

The FLES Attitudinal Inventory

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Abstract: *This study investigated attitudinal changes experienced by elementary students studying a second language and presents the development of an attitudinal assessment instrument, its reliability, and a summary of findings from initial administrations of the inventory. The primary purpose of this study was to compare attitudinal differences between elementary students (K-5) involved in a regular Foreign Language in the Elementary Schools (FLES) program with their peers who were not provided with additive foreign language curriculum. Results from the study showed that students participating in FLES programs had positive attitudes relating to school, perceived difficulty in language acquisition, perceived desirability of foreign language study, cultural views, and student self-esteem and confidence levels in relation to their academic achievement in comparison with their non-FLES peers. The conclusions of this study suggest that FLES programs provide students with improved motivation to participate, to persist, and to succeed in second language study.*

Introduction

The FLES (Foreign Language in the Elementary Schools) Attitudinal Inventory, created in 1996, underwent a two-year testing period and was administered to 569 students from three elementary schools located in northern Idaho and eastern Washington. This attitudinal assessment instrument was designed to assess changes in the way students view school, second language learning, different cultures, and their personal academic achievement. The test was designed to be administered at various times during the school year to students enrolled in foreign language programs as well as those who are not. Student attitudes have been shown to affect their behavior in school because students with more positive attitudes are more likely to participate in class and take a more active role in their learning (Gardner et al. 1976; Mantle-Bromley 1995; Spolsky 1969). Many studies have described the academic, cultural, and economic advantages of bilingualism (Chapman and Haas 1987-88; Genesee 1996; Hakuta 1986; Hakuta and Pease-Alvarez 1992; Statzner 1987-88). Some studies have examined affective variables in relation to second language study, concluding that success in language acquisition is related to the learner's atti-

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