.S. for 3 months or more with the student?	3.8		96.2		
Has the student traveled outside of the United States without a parent/guardian?	16.8		82.4		

Table 2: Selected Home Background Characteristics of Respondents (N=131)

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The findings in this section will first consist of a presentation of the quantitative results related to the construct of integrativeness in the socio-educational model. This will be

followed by a presentation of the qualitative data related to that construct. Finally, other themes from the interviews about the immersion students' understandings of culture will be provided in order to give more context and detail to the analysis.

Integrativeness in survey results: home exposure to culture and language

Table 2 represents selected information gleaned from the parent survey. Note that the responses to this survey indicate that, although some students had exposure to other languages in the home, very few had parents who considered themselves to be fluent in the language taught in the immersion program, and most (78.6%) lived in a home where only English was spoken. Additionally, 70.2% of the respondents indicated that they did not have family who lived outside of the United States. The diversity of the home backgrounds of the participants is important, but it is equally important that a significant majority of these parents reported raising their children in monolingual English homes with few strong familial ties with other cultures.

The subscale of interest in this study, a component of the notion of integrativeness in the socio-educational model, is *Interest in world languages*. This subscale performed predictably with regard to its correlation with other subscales in the AMTB, correlating significantly at the .01 level (2-tailed) with all other subscales with the exception of the anomalous *Anxiety about learning language* subscale. The responses to the questions in this subscale were coherent, with a Cronbach's alpha of .787 for 7 items. The results are only given for this subscale because it was the only subscale in the modified AMTB where *multiple* procedures revealed that students with different levels of exposure to other languages and cultures in the home responded differently to its items in a way that was statistically significant. Although other subscales were found to have statistically significant differences based on groupings of students with select characteristics, those characteristics were often either related solely to the schools attended by the students (as occurred with the subscale of *Attitudes about language learning*), or one or two findings of statistical significance were the isolated findings for that particular subscale.

The Cohen's kappa coefficients, measuring the overlap between pairings of home background characteristics, indicated that overlap between different pairings were moderate to weak. This coefficient ranges from 0-1, with higher values indicating more overlap; the most overlap was between families who spoke a language other than English in the home, and those who had family abroad (Cohen's kappa of .424). The least overlap was between families who had had a guest from the target culture(s) in the home, and those who had a parent/guardian with at least a novice level of language fluency (Cohen's kappa of .065).

Table 3 summarizes the different home background characteristics that were associated with the *Interest in world languages* subscale. For instance, if one considers the first row, it is shown that approximately 7.5 percent of the variation in students' responses to the *Interest in world languages* subscale could be attributed to whether or not their parents had lived abroad. Based on Howell's (2002) classification of effect sizes, the other effect size statistic reported, Cohen's *d*, also shows that the effect sizes for *Interest in world languages* were

medium to large (Howell, 2002). As the aforementioned moderate-to-weak overlap between the six different home background characteristics listed here is a concern in examining these data, we are led to a more general, exploratory finding that a variety of exposures to other languages and cultures in the home might lead to more interest in world languages.

Characteristic	Yes	No	% of variance explained (based on adjusted R^2)	Effect size (Cohen's *d*)	*p*
Parents have lived abroad	N=41 Mean = 10.41 SD = 3.38	N=88 Mean = 7.62 SD = 4.75	7.5	.73	.001
A language other than English is spoken in the home	N=28 Mean = 10.36 SD = 3.38	N=101 Mean = 8.00 SD = 4.70	3.9	.53	.015
Student has family abroad	N=38 Mean = 9.92 SD = 3.82	N=91 Mean = 7.92 SD = 4.71	3.3	.45	.022
Student has lived with a guest in home from a target country	N=78 Mean = 9.21 SD = 4.49	N=51 Mean = 7.45 SD = 4.46	2.8	.40	.031
Parent speaks the target language at least at a novice level	N=101 Mean = 8.92 SD = 4.20	N=28 Mean = 7.04 SD = 5.43	2.2	.42	.052[a]

Table 3: Results Relating to Select Home Background Characteristics and Student Attributes on the Subscale of Interest in World Languages

[a]This falls slightly outside of the traditional definition of statistical significance where $\alpha=.05$, but the calculations related to effect size offer further evidence that it should be included here.

The subscales in the qualitative data

The purpose of a mixed methods study with an explanatory design is to expand or elaborate on quantitative data with qualitative results. As such, the first part of this presentation of the qualitative findings will focus on how the students addressed the three

factors specifically identified by the three subscales of the socio-educational model associated with integrativeness: integrative orientation, attitudes toward the target community, and interest in world languages.

Integrative orientation. Interview responses from the immersion students often reflected what Gardner and his colleagues would identify as clear integrative orientations, or a desire to learn a language because of wanting to communicate with members of the target language group (Gardner, 2005). Students mentioned that knowing a language allowed you to "communicate with more people" (School D) frequently in the interviews as a reason why learning a language was good or important. This was often linked with travel experiences. For instance, one student (School C) stated:

> [I like] meeting new people who speak French, and I'm able to go to different countries that speak French. Like I went to France, and I got to kind of do the touring and everything. I got to talk to people and order at restaurants, and [in] Africa, it kind of helped, too.

Other students mentioned the pleasure of being able to talk to "the locals," (School B); or to "have a lot of fun with" Mexican kids at a school (School D). Another student from School D, in response to the very first question of the interview, "Tell me something that you like about learning in Spanish," responded that she didn't want to be "a stranger in a strange place" when she travels to a Spanish-speaking country. These responses indicate a clear desire to learn language with the objective of making strong connections with members of the target culture, a key connection to the principle of integrative orientation.

Sometimes the ability to communicate with members of the language group was overtly connected to the idea of developing cross-cultural understanding for the students. For instance, this student (School B) said, "Like maybe you could help [people who speak the target language], if they need some assistance…Then everyone can communicate better. So maybe there won't be as many arguments because people misunderstood each other." This reason for learning a second language demonstrates that some of the students were able to see beyond merely the initial thrill of connecting with someone from another culture, to some of the more considerable implications of such a connection. Similarly, a different student from the same school articulated that he wanted to "just look at the language as you see the world from a new perspective, from the perspective of a person and the culture that the language belongs to." Some immersion graduates clearly did develop an understanding of the fact that culture is a complex construct that is as much an issue of perspectives as it is of products and practices.

Attitudes toward the target community. When I asked many students directly what they thought about people from the target culture, they tended to offer bland statements like "They're friendly" (School A) or "It's just that they don't speak English," (School E). One important exception to this came from students when I asked about individual relationships

that they had been able to develop with members of the target community. A student from School D spoke excitedly and at length about her own experiences with the target community, as a function of her relationship with an aide who had lived with her friend. She explained, "My friend [hosted teacher aides] and I went over to her house a lot. The [aide] and me and my friend, we became really good friends and we went out for lunch and stuff, and it was really fun." She continued to say, "we started to become closer" and "[the aide] just had this really bright, funny, spunky personality." In reflecting on another aide, this student continued:

> A bunch of [aides] I guess all have that kind of excitement, like last year one of our [aides], it was the first time that she had seen snow. So the first thing that she did was she ran outside and was rolling around in it…They're just so amazed at what this world is like, it's like a whole different place to them, and it's really cool to see how different our world is from theirs.

Clearly, this student had had positive, rich experiences with the members of the target community with whom she had come in contact. She went on to reflect on how the aides described their lifestyles as farmers, and how those interactions helped her understand more about the target culture.

In some immersion schools, particularly Spanish, urban School A, getting to know members of the target culture was a feature of the student and family population in the school, where more than 45% of the student population had a Hispanic background (see Table 1). One student from this school explained:

> A lot of people [in the immersion school] talk about their culture because a lot of them have been to Mexico. We like to talk about from their experience what's Mexico like, and how they live there, and then move here and how it's a really big difference between those places…Because a lot of people I know have family in Mexico, or were born in Mexico.

Another student from the same school indicated that attitudes about members of the target community are a function of attending an immersion school with a large Hispanic population. He clearly connected those relationships with a deeper understanding of the culture ("how they live there, and then move here and how it's a really big difference between those places"). Another student from that school said, "My friend, she speaks Spanish, and she likes to watch *telenovelas* which are like Mexican soap operas on TV, and she likes to listen to Spanish bands and stuff." It stands to reason that many of the Spanish immersion students from this school called upon thoughts of their friends when they thought of members of the target community, and, as with the previous instances, they were able to display more complex knowledge and awareness of cultural products, practices, and perspectives as a result.

Therefore, when students were able to create sustained and fulfilling relationships with the members of the target community, they seemed to have a better developed cross-cultural understanding. This finding is supported by studies both within immersion education (Van der Kielen, 1995) and in more traditional programs (Clément et al, 1977a; Kim, 2009; Wright, 1999). It does, however, depart from what was found in the quantitative data, in that there were very few distinctions among students with or without travel or houseguest experiences in this subscale. One possible explanation for this is related to the students' reticence to pass judgment on members of the target community. Another explanation lies in the nature of the instrument, since the questions on the AMTB were focused on what the people and/or the culture was like ("nice," "friendly," "interesting," etc.). Finally, as Van der Kielen (1995) pointed out in her study, the *reported* acceptance of relationships with members of the target community is not always necessarily an indicator of *actual* acceptance of that community when interaction opportunities arise. Further analysis of the qualitative data will explore this finding further.

Interest in world languages. Recall that on the AMTB, factors about students' sustained exposure to cultures in other countries, either through parent influence or through family ties abroad, seemed to have a great effect on how those respondents reacted to statements about their interest in world languages. I observed a strong echo of this during the student interviews, where their responses could be categorized into three groups: students with absolutely no interest, students with some superficial interest, and students with substantial and informed interest.

One group of the interviewees, most of whom had been relatively positive about their immersion experiences and about language learning in general, revealed absolutely no interest in learning more languages. When I asked them, "Have you thought about studying another language?" many of them responded with a simple, curt dismissal like, "I'm not interested" (School D). Other students had given studying other languages some thought, but had decided that they were "too complicated for me" (School B) or "kind of boring" (School A). These students' distinct lack of reflection and interest about learning other languages certainly calls into question the frequent suggestion that the self-selecting process of immersion program enrollment ensures a population of immersion students who are inherently more motivated and interested in other languages and cultures than non-immersion students (Lapkin et al., 1990; Van der Kielen, 1995).

A smaller group of students want to learn other languages, but they emphasized reasons that focused on cultural products and practices like food or architecture, which are often considered to be much easier to understand and address than the more complex idea of "perspectives" in the ACTFL Standards (1999; Schulz, 2007). In a particularly vivid instance, a student from School B said that he wanted to learn Italian because, "Italy is a cool country, it'd be nice to go to Italy and know how to say stuff, and there's all these cool Italian words that come from Italy: pizza, spaghetti." A student from School C spoke inaccurately about the relations between languages and cultures, claiming for instance that she wanted to learn Chinese because of "sushi" and Spanish and Italian because they are

"the same" as French, the language that she already knew. So, although this group of students did indeed show interest in learning world languages, their interest in those other languages and cultures seemed to be based on superficial, sometimes faulty reasoning that did not show a lot of reflection.

Finally, there were students who seemed to express sincere reasons for wanting to learn another language, in a way that indicated to me that they had wanted to do so for a long time and thought about it a great deal. One student from School B stated:

> My grandparents…I think that they just don't understand very much about other languages. They're a little scared by other languages. And I think I'm never going to be scared by a foreign language, because I already know one…Even if you have no idea what they're saying, if you know a foreign language you can start with the tones and the body language, and you get a general idea of…what they're trying to say.

Other interviewees also showed profound and detailed interest in other world languages. A student from School D was disappointed by the fact that he could not learn a second language in the immersion continuation program, stating, "I really wanted to learn French [because] I kind of wanted to live in southern France…like along the Mediterranean." He continued to say that he was also learning Hebrew, and that he would also be interested in Arabic. A student from School D who already knew English, Spanish, Mandarin and Cantonese, explained her choice to continue in learning French and Japanese: "I just like the little concept of knowing another language and another culture, so I'm studying French at my school right now. I just really enjoy learning other languages, I suppose." These two students had clearly already had ample opportunities to learn other languages through their exposure at home and during travel; this mimics the observable groupings in the quantitative data reflecting the *Interest in world languages* subscale.

I would argue that the students' positive and negative responses to my question on the students' interest in world languages seemed, in their detail and their vividness, to be more indicative of the students' integrativeness, that is, whether or not they were "[open] to taking on characteristics of another cultural or linguistic group," than the other two contributing variables (Gardner, 2005, p. 7). Two other important things are important to note here: these evidences of cross-cultural understanding in the immersion graduates were not explicitly linked with their experiences in immersion program, and their definitions of culture depend very much on an idea of the distinct nature of culture(s), rather than the relationships between cultures (Byram, 1997). Both of these issues come to bear in the next section of qualitative analysis.

Themes in immersion students' statements about culture

As the literature has shown, foreign language students have often had difficulty in expressing their understanding of the target culture(s), either due to true misunderstanding of the nature of culture, or due to the inherent challenge in addressing the topic of culture

in an articulate and sophisticated manner (Chavez, 2002). Nonetheless, researchers have long argued that identifying the origins of student attitudes and what Morgan (1993) called "pupil preconceptions" about culture can be key in understanding their perspectives on studying language and culture, and in ultimately counteracting misunderstandings (see Morgan, 1993; Dagenais, 2008). Therefore, an investigation of the themes that emerged from these immersion students' statements can help elucidate further the nature of their cross-cultural understanding, and suggest paths for future development.

Culture lessons from school.   The immersion graduates sometimes resorted to very simple definitions of culture, as suggested in the prior section of findings.   Perhaps the most simplistic cultural distinction made by the interviewees was that people from the target culture spoke the target language: "They don't really speak English" (School E). Many limited their definitions of cultural practices to the traditional foreign language student category of "holidays." As one student from School D said, as an explanation of how she learned about culture: "At [the elementary immersion program] we celebrated a lot of things like Cinco de Mayo, we had like big celebrations and stuff." A student from School E said: "You get to learn a lot about other cultures that you wouldn't learn a lot about normally at other schools. You learn about their holidays because it's Spanish holidays." Note that despite these students' many years of education in the target language, they still essentialized culture to mean language or celebrations of holidays.

Other students expanded their comments to cultural practices beyond celebrations and holidays. Several students referred to the target community's "daily routine" (School D) or "how they live with their Spanish lives…they have different lifestyles like different houses and jobs" (School E). A student from School C similarly stated: "When you learn a language you learn what they eat [and] how they do stuff. I know in France they walk a lot more than we do, like they'll walk to certain places a lot more." Importantly, this student attributed this knowledge to her participation in the immersion program: "I wouldn't have really known that, unless I was in the French program." These references to aspects of daily life in the target culture(s) mirrors "culture" as defined in the National Standards as "everyday life and social institutions" (ACTFL, 1999, p. 34). However, not every student made comments like this, and those that were made never addressed the rest of the ACTFL definition: "contemporary and historical issues that are important in those cultures, about significant works of literature and art, and about cultural attitudes and priorities" (1999, p. 34). One could argue that not all of these parts of the definition of culture can easily be addressed with elementary or early middle/junior high school students, but it is undeniable (and widely accepted by foreign language educators) that a knowledge of these other aspects of culture are crucial to developing cross-cultural understanding in the immersion students.

Culture lessons from travel. Students did have the opportunity to learn about the target culture(s) in another venue: that of a travel experience. Among the survey respondents, as Table 2 shows, 70.2% of the parents reported traveling outside of the United States with their child once or more, 3.8% reported living outside of the United States with their child,

and 16.8% reported that their child had traveled outside of the United States without them. Although there was some overlap among these groups, these statistics certainly suggest that most of the immersion graduates in my study had had some experience with traveling to other countries, although they did not necessarily always travel to countries where the student's immersion target language was spoken.

Some students made statements that showed a nuanced and varied insight into the nature of other cultures as a result of travel experiences. One student from School D had studied Hebrew in addition to Spanish, and, in speaking of his travels to Israel and his favorite schwarma stand, he shared:

> The thing I hate the most is tourist food. [In Israel], we were walking into [famous landmark] and I was really hungry, and we didn't have enough money for the schwarma, so we had to get some falafel and it was a real tourist falafel, and it tasted like crap…[You have to] always go to the center of the city.

This sophisticated understanding of culture and travel, not to mention the notion of cultural authenticity, was somewhat unique, but it showed that some immersion graduates were capable of developing interesting attitudes about culture in the course of their travels. Echoes of this can be identified in a statement made by a student from School C, who said, as an example of something that he had heard about from French-speaking aides: "…in some of the smaller towns [in France], they had shopping malls outside, like markets. It was cool because we don't really have many of those besides the Farmer's Market." His observation, paired with a direct contrast with American culture, indicates an insight into how life is lived in the other culture, as well as an indication of intercultural competence (Byram, 1997). Both of these quotes, although coincidentally centered around food, reflected an understanding of not just the products of the culture being visited (sandwiches, market products), but also the practices (going to the center of the city, shopping in markets). Even an understanding about perspectives on city and town life can be inferred from a reading of these statements.

However, travel experiences did not always give the immersion graduates added insight into the nature of the target culture(s). One student from School D stated that she wanted to travel because it was like "collecting a snow globe," where "you get all these different kinds of snow globes from different places, and you can see the difference. Some have brighter colors, and some are more modern or classical." This image suggests that, to this student, culture can be seen as isolated and unchanging, literally frozen in a snow globe. Students also often saw other cultures as problematic or dangerous, as a student from School E described his trip to Mexico thusly:

> The foods are very different…usually they'd have tacos, the cereal brands are different, their laws are different, like you can't drink energy drinks unless you're 18 there…Normally it's dangerous to walk outside your front door, and you have to keep

every door locked, even if you have a patio three stories high, you have to keep that locked, up there.

This student learned some idiosyncratic facts about the Mexican culture from his travels. His understanding of the culture was both a reflection of his perspective as an early adolescent with a favorite drink (energy drinks), and of the part of the country that he visited (the need for security in the city). He clearly focused on Mexican products (tacos, different cereal brands, energy drinks), and his observations about practices (different laws, necessary self-protection) showed little insight and considerable negativity. The idea of another culture being repressive as well as dangerous was carried over for a few other students in their travel experiences. A student from School E visited Mexico with her family and commented, "I noticed that the other kids rode in the back of trucks. And these people walk around in the streets selling things, it was weird, I was like, they're gonna get run over." Again, this student identified somewhat stereotypical Mexican products (pickup trucks, items sold in the streets) and a shallow and negative depiction of practices (riding in the back of trucks, selling things in the street). The idea of traveling in other cultures was a matter of visiting the Other, where differences were inevitable, with little attempt to develop or demonstrate understanding across cultures.

This qualitative investigation of students' received messages about culture reveals that many of the interviewees struggled with articulating sophisticated definitions of culture or describing complex components of the target culture, although their descriptions of what they learned about culture in school or from travel were not universally shallow or based on false assumptions. Furthermore, these data also call into question the assumption that respondents to the AMTB would have a similar and developed understanding of the nature of the target community and culture(s). I would argue that this assumption made by the AMTB might be problematic in a variety of settings beyond this study, given the difficulty of defining and identifying a construct like culture.

CONCLUSION

The variety of the responses given by the students in this study revealed several important implications for immersion education research and programs. The first research question guiding this study asked what examining these immersion graduates' L2 learning motivation might reveal about the development of their cross-cultural understanding. An important finding from the quantitative data was that students who had more exposure to other languages and cultures in their homes were significantly more likely to display the aspects of L2 learning motivation that were conceptually linked to cross-cultural understanding, particularly stronger interest in world languages. In the qualitative interviews, students generally demonstrated strong integrative orientations in their responses, also showing that their ability to develop relationships with members of the target culture(s) was an important aspect of their articulation of positive attitudes toward the target community. The students' responses to questions about their interests in world languages varied widely, however,

suggesting that it would be unwise to assume that all immersion graduates had developed the same type or intensity of cross-cultural understanding based on their educational experiences. The notion that immersion students all have a preexisting and foundational motivation and interest in the target culture(s) is also challenged by this finding.

The second research question addressed how the data collected through the student interviews compared to the data generated by the results of the Attitude/Motivation Test Battery. The fact that students' interest in world languages varied widely was reflected in both the quantitative and qualitative data. The qualitative data gave a more complete picture beyond the AMTB survey, revealing that the students in this study defined culture differently and with different levels of sophistication, thus calling into question the assumption made in the socio-educational model that culture would be defined consistently across a respondent group. Without observational data from the classroom, it is impossible to draw conclusions about classroom practice. Nonetheless, these data did seriously call into question whether or not the goal of cross-cultural understanding in immersion students was being reached by the schools included in this study, particularly since it seems that some of the students clearly struggled both with the identification and the interpretation of elements of the target culture(s).

This study sheds some light, but there is still a great deal more to be explored about the nature of culture learning in language immersion programs. Assuming that this study was able to capture at least some aspects of how these immersion graduates viewed culture, one can easily see that the issues involving culture instruction that have been faced by foreign language instructors in more traditional non-immersion environments still exist in immersion contexts. Advanced levels of language proficiency cannot be equated with advanced levels of cross-cultural understanding. The benefits of early language learning do not automatically translate into benefits of early culture learning. Beyond these findings, further research is needed. An important addition to this body of knowledge would be a curriculum analysis and observational data relating to what is currently included in immersion programs related to culture. It is impossible to say from these data if the issue is that culture is not adequately addressed by immersion teachers, or if the students, due to their developmental levels or their own backgrounds, are not learning the lessons as intended. Research can and should also investigate other methodologies for measuring immersion students' cross-cultural understanding, including allowing students to reflect on their culture knowledge through telling narratives, drawing pictures, or constructing metaphors. If immersion programs do sincerely believe in their stated goals that place cultural understandings alongside language, this work must be done.

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