

A Comparison Study of Early and Late French Immersion Programs in British Columbia*

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This study compared the French language skills and attitudes of grade 7 early and late immersion students in three school districts in British Columbia. Statistical comparisons in each district revealed that only in one (District C) did early immersion students perform significantly higher than late immersion students in both French language arts and French comprehension. In the two other districts, early immersion students performed significantly higher than late immersion students in French comprehension but not in French language arts. Early and late immersion students in one district (District A) did not differ significantly on attitudinal measures, whereas in the two other districts early immersion students displayed significantly more positive attitudes to their schooling than their late immersion counterparts. The British Columbia results show some of the same variations that have been found in comparisons of early and late program options conducted elsewhere in Canada.

Cet article présente les conclusions d'une étude comparative des compétences linguistiques et des attitudes des élèves de 7^e année inscrits tôt ou plus tard dans des programmes d'immersion en français dans trois districts scolaires de la Colombie-Britannique. Des comparaisons statistiques au sein de chaque district révèlent que, dans un seul d'entre eux (district C), les élèves qui ont été inscrits tôt dans un programme d'immersion ont, par rapport aux élèves inscrits plus tard, des résultats nettement meilleurs tant pour ce qui est des arts du langage en français que de la compréhension du français. Dans les autres districts, les élèves inscrits tôt ont obtenu de bien meilleurs résultats que les élèves inscrits plus tard au niveau de la compréhension du français mais non des arts du langage en français. Dans un district (district A), il n'y avait pas de différences significatives quant aux attitudes entre les élèves inscrits tôt ou plus tard, tandis que dans les deux autres districts, les élèves inscrits tôt dans le programme d'immersion avaient des attitudes plus positives par rapport à leurs études que les élèves inscrits plus tard. Les résultats de cette étude réalisée en Colombie-Britannique corroborent certaines des différences dévoilées par des études entreprises ailleurs au Canada entre les élèves inscrits tôt ou plus tard dans des programmes.

In the last decade British Columbia has dramatically expanded second-language programs that teach all or a major part of the curriculum in

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French. Until 1976, early French immersion was the only option other than the basic French as a second language, and it was offered in only three of the province's seventy-five school districts. However, since then the number of school districts offering early immersion has risen to nearly forty, and late immersion programs have been introduced and are offered in approximately twenty school districts.¹ Enrolment in immersion programs at the elementary level has risen from under 1,000 in 1976 to nearly 20,000 students.

Because of this rapid growth, British Columbia's Ministry of Education contracted an evaluation study of immersion programs on a provincial level.² One objective of the provincial study was to compare the attitudes and French language skills of students enrolled in the early and late immersion programs at grade 7, the final year of elementary school in British Columbia. The *early immersion* program begins in kindergarten and offers 100% instruction in French from kindergarten through grade 2, 80% instruction in French in grade 3, and from 50 to 70% in grades 4 to 7. The *late immersion* program is a two-year program beginning in grade 6 offering from 60 to 100% instruction in French in grades 6 and 7. In secondary school (grades 8–12), both early and late immersion students are offered a follow-up program (secondary immersion), in which French is the language of instruction for 40 to 50% of the time.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Considerable research has been conducted on early and late immersion programs in many regions of Canada (e.g., in British Columbia, Shapson & Day, 1982a, 1982b; in Quebec, Genesee, 1978a, 1978–1979; in New Brunswick, Gray, 1981, 1985; and in Ontario, Swain & Lapkin, 1982). This research has consistently demonstrated that students in both programs (a) suffer no harm to their cognitive or native-language (English) development through being schooled in a second language; (b) master content subjects such as mathematics and science as well as their unilingually educated peers; and (c) develop high levels of French language skills.

Because each program has proven effective at enabling students to develop high levels of proficiency in French and at the same time to maintain normal academic progress, studies have also been undertaken to compare the levels of French language proficiency attained by students in the two programs. The relative effectiveness of the programs raises theoretical issues in second-language learning having to do with the supposed advantages of an early starting age and greater amounts of instructional time for achievement in a second language. The benefits of an early starting age have been debated extensively for several years (for reviews, see Genesee, 1978b;

Krashen, Long & Scarcella, 1979; Stern, 1976). However, empirical studies have uncovered little evidence of the superiority younger second language learners. They suggest on the contrary that older learners are quicker and more efficient because of their more advanced cognitive skills. Nevertheless, because research has also demonstrated a strong relationship between achievement and amount of time spent learning a second language (Carroll, 1975; Swain, 1978), many researchers have hypothesized that those who start earlier may ultimately be able to reach a higher level of language proficiency (Genesee, 1978b; Stern, 1976). Since early and late immersion programs differ in the starting age (age 5–6 years rather than 12–14 years) and in the number of years spent in immersion (12–13 years rather than 6–7 years), comparisons of outcomes of the two programs can shed light on this hypothesis.

Comparisons of the French language skills attained by students in early and late immersion programs have been conducted in the Protestant School Board of Greater Montreal (Genesee, 1978–1979; Genesee & Morcos, 1978), in the Ottawa and Carleton School Boards (Morrison, Walsh, Pawley, & Bonyun, 1979; Pawley & Walsh, 1980) and more recently in the provinces of Manitoba (CERCO [Centre for Research and Consultation], 1983) and New Brunswick (Lapkin & Swain, 1984).³ These comparisons involved students in grades 8 and 9 who had been enrolled in an early immersion program from kindergarten or grade 1, or in a late immersion program from grade 6 or 7. The results in Ottawa and Carleton revealed that grade 8 early immersion students were superior to their late immersion counterparts on all French language skills tested.⁴ In contrast, results in Montreal indicated that grade 8 and 9 early and late immersion students were equivalent on all French language skills except listening comprehension for one cohort of grade 9 students, where the differences favoured the early immersion students. Results in Manitoba and New Brunswick showed a disparity similar to that between Ottawa and Carleton and Montreal. Whereas grade 9 early immersion students in Manitoba were superior to their late immersion counterparts on most French language measures, grade 9 early immersion students in New Brunswick were superior only in listening comprehension.

To account for the disparity between the findings in Ottawa and Carleton and those in Montreal, Genesee (1984) has suggested that early immersion students in Montreal may not have had the advantage of an optimal program design. The activity-based instructional approach of Ottawa and Carleton and the higher percentage of French instructional time after grade 3 (i.e., 60–80% in grades 4 and 5, and 50% thereafter in Ottawa and Carleton, as opposed to 40% in Montreal) may be factors that have contributed to Ottawa and Carleton early immersion students' superiority over their late immersion counterparts. However, it is interesting to note that the New

Brunswick early immersion students also had received a high percentage of their instructional time in French after grade 3 (i.e., 85–90% in grades 4 to 6, and 50–60% in grades 7 and 8), and yet they were not superior to their late immersion counterparts on most French language measures—which suggests that instructional time alone may not be the critical variable.

In Ottawa and Carleton and Montreal, the relative benefits of early and late immersion programs were also investigated in the late secondary grades (grades 10 and 11). In Montreal, the two groups of students were comparable in their French language skills in grades 10 and 11 (Adiv, 1980). In Ottawa and Carleton (Morrison, Pawley & Bonyun, 1982), while one cohort of late immersion students still lagged behind their early immersion counterparts in grade 10, a subsequent cohort attained comparability on French language arts and writing in this grade. In addition, a recent study of grade 12 students in Ottawa and Carleton (Morrison & Pawley, 1985) revealed fewer differences between early and late immersion students as they approached the end of secondary school. In this study, early immersion students did better than their late immersion counterparts on a locally developed French Speaking Test, but were equivalent on listening, reading, dictation, and cloze tests developed by the University of Ottawa. The authors suggest that the instruments may not have been sensitive enough to capture the differences between the two groups of students. Thus, cohort variation and instrumentation bear on comparisons of early and late immersion, and the relative effectiveness of the two programs remains uncertain.

To date, most comparisons between early and late immersion programs have emphasized students' linguistic achievements. The affective and attitudinal outcomes of the two programs can also be compared. However, the little research that has been conducted in this area suggests no clear pattern of results. For example, although early immersion students in Manitoba (CERCO, 1983) did better than their late immersion counterparts on most French language tests, the two groups of students did not differ significantly in areas such as motivation for learning French, anxiety in using French, and attitudes toward French-speaking Canadians. On the other hand, although in New Brunswick (Lapkin & Swain, 1984) early immersion students were equivalent to late immersion students in most of their French language skills, they were clearly superior in such areas as self-perceptions of their ability in French and feelings of comfort and ease in using the language. Similar findings were reported in the early/late comparisons conducted in Peel County, Ontario (Lapkin, Swain, Kamin, & Hanna, 1983).

Because the findings of previous comparison studies to date were disparate, the study reported here was undertaken to determine the relative effectiveness of early and late immersion programs in the British Columbia context. In British Columbia, students have much less French second-

language instruction prior to entering late immersion than their counterparts in other regions of Canada (1–2 years as opposed to 5–6 years in Ottawa, Carleton, and Montreal). Financial considerations precluded collecting background data on the students (e.g., socioeconomic and cognitive abilities levels) and testing them for a wider range of language skills, in particular for oral communication skills.⁵

DESCRIPTION OF THE BRITISH COLUMBIA STUDY

The study was conducted in three school districts in British Columbia. These districts were the first in the province in which early and late immersion programs reached grade 7. The early immersion programs in the three districts were similar to one another in the percentage of instructional time in French they had offered in the primary grades (i.e., kindergarten through grade 2, 100%; grade 3, 80%), but they differed in the intermediate grades (grades 4–7), with one district (District A) offering 50% instructional time in French, another (District B), 60% and the third (District C), 70%. The three districts' late immersion programs offered the same amounts of instructional time in French in both grade 6 (100%) and grade 7 (80%).

Sample

The sampling included all schools (10) housing grade 7 early and late immersion programs in the three districts. The class sample for early immersion consisted of all classes (7) and for late immersion, of all classes in two districts and two out of three classes in one district (i.e., five out of six classes for the three districts).

Measurement Instruments

Test de Rendement en Français (Sec. Level 1, 1982–83)

This French language arts test was developed for grade 7 French-speaking children in Montreal by the Bureau de l'Évaluation, La Commission des Écoles Catholiques de Montréal. It is a 40-item paper and pencil test measuring a variety of French language arts skills including spelling, vocabulary, grammar, reading comprehension, and logical sequencing. Norms are available to make comparisons with Francophone children in Montreal, who are tested in November of the school year.

Test de Comprehension Auditive, Niveau A (revised 1978)

This test was designed by the Bilingual Education Project, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, to measure comprehension of French in “commu-

nicative" situations. It is a tape-administered test consisting of six passages recorded from radio broadcasts, interviews, and similar situations; the student listens to each passage and answers multiple-choice questions on it.

Student Opinions Scales (Kaufman, D., Shapson, S., & Day, E., 1982)

This instrument was originally developed for high school and university students studying French as a second language in summer immersion programs. The present study utilized the first section in a format altered slightly to suit younger students, and is composed of a series of five-point Likert-type items (28 in all) which form six sub-scales: attitudes toward French-speaking Canadians (8 items); attitudes toward English-speaking Canadians (5 items); attitudes toward bilingualism (6 items); motivation for learning French (4 items); anxiety about using French (4 items); and perceived understanding of French-Canadian culture (1 item). Most items were taken or adapted from existing scales and are used with permission of the authors (Clement, Smythe, & Gardner, 1976). Reliability coefficients (Cronbach's Alpha) were determined for the present study; the reliability coefficients for the total scale were 0.83 and 0.78 for the early and late immersion students, respectively.

Student Questionnaire

This questionnaire, which was designed for the present study, is composed of a combination of closed- and open-ended questions asking students about their use of French, their perceptions of their knowledge of French, reasons for learning French, and their satisfaction with the program and desire to continue.

Analysis

The analyses were conducted separately within each district in an attempt to validate the findings with three different groups of early and late immersion students. Mean raw scores and standard deviations were computed, and the performance of the early immersion students was compared statistically with that of the late immersion students in their districts on all measures. In addition, a two-way analysis of variance was conducted on the French language measures to examine the main effects of district and program.

RESULTS

French Language Skills

The performance of the early and late immersion students in each district on the French language measures is illustrated in Figure 1. Statisti-

cal comparisons of the mean scores indicated that early immersion students in only one of the districts (District C) performed significantly higher than late immersion students in their district in both French language arts ($t[1,41]=3.47, p<.001$) and French comprehension ($t[1,42]=4.05, p<.001$). Early immersion students in the two other districts (Districts A and B) also performed significantly higher than their late immersion counterparts in French comprehension (District A: $t[1,97]=2.75, p<.01$; District B: $t[1,85]=3.47, p<.001$).^e However, unlike those in District C, the early and late immersion students in these districts performed at a similar level in French language arts (District A: $t[1,96]=0.47$; District B: $t[1,88]=1.28$).⁶

The results of the two-way analysis of variance (see Table 1) revealed that overall there were a significant program effect, with early immersion programs superior to late immersion programs in both French language arts ($F=4.0, p<.05$) and French comprehension ($F=32.1, p<.001$). However, there was also a significant district effect on the French comprehension test ($F=21.3, p<.001$) and a significant program by district interaction on the French language arts test ($F=4.4, p<.01$).

Attitudes and Opinions

The performance of the early and late immersion students in each of the districts was compared on the Student Opinions Scales (see Table 2). Student attitude scores were positive in all three districts: mean scores on the total scale ranged from 2.19 to 2.36 for the early immersion students and from 2.34 to 2.54 for the late immersion students (on a 5-point scale, with 1 as the positive end and 5 as the negative end). On individual scales, early and late immersion students in all three districts were most positive in their attitudes toward bilingualism and in their motivation to learn French (see Table 2).

Comparisons between the performance of the early and late immersion students in the three districts indicated that early immersion students in Districts B and C were significantly more positive in their attitudes toward bilingualism, their understanding of French-Canadian culture, their anxiety in using French (District B only), and on the total scale of the Student Opinions instrument. The early and late immersion students in District A did not differ significantly on the individual scales or on the total scale.

Student Questionnaire

Results of comparisons between early and late immersion students on the questions how well they felt they could speak, understand, read, and write

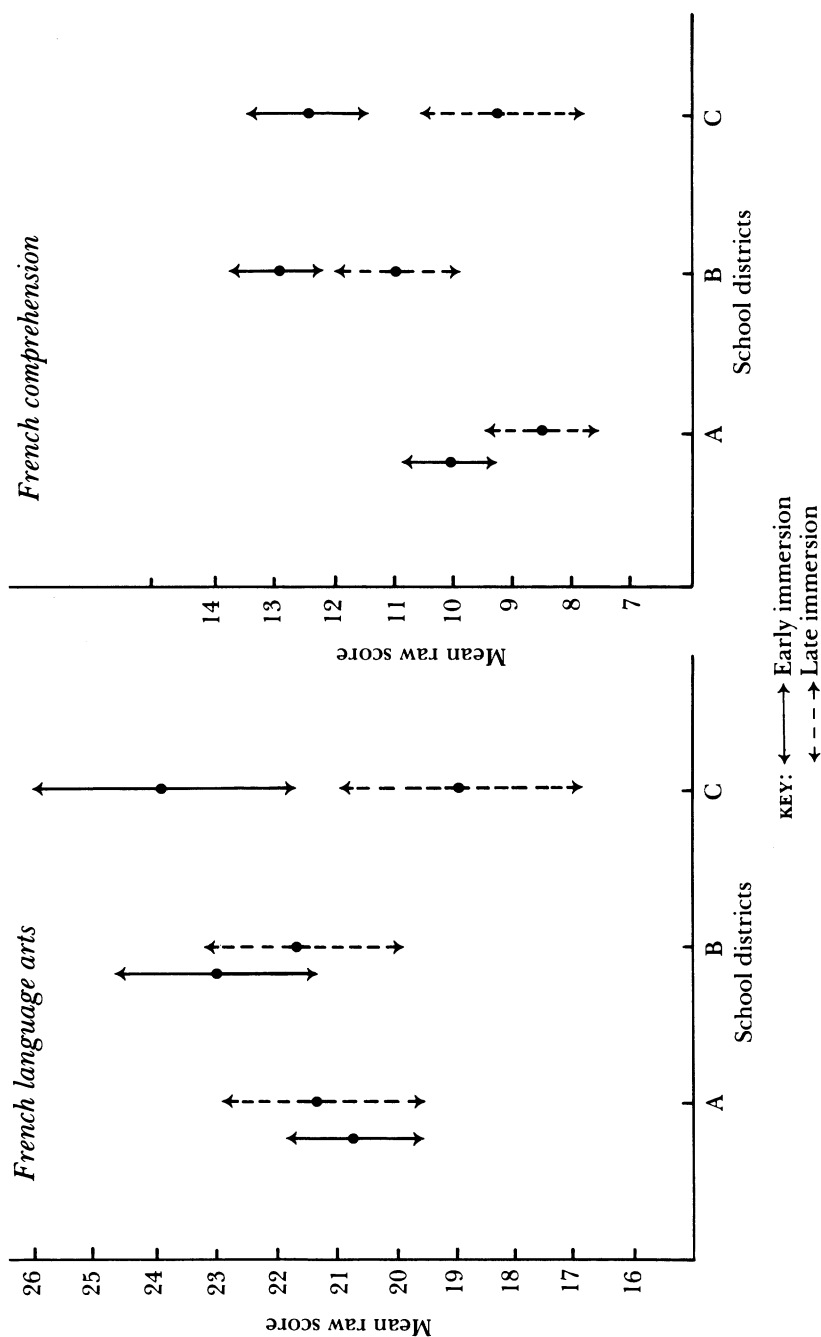


FIGURE 1

Grade 7 Early and Late Immersion: Mean Raw Scores and 95% Confidence Intervals on French Language Measures

TABLE 1
Results of the Two-way Analysis of Variance on the French Language Measures

<i>Effects</i>	<i>French Language Arts</i>			<i>French Comprehension</i>		
	<i>df</i>	<i>Mean Square</i>	<i>F-value</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Mean Square</i>	<i>F-value</i>
Program	1	105.7	4.0*	1	246.8	32.1***
District	2	43.0	1.6 ^{n.s.}	2	163.6	21.3***
Program x District	2	115.2	4.4**	2	10.6	1.4 ^{n.s.}
Within	225	26.5		224	7.7	

n.s. = not significant

* Significant at the .05 level.

** Significant at the .01 level.

*** Significant at the .001 level.

French also appear in Table 2. Both early and late immersion students rated their language skills quite highly, with means ranging from 1.36 to 2.11 (on a 4-point scale where 1 equals "fluently" and 4 means "not at all" fluently). Comparisons between the two groups of students indicated significant differences in favour of early immersion students in Districts A and B in ratings of ability to speak French, and in Districts B and C in the ratings of ability to understand French. However, there were no significant differences in any of the districts in student ratings of their ability to read and write French.

The results of remaining questions on the Student Questionnaire, which assessed the students' use in French, their opinions of the program, and their desire to continue in French immersion, indicated a similar pattern of results for all three districts. In all districts, English was the language first learned and the language most often spoken in the home for the great majority of early and late immersion students. There were no significant differences between ratings given by early and late immersion students to the question asking why they thought it was important for them to learn French. All students rated the following as the most important reasons for learning French: "It will be useful when visiting places where French is spoken" and "It will be useful in getting a good job some day." In addition, all students appeared to be enthusiastic about their immersion experience. When asked whether they would recommend a French immersion program to a friend, the majority of early and late immersion students said they would. The majority also indicated they would like to continue in a French immersion program in the following year.

TABLE 2
*Comparisons Between the Performance of Early and Late Immersion Students in Three School Districts:
 Student Opinions Scales and Students' Self-Rating of their Knowledge of French*

	District A				District B				District C			
	Early Mean Rating	Late Mean Rating	t-value		Early Mean Rating	Late Mean Rating	t-value		Early Mean Rating	Late Mean Rating	t-value	
<i>Student Opinions Scales^a</i>												
Attitudes toward French-speaking Canadians (8 items)	2.52	2.46	0.50 n.s.		2.65	2.66	0.14 n.s.		2.45	2.52	0.50 n.s.	
Attitudes toward English-speaking Canadians (5 items)	2.82	2.75	0.56 n.s.		2.79	2.89	0.90 n.s.		2.82	3.00	1.13 n.s.	
Attitudes toward bilingualism (6 items)	1.98	1.86	1.09 n.s.		1.91	2.17	2.47*		1.58	1.89	2.44**	
Motivation to learn French (4 items)	2.06	1.84	1.34 n.s.		2.00	2.02	0.11 n.s.		1.85	1.71	0.87 n.s.	
Anxiety about using French (4 items)	2.38	2.59	1.22 n.s.		2.02	2.71	3.97***		2.15	2.59	1.84 n.s.	
Perceived understanding of French-Canadian culture (1 item)	2.52	2.78	1.65 n.s.		2.53	3.13	3.17**		2.36	3.18	3.30**	
TOTAL SCALE (28 items)	2.36	2.34	0.27 n.s.		2.34	2.54	2.77**		2.19	2.40	2.15*	

(continued next page)

TABLE 2 continued
*Comparisons Between the Performance of Early and Late Immersion Students in Three School Districts:
 Student Opinions Scales and Students' Self-Rating of their Knowledge of French*

	District A				District B				District C			
	Early		Late		Early		Late		Early		Late	
	Mean	Rating	Mean	Rating	Mean	Rating	Mean	Rating	Mean	Rating	Mean	Rating
				t-value				t-value				t-value
<i>Student Self-Ratings^b of Knowledge of French</i>												
How well do you feel you:												
Speak French?	1.68	1.93		2.87**	1.58	1.91		3.15**	1.86	2.00		1.40 n.s.
Understand French?	1.66	1.82		1.65 n.s.	1.36	1.85		4.69***	1.67	2.05		2.88 n.s.
Read French?	1.94	2.11		1.49 n.s.	1.82	1.91		0.74 n.s.	1.81	2.00		1.32 n.s.
Write French?	1.89	1.96		0.72 n.s.	1.82	2.03		1.67 n.s.	1.90	2.09		1.26 n.s.

n.s. = not significant

* Significant at the .05 level.

** Significant at the .01 level.

*** Significant at the .001 level.

^a The Student Opinions Scales are based on a five-point scale with 1 as the positive end and 5 as the negative end. A lower mean rating indicates more positive findings.

^b Based on a four-point scale, where 1 = Fluently, 2 = Fairly well, 3 = A little, and 4 = Not at all.

However, late immersion students in two districts (A and C) were more willing to speak French in their home and outside of school than their early immersion counterparts. Over half of the late immersion students, compared to less than half of the early immersion students, reported that they "occasionally," "frequently," or "always" spoke French at home (District A, 78% vs. 47%; District C, 64% vs. 48%) or with French-speaking people outside of school (District A, 56% vs. 45%; District C, 55% vs. 38%). In addition, a greater percentage of late than of early immersion students in Districts A and B (District A, 58% vs. 39%; District B, 43% vs. 15%) reported that they would like to be able to speak French more often with French-speaking people outside of school.

SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

Comparisons between early and late immersion programs in three British Columbia school districts showed variations that also have been found in other Canadian comparisons of the two program options (e.g., in Manitoba, CERCO, 1983; in Montreal, Genesee & Morcos, 1978; in New Brunswick, Lapkin & Swain, 1984; and in Ottawa and Carleton, Morrison et al., 1979). The findings in one district (District C) paralleled the Manitoba and the Ottawa and Carleton findings in showing the superiority of early over late immersion students in their French language skills. The findings in the two other districts (Districts A and B) paralleled the New Brunswick and Montreal findings, where early immersion students were equivalent to their late immersion counterparts on most French language skills, but maintained superiority in listening comprehension (in Montreal, for one cohort of grade 9 students only).

As was the case with the linguistic measures, comparisons of the performance of the early and late immersion students on the attitudinal and opinions measures also were not consistent for the three districts. Early immersion students in one district (District A) did not differ significantly from late immersion students on the individual scales or on the total scale of the Student Opinions instrument. However, the early immersion students in the two other districts (B and C) were significantly more positive than the late immersion students in the same districts in their attitudes toward bilingualism and understanding of French-Canadian culture, and showed more anxiety in using French (District B only).

Early immersion students in two districts rated their ability to speak French (Districts A and B) and their ability to understand French (Districts B and C) more highly than their late immersion counterparts, but late immersion students in Districts A and C were more willing to use French in their homes and outside of school. Early immersion students also rated

their linguistic skills more highly than their late immersion counterparts in New Brunswick (Lapkin & Swain, 1984) and in Peel County, Ontario (Lapkin, Swain, Kamin, & Hanna, 1983). Further research would show whether these perceptions result in better French language development and in increased use of French in and outside of school. Previous research (Gardner & Lambert, 1972; Gardner, Smythe, Clement, & Gliksmann, 1976) suggests that affective and attitudinal variables should be given more consideration in weighing the effectiveness of the two programs.

Research on early and late language learning has provided much evidence of late language learners' abilities to attain levels in their second language equivalent to those who start early. Although late immersion students in two districts in this study were able to catch up to their early immersion counterparts in French language arts, they were not able to do so in French listening comprehension. It is possible that this skill develops more slowly than other language skills. If so, late immersion students may attain equivalence with their early immersion counterparts in future grades. However, it is also possible that the development of this skill is so closely related to the amount of instructional time in the second language that the early immersion students may always maintain their advantage. It is interesting that listening comprehension was the only advantage retained by early as compared to late language learners in a study of French second-language programs in Great Britain (Burstall, Jamieson, Cohen & Hargreaves, 1974). Comparisons of the linguistic levels attained by early and late immersion students at the end of secondary school would shed more light on this question.

While considerable research has been conducted on student performance, relatively little is known about how immersion programs operated in practice. Variations in the findings of comparisons between early and late immersion programs across Canada suggest that detailed investigations be conducted especially to examine intervening programs and instructional factors that contribute to the relative effectiveness of these two program options.

NOTES

¹ French immersion programs are intensive second-language programs designed for Anglophone students. A separate program for Francophone students, the *programme-cadre de français* (minority language program), is also offered in many school districts in the province. In this program, French is the only language of instruction except for time given to English language arts, and the curriculum parallels the prescribed English core curriculum.

² This project included surveys of parents, teachers, and administrators; instrument development; and collection of normative data on French language skills

of grade 3 early and grade 7 early and late immersion students. The survey results are presented in Day & Shapson (1983), and the test results in Shapson & Day (1984).

³ The Protestant School Board of Greater Montreal offers a one-year and a two-year late immersion program beginning in grade 7. Only the findings of the two-year program are discussed in this review because this program's format is more consistent with that of others discussed.

⁴ Comparisons of early immersion students with late immersion students who had begun their immersion experience somewhat later than those reviewed (i.e., grade 8 vs. grade 6 or 7) were also conducted in Ontario's Peel County by Lapkin, Swain, Kamin, & Hanna (1983). These comparisons, too, revealed consistent differences in favor of the early immersion students.

⁵ Since this study was conducted, a French Speaking Test for grade 7 immersion students has been developed under contract to the British Columbia Ministry of Education (Day, Shapson, & Rivet, 1985) in preparation for a more comprehensive study of early and late immersion programs to be undertaken in the future.

⁶ Comparisons of the results on the French language arts test with the norms for native French-speaking students in Montreal indicated that all groups of British Columbia students performed in a similar percentile equivalent range (i.e., 24th to 39th percentile range) except for the late immersion students in District C, who performed in a lower range (i.e., 11th to 23rd percentile range). The results of item analyses conducted on this test revealed that early and late immersion students in all three districts tended to perform less well on the items measuring vocabulary and reading than on those measuring technical skills and grammar. Although it was not possible to compare directly the performance of the immersion students with that of the Francophone students in the norming group, the results suggest that there may be considerable room for growth in the vocabulary and reading skills of both the early and the late immersion students if they are to attain comparability with native French speakers.

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In diesem Artikel werden die Ergebnisse einer Studie vorgestellt, die die französischen Sprachfähigkeiten und die Einstellung von Schülern der 7. Klasse in drei Schulbezirken in British Columbia, die a) frühzeitig und b) später in die vertieften Unterrichtsprogramme aufgenommen wurden, vergleicht. Statistische Vergleiche in jedem Bezirk zeigten, daß nur in einem Bezirk (Bezirk C) früh teilnehmende Schüler bedeutend höhere Leistungen als später hinzukommende Schüler aufwiesen, und zwar sowohl in französischer Sprachfertigkeit als auch im Sprachverständnis. In den beiden anderen Bezirken zeigten früh teilnehmende Schüler bedeutend höhere Leistungen im französischen Sprachverständnis als ältere Schüler, nicht jedoch in der Sprachfertigkeit. In einem Bezirk (Bezirk A) unterschieden sich jüngere und ältere Schüler nicht wesentlich bei der Untersuchung ihrer Einstellung, wogegen in den beiden anderen Bezirken Schüler, die bereits seit einem frühen Zeitpunkt an dem Programm teilnehmen, eine positivere Haltung zu ihrer Unterrichtsform zeigten, als die, die sich erst zu einem späteren Zeitpunkt dem Programm anschlossen. Die Ergebnisse aus British Columbia zeigen einige derselben Variationen, die man auch in Vergleichen der frühen und späten Programm-Optionen, die andernorts in Kanada durchgeführt wurden, gefunden hat.

Este artículo presenta los descubrimientos de un estudio comparativo de las habilidades y actitudes en relación con la lengua francesa de los estudiantes del 7o. Grado inmersos tempranamente y tardamente en el programa de francés en tres escuelas de distritos diferentes en Columbia Británica. Comparaciones estadísticas en cada distrito revelaron que sólo en uno (distrito C) los estudiantes inmersos tempranamente en el programa desempeñaron un papel significativamente más alto en ambos, arte de la lengua francesa y comprensión del francés, que los estudiantes inmersos tardamente en el programa. En los otros dos distritos los estudiantes inmersos tempranamente en el programa desempeñaron un papel significativamente más alto que los inmersos tardamente en el programa en la comprensión del francés más no en artes de la lengua francesa. En un distrito (distrito A) los estudiantes inmersos en ambos programas no difirieron significativamente en medidas de actitud, mientras en los otros dos distritos los estudiantes inmersos tempranamente en el programa demostraron significativamente una actitud más positiva en el aprendizaje que la de los estudiantes inmersos tardamente en el programa. Los resultados en Columbia Británica muestran algunas de las mismas variaciones que se han encontrado en las comparaciones de las opciones de la temprana y tardía inmersión realizadas en otras partes de Canadá.

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