

Abstract

This dissertation investigated the differences in Spanish achievement between Grade 8 students with and without pre-high school exposure to Spanish and the relationship between the students' home background, their individual characteristics and their performance in Spanish.

Quantitative methods were predominantly used to analyze the data but qualitative approaches were also used to provide in-depth perspectives, not achievable through quantitative methodology.

One of the major findings of the study revealed that the Grade 8 students with prior exposure to Spanish performed significantly better than their non-exposed peers in the Speaking, Reading and Writing Tests but not in the Listening Test.

A key conclusion of the study indicates, however, that with appropriate technology and methodology, teachers were able to significantly reduce the negative effects of a low Socio-economic Background (SEB) by equipping the non-exposed Spanish students with the ability to perform almost on par with the pre-exposed in the Listening component of the Spanish Achievement Test.

The most interesting finding of the study was that although the pre-exposed Spanish students significantly out-performed their non-exposed peers in the criterion measure, the superior performance of the students with prior exposure to

Spanish was linked to the differences in the Socio-economic Background (SEB) between the two groups.

It appears conclusive, therefore, that it is Socio-economic Background (SEB) and not Prior Exposure that is the central predictor of Spanish Achievement in this dissertation.