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# L'Italiano a Miami: An Investigation of the Current Status of the Teaching and Learning of the Italian Language in Miami and of Students' Motivational Factors

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FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY

Miami, Florida

L'ITALIANO A MIAMI: AN INVESTIGATION OF THE CURRENT  
STATUS OF THE TEACHING AND LEARNING OF THE ITALIAN LANGUAGE IN  
MIAMI AND OF STUDENTS' MOTIVATIONAL FACTORS

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment

of the requirements of the degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE

in

CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

by

Antonella La Tegola

2015

To: Dean Delia C. Garcia  
College of Education

This thesis, written by Antonella la Tegola, and entitled L'Italiano a Miami: An Investigation of the Current Status of the Teaching and Learning of the Italian Language in Miami and of Students' Motivational Factors, having been approved in respect to style and intellectual content, is referred to you for judgment.

We have read this thesis and recommend that it be approved.

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Sarah Mathews

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Aixa Perez-Prado

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Eric Dwyer, Major Professor

Date of the Defense: June 10, 2015

The thesis of Antonella La Tegola is approved.

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Dean Delia C. Garcia  
College of Education

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Dean Lakshmi N. Reddi  
University Graduate School

Florida International University, 2015

## DEDICATION

Dedico questa tesi ai miei genitori, Antonio e Rosa La Tegola, che per anni hanno partecipato alle vicende della mia vita condividendone in pieno sia i momenti felici che quelli più duri, e che hanno sempre creduto in me. Il loro sostegno e amore mi hanno permesso di raggiungere molte mete, e quest'ultima é dedicata a loro.

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ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

L'ITALIANO A MIAMI: AN INVESTIGATION OF THE CURRENT  
STATUS OF THE TEACHING AND LEARNING OF THE ITALIAN LANGUAGE  
IN MIAMI AND OF STUDENTS' MOTIVATIONAL FACTORS

by

Antonella La Tegola

Florida International University, 2015

Miami, Florida

Professor Eric Dwyer, Major Professor

The purpose of this thesis was to investigate the current status of the study of Italian in Miami and particularly to identify the motivational factors behind student enrollment in local Italian programs. A qualitative study was carried out based on interviews with the local director of “Società Dante Alighieri” and four students studying Italian in two different settings. Gardner and Lambert’s (1959) concepts of instrumental and integrative motivation and the motivation components identified by Csizér and Dörnyei (2005) provided the conceptual framework for this study.

According to the information obtained from the five participants the study of Italian in Miami is mostly linked to integrative motivation and particularly to the motivation components referred by Csizér and Dörnyei as “attitude toward the L2 speakers/community” and “culture interest”. These findings are in line with previous research that linked the study of Italian in the United States to cultural and ethnic factors related to integrative motivation.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. INTRODUCTION .....	1
Purpose of the Study .....	2
Significance of the Study .....	3
Research Questions .....	4
Conceptual Framework .....	4
Methodology .....	6
Definition of Key Terms .....	7
Delimitations .....	9
Overview of Chapters .....	9
II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE .....	10
Italian from the Colonial Times to the Civil War .....	12
Italian at the Time of the Italian Immigration .....	15
The First Half of the 20 <sup>th</sup> Century .....	18
Italian in the 1960s .....	20
Present Status of Italian in the United States .....	22
The First Italians in Florida: From New Orleans to Tampa .....	24
Italian Communities in Florida .....	26
Motivation in Language Learning .....	29
III. METHODOLOGY .....	32
Scientific Background and Literature Review .....	33
Research Objectives .....	35
Subject Population and Recruitment .....	36
Obtaining Informed Consent .....	38
Methods and Activities .....	41
Confidentiality and Privacy .....	45
Summary .....	46
IV. ANALYSIS OF DATA .....	47
Answers to Research Questions .....	47
Italian Programs in Miami .....	48
Participants in Italian Programs and their Motivations .....	53
Reasons Reported by Four students .....	56
Instrumentality .....	60
Attitude toward the L2 Speakers/Community .....	62
Culture Interest .....	63
Milieu .....	64
Linguistic Self-Confidence .....	65
Affective Factors .....	66
Summary .....	67

V.	SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS .....	69
	The Current Status of the Study of Italian in Miami .....	70
	Local Programs of Italian.....	72
	The Local Community and the Study of Italian.....	74
	People’s Motivations for Studying Italian in Miami .....	75
	Conclusion .....	78
	REFERENCES.....	80
	APPENDICES.....	82



# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

The study of foreign languages has been holding an important role in the United States since the start of the new millennium. Despite a more recent decline registered in 2013, according to previous surveys carried out by the Modern Language Association in 2006 and 2009, enrollment in foreign languages has been on the rise in this country, particularly at the secondary level. Italian is presently ranked in the fifth place among the foreign languages studied in the United States after Spanish, French, American Sign Language, and German. Macchiarella (1993) attributes the diffusion of Italian in this country particularly to two factors: (a) Italian as language related to arts, music, culture, as well as culinary tradition, and (b) Italian as an important “community language” (as cited in Mason, 1997, p. 518).

The continued efforts made by a number of Italian organizations to reevaluate Italian culture and to promote the language in the United States also pertain to Florida, and particularly to Miami. Demographic information indicates that the population in Florida is characterized by the fifth highest percentage of Italian Americans in the United States ([www.niaf.org](http://www.niaf.org)). Italian ancestry is also part of the multicultural fabric of the population of Miami, a city that is also home to a large Latin American and Caribbean population of Italian descent and a transient place of recent Italian expatriation. Consequently, the connection between Italian and the local community is particularly vibrant and the study of the language holds an important status locally among other foreign languages.

As noted above, historically, the study of Italian in this country has been linked both to cultural and ethnic factors (Adorno, 1996; Cardasco, 2001; Fucilla, 1967). This study investigated how these factors apply to the local community and to people's interest in studying Italian. Identifying the motivational factors behind student enrollment in Italian programs in this area and defining local student perception of Italian as a heritage or as a second language can provide useful information on the population interested in the study of Italian in Miami and indications on the future of the Italian programs in this city.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to investigate the current status of the study of the Italian language in Miami and particularly to identify the motivational factors behind student enrollment in Italian programs locally. A qualitative study was carried out based on interviews with five participants, the local director of "Società Dante Alighieri", an Italian cultural organization that works with the Italian government towards the diffusion of the Italian culture and the maintenance of the Italian language abroad, and four students, two enrolled in the Italian language programs offered by Società Dante Alighieri, and two studying Italian in a local private high school, as part of their foreign language requirement. The responses obtained during the interviews were analyzed and interpreted in this study, in order to provide a description of the current status of the study of Italian in Miami through the perspectives offered by the five participants.

## **Significance of the Study**

The study of the Italian language holds an important status among other foreign languages in Miami. My personal experience can also confirm the positive perception that there is of the Italian culture and language locally, as there seems to be an undeniable mutual attraction between this city and Italians. I am Italian, and I have been living in Miami for several years. During this time, I have had the opportunity to meet people from different parts of Italy who travel frequently to Miami for business or pleasure, or who have come to live in this city for various reasons. Similarly, I have realized how Americans living in Miami also welcome their opportunities to visit Italy for work or tourism and how, as a consequence, they become interested in learning more about its culture. I also became aware of the undeniable important role that the Italian language has in these exchanges.

When trying to support my observations with existing documents, however, I found limited research conducted on the status of the Italian language in Florida and in Miami. While some studies have been conducted on the status of the language in the country and particularly on its connection with the history of the Italian immigration to the United States, this topic has not been explored so far from a local perspective. In addition, I have not found any specific study on the motivational factors to study Italian in the United States. The absence of studies on the status of the Italian language in a local context generated in me a spontaneous interest in this topic, to which I feel strongly connected due to my Italian heritage and personal connection with this community. By obtaining more specific results on the local population interested in studying Italian and

on student motivations, I hope therefore to provide valuable information that can be used to assess the existing Italian curricula or to create new programs in the future.

### **Research Questions**

The central research question guiding this study was: What is the current status of the study of the Italian language in Miami?

The research question was broken down into the following sub-questions:

1. What Italian language programs are offered in Miami, including those offered by Società Dante Alighieri, according to the Director of this cultural organization?
2. According to the Director of the Società Dante Alighieri in Miami, who participates in those programs and what motivates them to participate?
3. What reasons do four Miami students who are studying in two different settings give for studying Italian?

### **Conceptual Framework**

This study refers to the concepts of *integrative* and *instrumental motivation* introduced by Gardner and Lambert (1959) when investigating the motivational factors bringing local students to learn Italian. According to these researchers, there are two kinds of motivation that strongly impact language acquisition: integrative and instrumental. Integrative motivation applies to the learner's desire to identify with the target culture when learning a language, while instrumental motivation refers to the need to fulfill a practical or professional obligation. The cultural and ethnic factors that

motivate people to learn Italian in the United States are strongly related to integrative motivation and can be interpreted according to Gardner and Lambert's concept.

Motivation has been extensively studied since the initial conceptualization offered by Gardner and Lambert, and in an important work conducted by Csizér and Dörnyei (2005) additional components were introduced that particularly pertain to integrative motivation: attitude towards second language speakers, cultural interest, vitality of the second language community, milieu, and linguistic self-confidence. These motivational constituents were also referred to in this study when analyzing student responses in the interviews.

As previously mentioned, historically the study of Italian in the United States has been linked to cultural and ethnic factors (Adorno, 1996, Cardasco, 2001, Fucilla 1967). This connection appears to indicate the prevalence of integrative motivation in the study of Italian in this country. Referring to the above mentioned theoretical works on motivation was particularly relevant to this study, both to find out if instrumental motivation also applies to the interest of local students who study Italian and to investigate in more detail how the prevalence of integrative factors that appear to drive the study of Italian in the United States apply to a local context. An investigation of the motivational factors that bring students to study Italian in Miami was carried out in order to provide a description of the status of the local study of the language, thus fulfilling the main purpose of this study.

## Methodology

The methodology used for gathering and analyzing the information needed to answer the research questions in this study was qualitative research. To provide an answer for the first two sub-questions, an in-depth interview was conducted with Claudio Pastor, the director of Società Dante Alighieri in Miami, discussing, among several topics, Italian programs offered locally, Italian courses organized by Società Dante Alighieri, the local population attracted to the study of Italian, and his perception of the reasons why people study the language in this community. To answer the third sub-question, semi-structured interviews were conducted with four students studying Italian in two different types of institutions in Miami: Società Dante Alighieri and a private high school. During the interviews the students were asked a set of questions related to their experiences with the study of Italian and their particular reasons for learning the language.

The information gathered during the in-depth interview with the director of Società Dante Alighieri is presented in a narrative. The patterns of ideas emerging from the student answers during the semi-structured interviews were analyzed and interpreted through coding, using the “Three Cs of Data Analysis: Codes, Categories, Concepts” suggested by Lichtman (2013). This study was interested in discovering if the students’ interest for the language derives from an attraction to the Italian culture or the possibility of using the language in their profession. The concepts of *instrumental* and *integrative motivation* introduced by Gardner and Lambert (1959) and the motivational components suggested by Csizér and Dörnyei (2005) provided a referral for the analysis and interpretation of the students’ answers. The meaningful data gathered during the

interviews were used to answer the research question and to describe the current status of the study of the Italian language in Miami through the point of view of the five participants.

### **Definition of Key Terms**

The following key terms were employed in this study:

Advanced Placement (AP) A program existing in the United States and Canada created by the College Board, an American private non-profit corporation, which offers college-level curricula and examinations to high school students. There are presently 37 courses and exams available through the AP Program, including “Italian language and culture” (apcentral.collegeboard.com).

American Referring, in this study, to the United States of America or its inhabitants, as opposed to the alternative meaning “relating to North or South America of the Western Hemisphere” (“American,” n.d.).

Instrumental motivation Gardner and Lambert (1959) define instrumental motivation as the aim to study a language for reasons that “reflect the more utilitarian value of linguistic achievement” (p. 267).

Integrative motivation As defined by Gardner and Lambert (1959), integrative motivation refers to the aim to study a language in order “to learn more about the language group, or to meet more and *different* people” (p. 267).

International Baccalaureate The International Baccalaureate® (IB) is a non-profit educational foundation offering four programs of international education aimed at developing in students “the intellectual, personal, emotional and social skills needed to

live, learn and work in a rapidly globalizing world” (www.ibo.org). Schools all over the world must be authorized by the IB organization in order to offer any of the programs.

L2 Acronym generally used to indicate *second language*. Luria, Seymour & Smoke (2006) define *second language* as the *nonprimary* and *nonnative* language of a speaker.

As far as language learning a second language is different than a foreign language.

Second language learning “refers to language learning in the environment where the language is spoken”, whereas foreign language learning “refers to learning the language in one’s ‘home’ environment” (Luria et al., p. 44). Luria et al. (2006) do not make this distinction when using the term “second language”, as “the processes involved in learning a nonnative language are not dependent on the location of learning” (p.44). In this study the term *second language (L2)* is also used in this broad sense.

Standard Italian Defined by specialists and in particular referred by Marongiu (2007) as “the literate and formal variety of Italian, developed from the Italian literate tradition”.

Standard Italian also commonly indicates “the national and the official language of the Italian nation, used in administrative and legal documents as well as in formal speech” (p. 114).

Ufficio Scolastico Education office of the Italian Consulate, headed by its own director.

The purpose of the Education Office is to promote the teaching of the Italian

Language, overseeing the implementation of programs of Italian in select public schools

in Miami and in Florida in accordance with agreements between the Consulate General of

Italy in Miami and The School Board of Miami-Dade County.



## **Delimitations**

This study focuses on presenting a general description of the status of the study of the language in this city and reasons behind it, but it does not offer a detailed description of all the courses of Italian in this city, nor does take into account specific curricula and teaching methods. The participants in this study were limited to the Director of Società Dante Alighieri, a cultural organization working with the Italian government in areas concerning the teaching and diffusion of the Italian language in Miami, and to four students studying Italian in two different settings. This study can open up possibilities for further research, for example examining specific aspects of the teaching of the Italian language, involving the adaptation of teaching methods of Italian to the motivational factors reported by the students. These aspects were not taken into account in this study.

## **Overview of Chapters**

Chapter I of this thesis explains the purpose and significance of this study, introduces the research question, and presents the conceptual framework, methodology and delimitations of the research. Chapter II includes a literature review of works carried out so far on the study of Italian in the United States and of the studies on motivation in second language acquisition that offer the theoretical framework for this study. Chapter III presents a detailed explanation of the methodology used in this research. Chapter IV presents the results of this study. Finally, Chapter V includes a summary and personal conclusions derived from this study.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A review of literature on the status of the Italian language in Florida reveals a relative scarcity of material particularly pertaining to this state, thus bringing one to examine this topic from a broader perspective that relates it to a national context. Connecting the Italian-American community in Florida and local people's relationship with the Italian language to the history and the demographics of the Italian language in rest of the Unites States provides an effective approach. Gaining an insight on the general status of the Italian language in this country offers a perspective that can be applied to the local context that this study takes into examination.

The studies in this literature review generally show two main trends concerning the study and diffusion of the Italian language in this country that were historically predominant until the first half of the 20th century: 1) the role of Italian as language of education, vehicle to the study of literature, sciences and art, established its study as a foreign language in the curricula of the oldest universities in the country since the mid-19th century; and 2) the gradual immigration of more than five million Italian citizens looking for a new life in North America starting from the 1880s introduced to this country Italian language in its vernacular forms, including mostly southern dialects, quickly blended with the newly acquired English necessary for integration. The impulse towards the study of standard Italian starting from the 1960s placed the language on a middle ground between its academic and its spoken and vernacular forms that had existed in the United States until then. It is at this time that the study and defense of the Italian

language acquired an important role in the United States, establishing it at the fifth place among the other foreign languages studied in this country.

This review presents the status of the Italian language in the United States both from a historical and from a sociological point of view. In the first part it describes the presence of Italian in this country from a chronological perspective. It begins by illustrating the role of Italian as language of education from the colonial times to the Civil War and continues by presenting the Italian immigration movement to the United States as the modifying agent that caused the role of Italian to change from language of culture to an instrument for everyday communication in the Italian-American communities. The status of Italian during the first half of the 20th century is presented subsequently, emphasizing its changing fortune from World War I to World War II. The chronological review follows with a description of the role of Italian in the United States in the 1960s and is concluded with an evaluation of the present status of the language.

The second part of this review presents two particular centers of the Italian immigration in the south-eastern United States, the cities of New Orleans, Louisiana, and Tampa, Florida, because of their historical impact on the Italian population in this country in general and Florida in particular. Describing these areas links to presentations of other Italian communities in Florida, including a highlighting of Miami, whose Italian community and interest for the Italian language specifically pertain to this study.

The review is concluded with a description of the theories concerning motivation in second language learning (L2) that are taken into account in this study when analyzing the motivational factors to study Italian reported by the five participants. In particular, the concepts of “instrumental” and “integrative” motivation introduced by Gardner and

Lambert (1959) and the additional factors related to motivation presented by Csizér and Dörnyei (2005) in their subsequent study are presented, since they offer the theoretical background for the interpretation of the students' responses during the interviews conducted for this study.

### **Italian from the Colonial Times to the Civil War**

Although not the breadth of French and German, the study of Italian as a modern language has had a place in the educational history of the United States since its colonial times. Fucilla (1967) reports that the pro-Italian tradition existing in England particularly during the Renaissance reappeared in the old Anglo-American Colonies throughout the nineteenth century and continued to influence the attitudes of the cultivated Americans. Some of the most distinguished first colonists had the opportunity to acquire a solid knowledge of Italian during the seventeenth century while studying medicine at the University of Padua; in fact, a number of colonial physicians were most likely trained in Padua. Fucilla (1967) also reports that in the 1750's several Catholics from Maryland were attending Catholic colleges in France and Italy. By the mid-1700s the colonial Americans had already begun to tour Italy for pleasure, and wealthy American families, particularly those who had sent their sons to England to complete their studies, had also begun to encourage them to visit Italy during their European stay. Among those who did not travel to Italy, but who are known to have studied Italian, is Benjamin Franklin, who taught himself Italian in order to read the works of Machiavelli, Ariosto, Dante and Petrarch, but also to ease his way into the study of Latin (Fucilla, 1967).

There is not much available data on the teaching of Italian in the colonies, since printed or manuscript materials have either been lost or are difficult to access. Nevertheless, there is enough evidence to show that there was a fair demand for Italian in most of the original thirteen colonies. Before the revolutionary war, Italian was taught in major cities like New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, and Washington D.C. mostly by private tutors, or was offered in some academies together with French, German, and Latin as part of a liberal art education. Italian was also taught to those who were preparing to work in foreign trade along with “mercantile arithmetic, bookkeeping and penmanship” (Fucilla, p.23). Additionally, the language was taught by a number of Italian teachers of vocal music, who had started to arrive increasingly to the United States throughout the latter half of the eighteenth century, when a growing attraction for the Italian opera was helping to propagate the interest for the Italian language. Private teaching of Italian had become a proliferous business that had spread over a considerable part of the United States at that time. Thus, when interest for the modern languages began to spread in the nineteenth century, the teachers who had already established themselves as private instructors were invited to teach the language in universities in the area. At the same time, however, where teaching of the language was available, there were always plenty of culture-minded people who freely chose to study it even outside the formality of the academic requirements (Fucilla, 1967).

The nineteenth century, particularly the period between 1815 and 1861, was the Golden Age of Italian study in the United States. An increasing number of eminent American people became interested in Italian architecture, painting, sculpture, music and literature, thereby developing a desire to create a more personal link with Italian culture

that they deeply admired through the study of Italian language. Many learned Italian during prolonged stays in Italy, while several others were able to study it as a regular or optional course in the colleges and secondary schools or under native and American tutors (Fucilla, 1967). The first American universities offering courses of Italian included William and Mary, Harvard, Columbia, and the University of Virginia.

During the Civil War (1861-1865) the teaching of Italian saw a period of regression. Most of the Italian patriot exiles who had sought refuge in this country and who had earned their livelihood by teaching the language had returned to their homeland. The Civil War had reduced to a minimum the flow of Americans who had been going to Italy to learn or to perfect their Italian. It was not until World War I that the study of the Italian language regained its popularity, as the study of German was drastically reduced and the freer competition that resulted led to an impressive number of new college introductions of Italian between 1914 and 1937.

With regard to the academies, the private or semi-public institutions that typically provided secondary instruction in the United States for most part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the teaching of Italian mostly happened in New England and Middle states, including Delaware, Maryland, New Jersey, New York and Pennsylvania, although it was also present in the South, particularly in North and South Carolina, Georgia and Virginia. At the beginning of the 20th century, following the strong influx of Italian immigration in North America more and more of them were established in the so called Italian Colonies, stretching from New York to San Francisco and from Duluth to New Orleans (Fucilla, 1967). A number of “immigrant” schools also emerged at that time, where children were given the opportunity to study the language of their parents, in addition to English.

## **Italian at the Time of the Italian Immigration**

Italian immigration in the United States played a strong role in the composition of the American multi-ethnic population between 1880 and the first half on the 20th century, a period in which large groups of Italians continued to arrive to this country in search of better life opportunities. Cardasco (2001) reports that the Italian presence in the United States literally swelled in those decades, growing from 3,645, as documented by the 1850 census, the first in the United States to distinguish among nationalities, to almost 3 million more in 1910. This mass immigration contributed to changing the perception of Italians, who went from being recognized in leadership roles in the earliest colonial period to being little more than human cargo in the early 20th century (Cardasco, 2001).

Many Italian immigrants came to the United States with the intent of easily earning a considerable amount of money that would allow them to go back to Italy and ensure a comfortable life for them and their families. They worked in agriculture and mining, often switching between occupations. In the proximity of the large cities of the East, however, Italians often established themselves on small farms abandoned by the Americans who went to live in the city. The neighborhoods around Boston, all the Connecticut Valley, and the western part of the State of New York swelled to several hundred farms occupied by Italians. In the southern part of New Jersey the Italians also dedicated themselves to agriculture, especially to grape-growing. It was in California, however, that Italians achieved most success as cultivators. Throughout the South, and especially in Louisiana, Italians also worked as farmers with remarkably good results. A considerable number of Italians chose instead to settle in big cities, where they could earn money easily and be able to return to Italy faster (Catholic Encyclopedia).

According to Cardasco (2001) the Italian experience in the United States can be framed into three main chronological periods which also define a change in the perception and status of the Italian people and their language. The first period is “the large scale immigration out of Italy beginning in 1880 and ending in the mid-1920s, when immigration and restriction quotas terminated the massive Italian entry in the United States” (p. 58). The second period starts in the 1920s and extends across World War II into the mid-1950s. The third period “is dominated by the progeny of American born Italians, well into third and fourth generations” (p. 58). The Italians in these three chronological periods were profoundly different, just like their experiences of life in the United States; as a consequence, also their relationship with their native language greatly differed. Cardasco (2001) points out that the Italians of the first generation of immigrants came to the United States to escape poverty, and the preservation of their language and culture was not a priority for them. Second and third generation Italians, on the other hand “were driven by a desire to discover their ancestral past” (p. 60) and by an impulse towards the study of their heritage and native language which was consequence of the ethnic fever which developed in the United States in the 1960s.

The first generation of Italian immigrants worked hard to integrate into American society, which did not distinguish their origin from that of other ethnic groups. They lived in their immigrant enclave, where they tried to duplicate the customs they had left behind in their villages in Sicily and Southern Italy and spoke their Italian regional dialects. The majority of immigrant children attended American schools, where they were taught English as a necessary instrument for integrating in American culture. There was no



effort by these schools to preserve their culture and language, which eventually was lost in the process of integration.

At the time of the mass immigration the Italian language did not provide a “lingua franca” for the bulk of Italian immigrants, who come mostly from the South and were usually poor and uneducated. The immigrants communicated in a variety of regional dialects, considered in Italy as an evidence of poor education and intellectual inferiority for those who spoke them. According to Carnevale (2009), in the U.S. the stereotype of racial inferiority associated with the speakers of dialects was accompanied by a feeling of insecurity in the immigrants with respect to their not speaking English (Sterne, 2012). At the turn of the twentieth century, when the trend of the Italian immigration in the United States was at its peak, learning English was considered as the essential key to assimilation in the American way of life. In their efforts to learn English while communicating within their community the immigrants responded “by forging a creole out of English, standard Italian, and their regional dialects” (Sterne, p.105). The Italian-American speaking style that emerged at that time contributed to the creation of playful Italian stereotypes which became part of the American popular culture and were even portrayed in the music of Italian-American artists such as New Orleans-born singer and trumpeter Louis Prima. By the end of the 19th century the Italian spoken in the United States had a highly local component, not necessarily confirming to the forms of a standard language. The Italian language at the time highly reflected the various dialects spoken by the population of Italian immigrants who had come to the United States from different regions of the South of Italy.

## **The First Half of the 20th Century**

The decrease in popularity of German during World War I resulted in a freer competition in the linguistic landscape in the United States, which had a positive impact on the status of Italian at that time. The reduction of the quotas of Italian immigration in the 1920s also helped to redefine the role of the language in this country. Italian started to regain its status as an educated language and to be seen from the more objective point of view of a national language, going beyond the collection of dialects that were spoken by Italian immigrants. By the 1920s some ethnic leaders like the New York educator Leonard Covello started to encourage “Italian-language instruction in public schools on the grounds that the best way to Americanize immigrants was to teach them Italian”, arguing that “teaching standard Italian would encourage assimilation by forging a linguistically diverse population into “a unified, pan-Italian-American community” (Sterne, 2012, p.105).

However, the fact that the fascist government was promoting Italian instruction for different reasons complicated the matter, and the perception of Italian started to provoke mixed reactions in the United States when World War II started. Mussolini promoted the Italian language both in Italy and abroad, sponsoring the creation of cultural organizations like Società Dante Alighieri, which worked with the Italian government to foster the Italian language and culture. Sympathy for fascist ideas became popular among many Italian-Americans, mostly as a reaction to the strong anti-immigrant sentiment of the 1920s and as a way to express ethnic pride, more than for a political conviction. There was indeed “a widespread American fascination with the charismatic Mussolini that did not fade until his imperialistic ambitions surfaced in the 1930s” (Carnevale,

2003, p.12). A reason behind the admiration for Mussolini was the prestige he brought to the Italian Americans prior to the war.

During the first half of the 20th century, however, the general mistrust towards foreign languages that prevailed in America contributed to the assumption by the FBI that any evidence of foreign language spoken in America during the war was suspect. The Italian language was a particular cause of concern for the government during the war, and records of the FBI reveal that “the use of Italian was a marker of potential disloyalty during the World War II era” (Carnevale, p.4). As a consequence, the United States government began scrutinizing the Italian-Americans’ use of the language after Italy’s entry into the war in 1940, and Italian-language newspapers and radio broadcasts were closely monitored by the government during this period.

Just as it had happened with the German language during World War I, Italian was perceived as negative during World War II. At the same time, however, the possession of Italian language skills also became a military asset during World War II, and as Italian speakers were recruited to work in intelligence, they also had the opportunity to prove their ethnic pride and patriotism. Carnevale (2003) reports that “the influential Italian educator Leonard Covello, who was at the center of the efforts to promote the teaching of Italian to second-generation Italian-Americans, came to see the war effort as a godsend for Italian-American youth who were trapped between two cultures” (p.18). The possibility to enter the military thanks to their knowledge of Italian gave the Italian-American youth recognition within the American nation and elevated the Italian language to a level never achieved by years of language promotion in public schools.

## **Italian in the 1960s**

The linguistic goals of first and second generation Italian-Americans were profoundly different. While first generation Italian-Americans needed to learn English in order to integrate in the American society and later also to communicate with their children, who had eventually become part of it, correspondingly second generation Italian-Americans wished to learn Italian to be able to communicate with their parents. The impulse to learn Italian in order to maintain their linguistic heritage characterized second and third generation Italian-Americans and started a positive trend in the study of the language. The Italian language maintenance efforts in the United States in the 1960s, however, were still disorganized in comparison with the other four major foreign languages spoken in the country at the time, such as French, Spanish, German and Polish (Fishman, 1965). Even though it was estimated that close to 3,700,000 first, second and third generation Americans of Italian descent were living in the United States in 1960, only five Italian daily newspapers were published at the time, far fewer than in the other afore mentioned foreign languages. Italian was not regularly taught in Catholic or independent, ethnically supported language schools, and fewer language maintenance organizations existed in the Italian-American than in other ethnic groups.

The regionalism and localism that characterized the Italian immigration continued to exist in the Italian-American neighborhoods, where standard Italian was still a distant reality. In the 1960s the Italian spoken in the United States was deeply associated with family and tradition, rather than with literature, art, or history. The cultivated Italian that had originally penetrated the United States during the colonial times had been replaced by a language dominated by localisms and informality. The language once regarded as a

classic “heir” to Latin had assumed a plebeian image in this country, compared to French, Spanish or German, and was studied mostly by Italian-American students interested in maintaining the language of their family more than in reading the works of Italian classic literature.

The founding of organizations like the Italian American Historical Association in the mid-1960 can be seen as a dividing line between the early perception of the Italian language in the United States and efforts for the language maintenance and reevaluation that have followed ever since. Since Italian was mostly studied by students of Italian origin for ethnic reasons, the Italian cultural organizations aimed at changing the public opinion towards the language and at reestablishing its higher status, with the goal of attracting more students to study it for reasons beyond ethnicity. At that time, the Italian Culture Council (ICC) particularly tried to foster a greater appreciation of the Italian culture in America and to improve the status of the Italian language. A defense of Italian as a language related to the fields of literature and the arts, but also to more modern uses involving commercial, political and scientific areas emerged as a consequence. A survey published by ICC presented statements by several universities in the United States, including the university of Chicago, MIT, and Harvard, as well as by the Department of Health and Welfare that justified the actual use of Italian in various areas of professional applications, such as medical microbiology, architecture, political and historical writing, international politics and archeology (Adorno, 1966). The document also included a contribution by the Foreign Service Institute of the Department of State which illustrated the rating scales used to assess the language skills of Foreign Service personnel engaged in international affairs of a diplomatic, political, economic and cultural nature in multiple

languages. The emphasis put on the accuracy in the use of grammar and vocabulary required for a competent use of the language demonstrated the need to improve the study of foreign languages in the United States and a higher recognition of their role. Italian did not escape from this new perception of foreign languages in the United States.

### **Present Status of Italian in the United States**

Italian is presently taught at all level of instruction in the United States. Referring to Macchiarella (1993), the diffusion of the language in this country continues to be driven by two factors: (1) Italian as a language related to arts, music, classical culture as well as to culinary tradition, and (2) Italian as an important “community language”, still “marginally bound to the dialects spoken in Italy” (as cited in Mason, 1997). While it is not in the top twelve languages spoken in the world, Italian “is still a vital language spoken by 63 million people (native and non-native speakers)” (Mason, p. 518). In 2007-2008 Italian appeared at the third place after Spanish and French among the languages taught in public school in the United States in the category of less common languages, coming second after American Sign Language ([www.actfl.org](http://www.actfl.org). 2011). Italian enrollment has been on the rise, although in certain regions of the West it has been challenged by Japanese, Chinese and Korean “for several reason including economic and social” (Mason, p. 518). Although largely behind Spanish, increase in Italian enrollment is in contrast with the decline reported in French and German.

Despite its rank as the fifth most studied language in university programs in the United States, however, Italian has struggled to maintain an AP course of study in high schools nationwide. AP Italian classes were first introduced in 2006, but they were

withdrawn from the national curricula after the spring of 2009, when the College Board decided to suspend the AP Italian program for lack of financial gain for the organization. Various Italian organizations worked in the attempt to revive the course of study, which was reinstated in 2011 particularly thanks to the efforts of Margaret Cuomo, sister of former New York Governor Andrew Cuomo, who was instrumental in providing the impetus for the program's birth in 2006 and in securing funding and teachers to reinstate the program.

Some challenges continuing to affect the teaching of Italian, however, include a shortage of teachers and of adequate pedagogical material compared to the other major foreign languages taught in the United States. Italian has often been taught by teachers of other languages because of the shortage of programs to specifically train teachers in Italian and of the lack of language-specific methodologies. As far as the teaching material, “Because of the limited size of the discipline, most Italian textbooks seem to try to appeal to the largest possible audience, often encompassing junior high to college” (Skubikowski, 1985, p.35). Textbooks specifically aimed at the preadolescent age, the “critical period” of language acquisition (Long, 1990) are also lacking. Additionally, the existing textbooks seem to inadequately supply contemporary cultural information. Some misconceptions and biases about the Italian language have also continued to exist, such as the perception of Italian as a spoken and nonacademic language derived from its association with the immigrant community, and its image of a heritage language attracting mostly Italian students because of their ancestors. Improved teacher preparation, implementation of language-specific methodology, updated pedagogical material, and promotion of Italian through public awareness are among the necessary

measures suggested to ensure the status of Italian among the other foreign languages taught in the United States (Mason, 1997).

### **The First Italians in Florida: from New Orleans to Tampa**

Even before Italy became a unified nation in 1861 and before the Italian mass immigration movement began in 1880, making New York harbor and Baltimore the preferred destination ports, New Orleans, Louisiana, was the first immigration site for Italians and Sicilians arriving in the United States in the 19th century. They usually belonged to the “chain” variety, immigrants coming to the U.S. after learning about job opportunities from labor workers, usually immigrants themselves, who acted as middlemen.

The immigrants escaped hardships in their homeland to find even more grueling work conditions in the sugar-producing communities in Louisiana. Like other poor immigrants, the Italian immigrants were met with discrimination and suspicion from locals. A famous case of the maltreatment and prejudice towards Italians is represented by the lynching of eleven Italian prisoners, nine of whom had been tried, but then acquitted, for the murder of police Chief David Hennessy in 1891. This event was reported worldwide at the time and is considered as one of the worst crimes of this type in the history of the United States.

Despite the hardship, many immigrants eventually integrated into the life of New Orleans, and “found employment on the riverfront, in farming, and in the French Market, often with bosses of Italian ancestry” (Roahen, 2008, p. 56). Some achieved considerable success after opening businesses related to the needs and customs of the Italian



immigrant community. The Italian immigrants introduced several of their religious customs and culinary traditions to New Orleans, which eventually became part of the city's culture, and defined the life of a large and vital Italian community in the French quarter.

The Italian immigrants who could not adapt to the harsh work conditions found initially in New Orleans, as well as in the sugar plantations in St. Cloud, Florida, looked elsewhere. Tampa appeared as an attractive destination, particularly since the completion of Henry Plant's railway system to Tampa and his hotel on the Hillsborough River in 1884, and the decision by Vincente Martinez Ybor to relocate his cigar factories from Cuba and Key West to the development of Ybor City in 1886 created excellent employment opportunities in the city (Mormino, 1982). The Italian immigrants who moved to Tampa from New Orleans and St. Cloud were mostly of Sicilian origin. They joined other immigrants coming directly from Sicily, attracted by "the lure of America in general and the promise of Tampa in particular" (Mormino, p. 399).

Tampa's Italian community originated mostly from three villages in the southwestern province of Agrigento, Sicily: Santo Stefano Quisquina, Alessandria della Rocca, and Cianciana. The immigrants were mostly farmers, but some were artisans. Although the majority was poor, a number of them left relatively comfortable lifestyles in Sicily attracted by the possibility of self-improvement that America offered them. Many of them moved with their entire families or followed a chain of related individuals who encouraged one another to move from Italy to America and from other cities in the United States to Tampa. Once in Tampa, the Italians experienced discrimination by the Spanish and Cubans employed in the cigar factories, and had to accept the lower jobs

before being allowed into the cigar trade. Typically, however, the Italians saw cigar-making as a springboard to other types of businesses, like owning fruit stands and investing in the opening of small grocery stores (Mormino, 1982).

The Sicilian immigrants who settled in Tampa belong to the first generation of Italian immigrants who came to the United States and moved to Florida. They faced all the challenges of the first immigrants and had to learn Spanish, besides English, in order to integrate in the local community. Their arrival did not bring the Italian language to Florida but an Italian population which tried to integrate linguistically with the local community while continuing to speak their Sicilian dialects within their enclave. The interest and rediscovery of the Italian language would be left to the future generations.

### **Italian Communities in Florida**

Although not comparable to the states of New Jersey and New York, which have the largest Italian-American populations in the United States, and Rhode Island and Connecticut, which comprise the highest percentage of citizens of Italian descent compared to their overall population (19%), Florida also has a remarkable percentage of Italian-American residents. According to the report based on the year 2000 census compiled by the Order of Sons of Italy in America, Florida is the state with the fifth highest number of Italian Americans, following New York, New Jersey, California, and Pennsylvania, with 1,004,000 Italian-American citizens (6.3% of the State population). Out of the 50 U.S. metropolitan areas with the most Italian-Americans, the Miami and Fort Lauderdale area occupies 11th place, with 206,119 Italian-American citizens out of a general population of 3, 876,380. The Tampa, St. Petersburg and Clearwater area follows

in the 13th place, West Palm Beach and Boca Raton in the 27th, Orlando in the 31st, and Jacksonville, Daytona Beach, and Sarasota in the 44th, 46th, and 47th respectively ([www.osia.org/documents](http://www.osia.org/documents)).

The growing size of the Italian population in Florida and the higher levels of education achieved by the second and third generations of Italian-Americans were some of the reasons that justified the introduction of the study of Italian in the Florida universities starting from the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The first university to introduce the study of Italian was Florida State University (Tallahassee) in 1900, followed several decades later by the University of Miami in 1941, the University of Florida (Gainesville) in 1949 and the University of South Florida (Tampa) in 1960 (Fucilla, 1967). At the high school level, Italian is presently taught in 55 Florida schools, 20 of which offer the AP Italian exam ([www.odli.us](http://www.odli.us)).

The current efforts to reevaluate the Italian culture and language in the United States are particularly evident in Miami, the city with the largest Italian-American population in the state of Florida. Here Italian is taught in selected public schools such as George Washington Carver Elementary School, George Washington Carver Middle School, International Studies Preparatory Academy, International Studies Charter High School, and Coral Gables High School, in addition to some private schools which also include Italian among the foreign languages they offer. In addition to these schools, John A Ferguson Senior High School, Law Enforcement Officer's Memorial High School, Mater Academy East Charter School, Miami Beach Senior High School, Miami Coral Park Senior High School, Miami Palmetto Senior High School, Saint Brendan High School, Trevor Packer High School, Somerset Academy High School, Westland Hialeah

Senior High School are public schools in the area that offer the Italian AP exam ([www.odli.us](http://www.odli.us)).

Società Dante Alighieri, an association that works in connection with the Italian Consulate general to propagate the study of the Italian language abroad, was opened in Miami in 1997 and has an important role in the diffusion of the language in the community through courses and events. The Organization for the Development of the Italian Studies (ODLI), a Florida non-profit organization founded in 1998 by the Italian Government and a group of volunteers, also collaborates with the Italian Consulate in Miami in the implementation of the teaching of Italian in Florida public schools.

Information gathered during an informal conversation with the director of the Società Dante Alighieri in Miami before starting this study provided me with some interesting insight concerning the local community and its connection with the Italian language. Miami stands at the crossroad between a large South-American population of Italian origin, an American-Italian population, and a number of more recent expatriates who all live in this city and share an interest for the Italian language. It is apparent that hundreds of years of Italian immigration to both North and South America and a more recent movement of Italian expatriation to the United States are represented in the Italian-American community in Miami and keep the interest for the language alive in this city. Considering that in present times the diffusion of the Italian language in the United States continues to be driven by the cultural and ethnic factors that have been historically linked to the study of the language, I thought that it could be interesting to evaluate how these factors specifically apply to the local community and to their interest for the Italian

language. These observations were at the base of my personal reasons to undertake this study.

### **Motivation in Language Learning**

An investigation of the motivational factors that bring local students to study Italian is an important aspect of the general description of the status of the teaching and learning of the language in Miami, which was the main focus of this study. In order to analyze the types of motivation provided by the participants in their responses during the interviews, the theoretical works on motivation by Gardner and Lambert (1959) and Csizér and Dörnyei (2005) were taken into account and provided me with the conceptual framework for the data interpretation. This section includes a description of the concepts of motivation elaborated by the aforementioned studies.

Until the 1990s, research on motivation in L2 acquisition was prevalently dominated by the work of two Canadian psychologists, Robert Gardner and Wallace Lambert. An element of their research receiving considerable attention in the field is their definition of two different types of motivation driving people toward language learning: instrumental motivation and integrative motivation. Gardner and Lambert came up with these concepts in 1959, when they published the results of a study in which students in Canada were asked to rank in order four reasons they had to study French. Students who were learning French in order to interact with French Canadians and to better understand their way of life were classified as integratively oriented. Students who were studying French in order to obtain a job or to become generally more educated were classified as instrumentally oriented. Integrative motivation applies therefore to the learner's desire to identify with

the target culture when studying a language, while instrumental motivation refers to the need to fulfill a professional or more practical obligation. The instrumental-integrative distinction provided by Garner and Lambert dominated much of the research on motivation and attitude in the past three decades. In addition, in their summaries of research from the 1960's through the 1990s, the authors supported the notion that integrative motivation is particularly important in the achievement of second language proficiency (Gardner and Lambert, 1972).

While still acknowledging the importance of Gardner and Lambert's work, more recent research has questioned the instrumental-integrative dichotomy proposed by those authors, taking into account a wider variety of reasons that students have to study a foreign language. In particular, an important work carried out by Kata Csisér and Zoltán Dörnyei in 2005 has proposed an update to the integrative-instrumental model, identifying five other factors related to motivation in L2 learning, in addition to integrativeness and instrumentality:

1. "Attitude toward the L2 speaker/community" is associated with students' desire to have a direct contact with L2 speakers and to travel to their country;
2. "Cultural interest" represents "the appreciation of cultural products associated with the particular L2 and conveyed by the media (e.g., films, videos, TV programs, pop music, magazines and books)";
3. "Vitality of the L2 community" concerns "the perceived importance and wealth of the L2 community in question", a concept that includes status, demographic and institutional factors related to the image that a country has for those who are learning its language;

4. “Milieu” refers to the social influences that the direct environment such as friends and family have on students and on their motivation to learn a language; and
5. “Linguistic self-confidence”, a concept “introduced into L2 motivation research by Richard Clément (1980), reflects a confident, anxiety-free belief that the mastery of a L2 is well within the learner’s means”. (Cziser & Dörnyei, pages 21-22).

When the authors examined the influence of the above-mentioned factors in a study conducted with students in Hungary, they found out that integrativeness is the most important factor in L2 motivation because it includes the other elements. The conclusions of their study are relevant also to the study of Italian in the United States, which is also driven by integrative factors, and can help interpret how the different elements of motivation particularly apply to the study of the language in the local community.

## **CHAPTER III**

### **METHODOLOGY**

The purpose of this study was to investigate the current status of teaching and learning the Italian language in Miami. This chapter describes the methodology employed to answer the following sub-questions pertaining to the central research question of this study: What is the current status of the study of the Italian language in Miami?

1. What Italian language programs are offered in Miami, including those offered by Società Dante Alighieri, according to the Director of this cultural organization?
2. According to the Director of the Società Dante Alighieri in Miami, who participates in those programs and what motivates them to participate?
3. What reasons do four Miami students who are studying in two different settings give for studying Italian?

The methodology used in this study to answer these questions is qualitative research. Data were collected through an in-depth interview and semi-structured interviews of a total of five participants: Claudio Pastor, local director of Società Dante Alighieri, who has been involved for years in the teaching and development of Italian language courses locally, and four students studying Italian in two different types of institutions, a private high school and Società Dante Alighieri.

Contacted informally before starting this study, Pastor showed interest for this project, agreeing to participate in it and to share information related to the teaching and learning of Italian in a local context. The students were selected in both setting from a group of volunteers who agreed to be interviewed.



There were no known risks associated with the interviews, which took place at agreed times in the two schools' locations, after the participants had been informed about the objectives and procedures of this study and had signed their consent forms. The five participants volunteered to participate in this study and did not receive any form of incentive or compensation for it. They expressed their positive feelings about talking with me about their experiences with the study of Italian, both from an educator and from the students' points of view, and about the possibility of contributing through their responses some knowledge to the educational field.

### **Scientific Background and Literature Review**

As previously mentioned in Chapter I, the study of foreign languages has been holding an important role in the United States since the new millennium. Despite a more recent decline registered in 2013, according to previous surveys carried out in 2006 and 2009 by the Modern Language Association, enrollment in foreign languages has shown an increase in this country, particularly at the secondary level. This positive trend also affects the study of Italian, which is presently ranked in the fifth place among the foreign languages studied in the United States after Spanish, French, American Sign Language, and German. The literature review, as highlighted in Chapter II, indicates two main factors historically linked to the study of Italian in this country, a cultural interest for the language and a desire to connect with one's Italian heritage. However, as far as the status of Italian in Florida and particularly in Miami is concerned, limited study has been conducted with respect to the reasons local students study the language.

Although not comparable with New Jersey, New York, Rhode Island and Connecticut, the states with highest percentage of Italian-American population, Florida also has a high number of Italian-American residents and offers programs of Italian at various levels. The current efforts to reevaluate the Italian culture and language in the United States are also evident in Miami, the city with the largest Italian-American population in Florida. Demographically, Miami is uniquely characterized by a large South-American population of Italian descent, an American-Italian population, and a number of more recent Italian expatriates. In Miami, Italian is also taught in several schools at all levels of instruction, and the Italian courses offered at Società Dante Alighieri are among the extra-curricular courses in the language that are available locally.

The theoretical background of this study was provided by the concepts of “integrative” and “instrumental” motivation introduced by Gardner and Lambert (1959) and by the additional motivation variables introduced by Csizér and Dörnyei (2005) in subsequent studies: attitude towards second language speakers, cultural interest, vitality of the second language community, milieu, and linguistic self-confidence. These concepts are described in the conceptual framework presented in Chapter I of this study and in the section on motivation in second language learning presented in Chapter II. This study referred to the above-mentioned motivation concepts and variables when investigating the motivational factors bringing local students to learn Italian.

Referring to the above mentioned theoretical works on motivation was particularly relevant to this study, in terms of both finding out if instrumental motivation also applies to the interest of local students in the study of Italian and investigating in more detail if the prevalence of integrative factors that appear to drive the study of Italian

in the United States also apply to a local context. An investigation of the motivational factors bringing students to study Italian in Miami was included in the description of the status of the local study of the language, which represented the main purpose of this study.

### **Research Objectives**

This study aimed particularly at identifying the motivational factors bringing students to enroll in Italian programs in Miami and also at investigating local student perception of Italian as a heritage or as a second language. Knowledge that Italian is ranked as the fifth most studied foreign language in the United States and third in Miami after Spanish and French prompted me to research the role of Italian in local foreign language programs and the reasons why people choose to study it. Generating from these considerations, the main research question guiding this study was: What is the current status of the study of the Italian language in Miami?

As mentioned previously, the main research question of this study was broken down into three sub-questions that I attempted to answer through the participants' responses in the interviews. In order to answer the first two sub-questions, (a) What Italian language programs are offered in Miami, including those offered by Società Dante Alighieri, according to the Director of this cultural organization? and (b) According to the Director of Società Dante Alighieri in Miami, who participates in those programs and what motivates them to participate?, I conducted an in-depth interview with Claudio Pastor, the director of Società Dante Alighieri in Miami, the oldest cultural association that works with the Italian government towards the diffusion of Italian culture and

maintenance of Italian language abroad. His answers to the interview questions provided me important information concerning the study of Italian in Miami, the people of different ethnic origins who are interested to study Italian in this city and their motivations.

To answer the third sub-question of this study, (c) What reasons do four Miami students who are studying in two different settings give for studying Italian? I interviewed four students, two studying Italian in the above mentioned cultural organization, and two studying the language in a local private high school. Their answers to the interview questions provided me information concerning the students' motivations to study Italian, including factors such as an attraction for the Italian culture or the possibility to use the language professionally, and thus relating the students' reasons to choose to study the language to the concepts of "instrumental" and "integrative" motivation presented by Gardner and Lambert (1959) and to the additional motivation variables introduced by Csizér and Dörnyei (2005) that represented the theoretical background of this study.

### **Subject Population and Recruitment**

This study involved the participation of five people in total: the Director of Società Dante Alighieri in Miami, Claudio Pastor, and four students, two studying Italian as an extra-curricular activity at Società Dante Alighieri, and two studying Italian in a local private high school, as part of their graduation requirement.

I decided to interview Claudio Pastor for his important role in the local community as far as the teaching and diffusion of the Italian language are concerned.

Born and raised in Italy and educated both in Italy and in the United States, Pastor has been the Director of Società Dante Alighieri in Miami for 18 years, after having collaborated with the Società Dante Alighieri in Rome for some time after the end of his studies. During the interview he mentioned that he was identified as the person to perform the position he has been holding locally also because he already had a history with Miami, having lived previously in this city with his parents, due to his family's interests in local business.

On the other hand, I considered interviewing four students from two different types of institutions teaching Italian, a cultural association and a high school, a way to gain some insight into why people choose to study Italian here in Miami. For this reason, I interviewed two students in each setting, identifying them among the individuals in each institution who volunteered to participate after they had been informed of the study. The characteristic that I was looking for in the students was a few years studying the language, so that each person would have enough insight and experiences to share that would enable me to gather sufficient information to answer my research question. As I thought that high school juniors or seniors and adults with an intermediate level knowledge of the language would be the kind of students I was looking for because they might have that kind of experience, I decided to resort to the indications of the directors in the two institutions when selecting the group of students to inform about my study. In both cases, the directors helped me identify the prospective participants for my interviews, indicating to me the classes or groups that I could notify about my study and where I could look for my volunteers.

## **Obtaining Informed Consent**

My first step in obtaining the consent required from the institutions and participants involved in this type of study was to contact informally both the director of Società Dante Alighieri and the high school principal, informing them about my intentions to conduct this research. I chose to approach the cultural organization for its important role in the maintenance of the Italian culture and the study of the Italian language both internationally and locally. The organization has indeed been active in Miami since 1997, attracting teachers, students and the general public interested in the Italian culture through the organization of Italian language courses and various cultural events related to Italy, and for these reasons I considered it to be the ideal place where to locate some of the participants in my research. To identify the rest of them, I decided to contact a local private high school, whose administrators I personally know, and which has been offering Italian as one of the foreign languages in the curriculum for several years. This high school is part of a K-12 private school in Miami, and offers the International Baccalaureate Program beside standard and Advanced Placement (AP) classes in several subjects. In addition to Italian, which is also offered at the AP level, the languages taught at this high school are Spanish, Español for native speakers, French, Portuguese, Mandarin and Japanese.

As I previously mentioned, since the beginning of this research the Director of Società Dante Alighieri showed support for my intent to conduct this study and interest in its final outcome, based on his knowledge that no similar study has been conducted so far locally, and thus confirming its utility. The high school principal also informally agreed for me to interview some students enrolled in the Italian program for research purposes,

on condition that both the names of the school and of the students remain anonymous.

Once I was ready to begin my research, my next step was to prepare for both institutions a brief written explanatory pamphlet, including my personal contacts, purpose of the study and invitation for the students to voluntarily participate in it. I visited both institutions again and asked the directors to make the information available to the groups of students who would fit into the characteristics that I was looking for in my participants, juniors and seniors high school students enrolled in the Italian program and adults taking intermediate to high level courses of Italian at Società Dante Alighieri.

In the case of the high school, the principal indicated to me the AP Italian class as the appropriate group where to locate two of my study participants. I was put in contact with the teacher, who took charge of handing out the information about my study to his students and notifying me about the students' interest. The teacher contacted me after a couple of days and told me that out of the three students who are in his small AP Italian class, two volunteered to participate in my study, a boy who is in his junior year and a girl who is a senior. As I expected the students to be below the age of 18, I also supplied the teacher with a few consent forms for both students and parents to give to the two students willing to participate. The teacher handed the consent forms to the two students and asked them to show the forms also to their parents and to return them to him once they and their parents had read and signed them. The students returned the signed forms to their teacher the following day, and he gave them to me when I went to the school to conduct the first interview.

In order to organize the interviews during the school day, the teacher also helped me set up a date and time to conduct the first part of the interview with each student. We

all agreed that the best time would be in the morning during the Italian AP class and the teacher allowed me to spend some time with each of the students and excused them from class for the duration of the interviews. I conducted the second part of the interviews after school in days and times that the students and I discussed and agreed on once we had completed the first interview.

As far as identifying my two volunteers at Società Dante Alighieri, the Director of the cultural organization, Claudio Pastor, indicated to me the appropriate group to inform about my study and where to locate the two participants. It was an advanced Italian class of approximately 10 students, all adults. I was introduced to the teacher, who let me visit her class and introduced me to her students. I explained my study to the group, who seemed interested and supportive. When I asked who was interested in participating, two women volunteered first. I gave them the explanatory pamphlet of my study and told them that I would wait for them after class to agree on a date and time for their interviews to take place. Because they were both over the age of 18, I had prepared for them an adult verbal informed consent form that I asked them to sign before starting the interview. As far as the Director, Claudio Pastor, I agreed with him on that same occasion the day and time for us to meet for his interview and also confirmed with him his willingness to waive anonymity during this study. As for the adult students at Società Dante Alighieri, I had also prepared for him a verbal informed consent form that I asked him to sign when we met for his interview.



## **Methods and Activities**

After having identified my five research participants, I proceeded to agree on a mutually convenient day and time to meet with each of them for the interview. I originally intended to meet once for an hour to an hour and a half with the Director of Società Dante Alighieri in order to conduct his interview. After we met the first time, however, we agreed to meet two additional times; in other words we met three times in total, but for shorter amounts of time. With respect to the students, we agreed to meet twice for 20 minutes to half an hour with each of the high school students for their interviews and once for 30 to 45 minutes with each of the students at Società Dante Alighieri.

As reported by Lichtman (2013), “The purpose of conducting an interview is the same whether you use a structured, formal style or select an unstructured, conversational style. You are gathering information from your participants about the topic you are studying.” However, “You are not trying to be objective” (p. 190). Therefore, in line with my goals as a qualitative researcher, I do not intend to generalize my findings, but rather to offer a reasonable and meaningful answer to my research question through the description and interpretation of the information that I gathered from the participants in my study. The types of interviews used in this study were in-depth and semi-structured interviews, which were conducted at the locations of the two institutions.

### **In-Depth Interview**

The type of interview that I conducted with Claudio Pastor, the director of Società Dante Alighieri, was an in-depth interview, discussing with him topics that allowed me to obtain information that I used to answer the first two sub-questions of this study: (a)

What Italian language programs are offered in Miami, including those offered by Società Dante Alighieri, according to the Director of this cultural organization? and (b) According to the Director of the Società Dante Alighieri in Miami, who participates in those programs and what motivates them to participate?

Lichtman (2013) cited Kyale and Binkman (2009), McCracken (1988), and Rubin and Rubin (1995, 2005), reporting that “Individual in-depth interviews are a type of qualitative interviewing that is described by some as a conversation between interviewer and participant” (p. 195). My three interview sessions with Claudio Pastor indeed had the tone of conversations on professional topics that one might have with a colleague or a superior. Lichtman (2013) suggested beginning in-depth interviews with a set of personal, concrete and feeling questions that would get the respondent to open up for the interview. As I had already met a few times previously with Claudio Pastor and had informed him about my study, I could skip these questions that are meant to develop rapport with the respondent and get almost directly to the main point.

I met with Pastor in one of the classrooms at Società Dante Alighieri three times. Each time I brought a digital recorder and a notepad with me. Before starting the first interview I asked him to read again and to sign an adult verbal consent form, and I reminded him that it would not be possible for him to remain anonymous during this interview, as he is an easily recognizable person in this community, and if he still agreed to that. He confirmed that he agreed that his identity could be fully disclosed in this study and he circled the option “*will not remain anonymous*” that appeared on the consent form. I also reminded him that I was recording the interview. Once we started, the interview went on without problems, apart from a couple of times when some people

entered the room and caused some noise, so that we had to stop the recording for a few minutes.

During the interviews, Pastor was asked to talk about topics that included the Italian programs offered in different schools in Miami and at Società Dante Alighieri, the history and role of this cultural organization and his perception of the people who study Italian in Miami and of their motivations.

After each interview I carefully transcribed answers having a clear and perfectly audible quality. Reading over the transcripts helped me guide the subsequent interviews with Pastor toward the topics that could provide me with the information that I needed to answer my first two research sub-questions. I report the information that I gathered from Pastor during the interviews in Chapter IV in a narrative form, organizing it around the main topics developed by the first two sub-questions.

### **Semi-Structured Interviews**

The type of interview that I conducted with the four students taking part in this study was a semi-structured interview. I met individually once with each of the two students at Società Dante Alighieri and twice with each of the two students at the high school in order to interview them. Their answers to my set of questions provided me with information used to answer the third sub-question of this study: (c) What reasons do four Miami students who are studying Italian in two different settings give for studying Italian?

Lichtman (2013) defined semi-structured interviews as a type of interview that is carried out following a general set of questions and format with all participants; however, “although the general structure is the same for all individuals being interviewed, the

interviewer can vary the questions as the situation demands” (p. 191). Semi-structured interviews provide the interviewer with a clear set of guidelines to follow during the process that offers guidance but also allows flexibility. I found this type of interview as appropriate for my sample of four students, to whom I asked the same set of 16 questions but adapted them in order to suit the tone and flow of the conversations. I met the two Società Dante Alighieri students in one of the classrooms at the cultural organization, and the two high school students in one of the conference rooms located in the library of their school. Each time I used a digital recorder to record the interview and had a notepad with me to take some notes. Before starting the interviews of the two students at Società Dante Alighieri I asked them to read again and sign their verbal consent forms. As far as the students at the high school, their child and parental written consent forms had been returned to me by their teacher. During the interviews, which proceeded without technical problems, the students were asked first a couple of personal and biographical questions, in order to develop rapport with them and put them at ease for the interviews. The body of the interview consisted of questions involving their experience and motivations to study Italian.

After each interview with the students I carefully transcribed the answers. The quality of the recordings was excellent. Subsequently, I used coding to analyze and interpret the data collected from the students interviews, using the “Three Cc of Data Analysis: Codes, Categories, Concepts” suggested by Lichtman (2013). Codes were represented by the initial meaningful words and phrases that I identified in the students’ answers. As they became more recurrent, several of the codes lead me to organize them into a list of categories according to motivational factors identified by Csizér and Dörnyei

(2005), whose study on motivation provided me with the theoretical referral for the analysis of the student responses. The final step in the process consisted in identifying the key concepts emerging from those categories and relating them to the concepts of “integrative” and “instrumental” motivation elaborated by Garner and Lambert (1959), i.e. the conceptual framework for this study. This approach enabled me to move from the specific information obtained through the answers of the four students to more general and recurrent themes and to generate through induction a possible answer to my third sub-question, allowing me to identify the motivational factors bringing students to enroll in Italian programs in Miami.

### **Confidentiality and Privacy**

The issues of confidentiality and privacy were an important matter in this study, as it is typically the case in any kind of research. While the Director of Società Dante Alighieri agreed for me to disclose the name of the cultural organization, the principal of the high school consented to let me interview the two students on condition that both the name of the school and of the students remain anonymous. Because Claudio Pastor, Director of the cultural organization, is a rather easily identifiable person in the local community, he agreed for me to disclose his identity and to use his real name during this study. I also, with the permission of the subjects, used the real first names Tiffany and Elvira to represent the two women I interviewed at Società Dante Alighieri. However, I kept the identity of the two high school students anonymous, referring them by the pseudonyms Mark and Emily during this study.

I kept my computer, the digital recorder, and all files and records in a secure place in my home, and I was the only person accessing to that material. However, the anonymous information I gathered during the interviews was available to my research advisors, when necessary, during the research process and continues to be accessible to the University for a period of time after the completion of this study.

### **Summary**

This chapter described the methodology used in this study in order to fulfill its main purpose of investigating the current status of the teaching and learning of the Italian language in Miami. This chapter described the qualitative research approach used in this study, which involved an in-depth interview and four semi-structured interviews of a total of five participants. This chapter also presented the rationale behind the subject population and recruitment and the procedure to obtain the participants' consent. In addition, it explained the activities and the method used to analyze the results, consisting of an identification of the key concepts emerging from the interviews through coding. Finally, the chapter presented how I addressed the requirements of confidentiality and privacy that are typically involved in research.

## **CHAPTER IV**

### **ANALYSIS OF DATA**

The goal of this study was to investigate the current status of the study of the Italian language in Miami and in particular to identify the motivational factors behind student enrollments in Italian programs locally. This chapter describes the results of this study first by presenting a narrative of the information on Italian teaching in Miami obtained from the answers provided by Claudio Pastor, director of Società Dante Alighieri in Miami, during an in-depth interview. Subsequently, an analysis is offered of the data collected through the semi-structured interviews with the four students in order to describe their motivation for studying Italian.

#### **Answers to Research Questions**

The following research sub-questions were explored in this study in order to answer its guiding question: What is the current status of the study of the Italian language in Miami?

1. What Italian language programs are offered in Miami, including those offered by Società Dante Alighieri, according to the Director of this cultural organization?
2. According to the Director of the Società Dante Alighieri in Miami, who participates in those programs and what motivates them to participate?
3. What reasons do four Miami students who are studying in two different settings give for studying Italian?

## **Italian Programs in Miami**

This section presents the information obtained from Claudio Pastor during our interview in order to answer the first research question: What Italian language programs are offered in Miami, including those offered by Società Dante Alighieri, according to the Director of this cultural organization? Based on the answers obtained from Pastor, the information is presented in two parts: 1) a description is given of the types of Italian programs offered in Miami schools, and 2) the courses offered at the Società Dante Alighieri.

### **Italian Programs in Schools in Miami**

The study of Italian enjoys high status among other foreign languages studied in Miami. Based on his personal experience and on his interaction with the people in this community, Pastor confirmed that “Italian holds the position of third place as a foreign language in popularity, after Spanish and French” in this city. Italian is present in the curricula of many of the schools in Florida and in Miami-Dade County, where it is offered in approximately 25% of the high schools, both public and private. According to Pastor, Italian was already being taught at the university level in this area in the 1950s and was offered at the high school level in the 1960s by Miami Senior High School, the oldest and historic high school in the city in Miami, founded in 1898.

As pointed out by Pastor, apart from the many schools and school districts that offer Italian locally like they offer any other language, other schools exist in Miami-Dade County that offer specific programs supported by the Italian Consulate. Carver Elementary and two high schools, ISPA (International Studies Preparatory Academy) and ISCHS (International Studies Charter High School), are in fact the only schools in Miami



that offer the Italian programs that are supported by the Italian government. Through the work of the *Ufficio Scolastico* and its own director the Italian Consulate oversees many Italian programs in Miami and in Miami-Dade County and in Florida, supporting them both financially and logistically.

In explaining the role of the *Direttore Scolastico*, Pastor explained that this position was introduced by the Italian Consulate and the Foreign Ministry, together with the Italian embassy in Washington, in the early 2000s after the realization “that there was sufficient apparent interest in the Italian language to send a person...[with] experience in the Italian school system to oversee a program that should in some ways reflect the Italian school curricula”. In the words of Pastor, “these programs originated with the idea that these classes would be available to children of Italian citizens who are living here not permanently...[allowing them]... to follow a program that was not completely different from the programs in Italy, so that when they return to Italy they could reenter the school system there without great difficulty”. Pastor reported that although these courses were originally created for the children of Italian expatriate families as a service of the Italian consulate to the Italian community, presently only about 10% of the students enrolled in them are actually children of Italians and the classes have become available to all children in the community, independently of their national heritage. It is important to keep in mind, however, that there are several other schools in Miami in which Italian is taught and that do not follow the Italian programs overseen by the Italian Consulate.

The institution of the *Ufficio scolastico* of the Italian Consulate follows the creation of the Organization for the Development of Italian Studies (ODLI.) in 1998, which also represents “an important part of the history of the promotion of the [Italian]

language in our area.” Pastor explained that this entity, born as an initiative of the Italian Consulate, helps promoting the language, specifically in the public schools, and “has the sole purpose of receiving funds from the Italian government and distributing them amongst the schools.” For the first couple of years, ODLI was alone in assisting the Consulate General of Italy in this project “handling this as a board, [...] receiving the funds from Italy, [...] and paying the Italian teachers to teach in the schools. Today this is handled within the Consulate by an expert in education, the *Direttore Scolastico*.

Although both these organizations have as their main objective the promotion of the Italian language, there is an important difference between the role of ODLI and of Società Dante Alighieri. As pointed out by Pastor, “the role of ODLI is limited to assisting elementary through high school programs, generally in the public school system, and that is where its role ends [...] It is an entity that is a vehicle to receive funds [from the Italian Foreign Ministry through the Italian Consulate General in Miami] and to distribute them locally in the public school system.” Società Dante Alighieri, on the other hand, as “the oldest and most prestigious cultural institution [belonging to the state of Italy] has a much more global role...[and] really covers all sectors of the promotion of the Italian language and culture”, from schools, to classes for children and adults, to educational events meant at promoting all aspects of Italian culture.

### **Italian Programs at Società Dante Alighieri**

Before describing the role of Società Dante Alighieri in the teaching of Italian in Miami, Pastor discussed the origins of this Italian cultural institution operating worldwide. According to Pastor, Società Dante Alighieri was founded in Rome in 1889 at a time that was significant, since it coincided both with the first decades of Italy as a

unified nation, considering that the unification of Italy happened in 1861, and the start of the great migrations of Italians abroad. Pastor added that one of the oldest and largest “Dantes” is the one in Buenos Aires, Argentina, as this “was one of those cities where enormous numbers of immigrants decided to go to, beginning in the latter part of the 1800s and into the early 1900s.” The first Dante Alighieri that opened in the United States, as reported by Pastor, was most likely the one in Boston, also a historic site of Italian immigration and of a long existing Italian community.

With respect to Miami, Pastor explained that the history of Società Dante Alighieri “really needs to be divided into two different parts.” Based on records from the archives of the society’s headquarters in Rome, he reported that a Società Dante Alighieri “club” existed in Miami in the 1960s and was a meeting place of several successful Italian-Americans living in this city. “They were leaders in the community, both business leaders and political leaders of the time” and also counted among them “a very important congressman from Miami who was for many years the very influential head of the foreign relations committee in the United States congress, and whose name was Dante Fascell.” This first Dante slowly came to an end in the early 1990s, due to membership inactivity, and was temporarily “frozen” as an institution by the main office in Rome. “When the Consulate General of Italy opened in Miami in 1992 after moving from New Orleans, which was the historical consulate of Italy in the southern United States, the first Consul General, Marco Rocca, put in a request that there would be a renewed presence of the Società Dante Alighieri to help support its cultural and educational initiatives.” This was the beginning of the Società Dante Alighieri that is active today in Miami.

Beyond the teaching of Italian as a foreign language in the schools, Società Dante Alighieri aims at promoting the Italian culture and language in the community in general. In addition to conferences, art exhibitions and various cultural events related to the Italian culture and industry, the organization offers different types of courses of Italian for both adults and children. Pastor explained that there are group classes divided into 8-week levels, following the programs established by the organization's headquarters in Rome, and private classes, catered to the particular type of schedule or learning that students are interested in. Additionally, the society organizes classes for corporate clients, usually Italian corporations based in Miami that request Italian classes for their employees, or diplomats aiming at learning the language for professional reasons. At the time of this interview approximately 100 students were enrolled in the eight-week sessions of the Italian programs at the Dante Alighieri. Once they complete their courses, the students can pass proficiency exams in Italian and receive certificates in the language that are internationally recognized. Pastor reported that there is a stable staff of Italian teachers who have been working at the Società Dante Alighieri in Miami for years and there is not much of a turnover. However, he states that, if the opportunity comes up for new hiring, a rich pool both of Italian teachers who are in Italy and of local teachers of Italian is available to teach at the organization.

As pointed out by Pastor, a unique aspect of the Società Dante Alighieri in Miami is that in this location the society supports also the interest of two other European countries, France and Germany, "in the spirit of European collaboration that the institution has." In the absence of an Alliance Française and Goethe Institute in Miami, courses of French and German are also organized by the Società Dante Alighieri, in

collaboration with the French and German consulates in Miami. According to Pastor, the presence of courses in other languages in the organization allows one to see how the interest for Italian is very strong compared to those languages. This preference for Italian can be explained by the characteristics of the population of Miami, that being largely Hispanic feels a stronger cultural connection with Italian than with German. Additionally, although French and Italian are both Romance languages, Spanish speakers generally feel an even stronger linguistic affinity with Italian than with French, as they perceive the language as “easier” and more understandable, just like Italian speakers feel about Spanish.

### **Participants in the Italian Programs and their Motivations**

This section presents the information obtained from Pastor during our interview in order to answer the second research question: According to the Director of the Società Dante Alighieri in Miami, who participates in those programs and what motivates them to participate? The information is presented in two parts. First, a brief description is given of Miami population interested in studying Italian, and next of local people’s motivations for studying the language.

#### **General Population of Italian Programs in Miami**

The growth of the Italian programs in the schools in Miami and of the courses offered by the Società Dante Alighieri “has mirrored the growth of the local community, both the Italian community and the city as a whole.” The numbers of Italian students both in the schools and at Società Dante Alighieri have definitely been growing, and this reflects the general growth of the city in the last twenty years. Pastor explained that in the

last decades the population of Miami has grown considerably, due to the arrival in the city of a large number of immigrants coming from many countries in the world, but particularly from Latin America. Looking at these groups of immigrants in particular, it is possible to notice a large wave of immigration of people from Argentina, Brazil and Venezuela, who joined the historic Cuban community that had already been part of the population of Miami since the Cuban revolution of the 1960s and helped make up the heavily Latin component of the present demographics of Miami. Pastor pointed out how many of these immigrants from Argentina, Brazil and Venezuela also have an Italian descent, so that inside the Latin American population of Miami there is also an Italian Latin American community, which is reflected in the growing interest for the Italian language locally.

With the general growth of the international population of Miami and in particular with the arrival of many well-educated expatriated, the city has seen the need to open places of cultural interest such as art museums and theaters like all other major cities, in order to cater to the cultural needs of the evolving local population. Pastor included in this positive trend the opening in Miami of the Adrienne Arsht Center for the Performing Arts in 2006, and the more recent establishment of the new of Perez Art Museum Miami (PAMM) in 2013, among other institutions. This has also reinforced the role of cultural institutions such as the Società Dante Alighieri, which aside from offering cultural events and language courses to the community, it also “represents the European old world” and enriches the city through the “exchange between the old world traditions, ideas, and cultures and this new culture.” In addition, as this organization is also well-known in their countries of origin, it comes to represent for many of the Italian-Argentineans,

Italian-Venezuelans and Italian-Brazilians who live in Miami and choose to learn Italian there “a little piece of home that connects them to the Italy that is in their blood, and a little piece of home that connects them to the countries they grew up in.”

### **People’s Motivations to Participate in Italian Programs**

According to Pastor, the motivation to study Italian in Miami can be mostly attributed to the desire of people to connect with a culture that they love or, in some cases, to reconnect with the culture of their ancestors, which can be related to the integrative factors explained by Gardner and Lambert (1959). When describing the student population in the classes of Italian offered in the schools with programs supported by the Italian Consulate, Pastor reported that about 10% of the students are children of Italian expatriates, while all the rest are students who “might be grandchildren or great-grandchildren of Italians [while] many of them do not even have an Italian heritage.” Like the people studying Italian at the Società Dante Alighieri, according to Pastor usually these students choose to study Italian for these reasons:

“ They either have something as basic and as simple as just a love for Italy that they grew up with or maybe have on their own, or maybe, as it happens very often, they are Italian-South-American or Italian-American and have a memory of their grandmother, but they never learned Italian, so they want to learn it now”.

As previously mentioned, a number of people also attend courses of Italian at Società Dante Alighieri for professional reasons, notions which can be related to the instrumental factors identified by Gardner and Lambert (1959). Italian corporations based in Miami often request their employees to take Italian classes at the organization,

following specific programs tailored to their professional needs. Similarly, Pastor added that the organization counts among its students with “a fairly important number of diplomats that are based in Miami who are learning Italian because they want to be posted in Italy as their next diplomatic post as representative of their countries.” He adds that they desire to learn the language and to be able to demonstrate their knowledge by obtaining a certificate that is internationally recognized.

It is important to mention that the interest for Italian in the local community is strong also due to the fact the Hispanic population in Miami has a greater affinity with the Italian language than with other languages. At least this is what Pastor suggests. Pastor observed that Italian is an easier language “for a Hispanic to speak or to learn than German or French” and that he believes that “the Latin community feels more a connection to Italy, culturally, than to other European countries.”

### **Reasons Reported by Four Students**

This section presents the information obtained in the course of the semi-structured interviews with the four students who participated in this study, two high school students who study Italian at a local private high school as part of their graduation requirements, and two adults who take Italian classes at Società Dante Alighieri. This information was used to answer the third research question of this study: What reasons do four students who are studying in two different settings give for studying Italian? The information is presented in two parts. First, background information is reported concerning the four students, including their native language, other languages they speak or study, and their



present level of Italian. Next, a summary is given of the various motivational factors to study Italian as reported by the four students in their answers.

### **Background Information on Students**

The four students interviewed for this study indicated English as the main language they speak at home; however, due to their national origins, both the two high school students and the two students at Società Dante Alighieri reported that they all speak an additional language with their family. Hebrew was indicated by Mark, Russian by Emily, Spanish by Elvira, and some German and French by Tiffany. None of the students reported to have an Italian ancestry, and when talking about their family members, only Elvira reported that her daughter had also previously learned some Italian. In the particular case of these four students, a heritage connection to Italian was therefore not a prevalent motivation for them to choose to study the language.

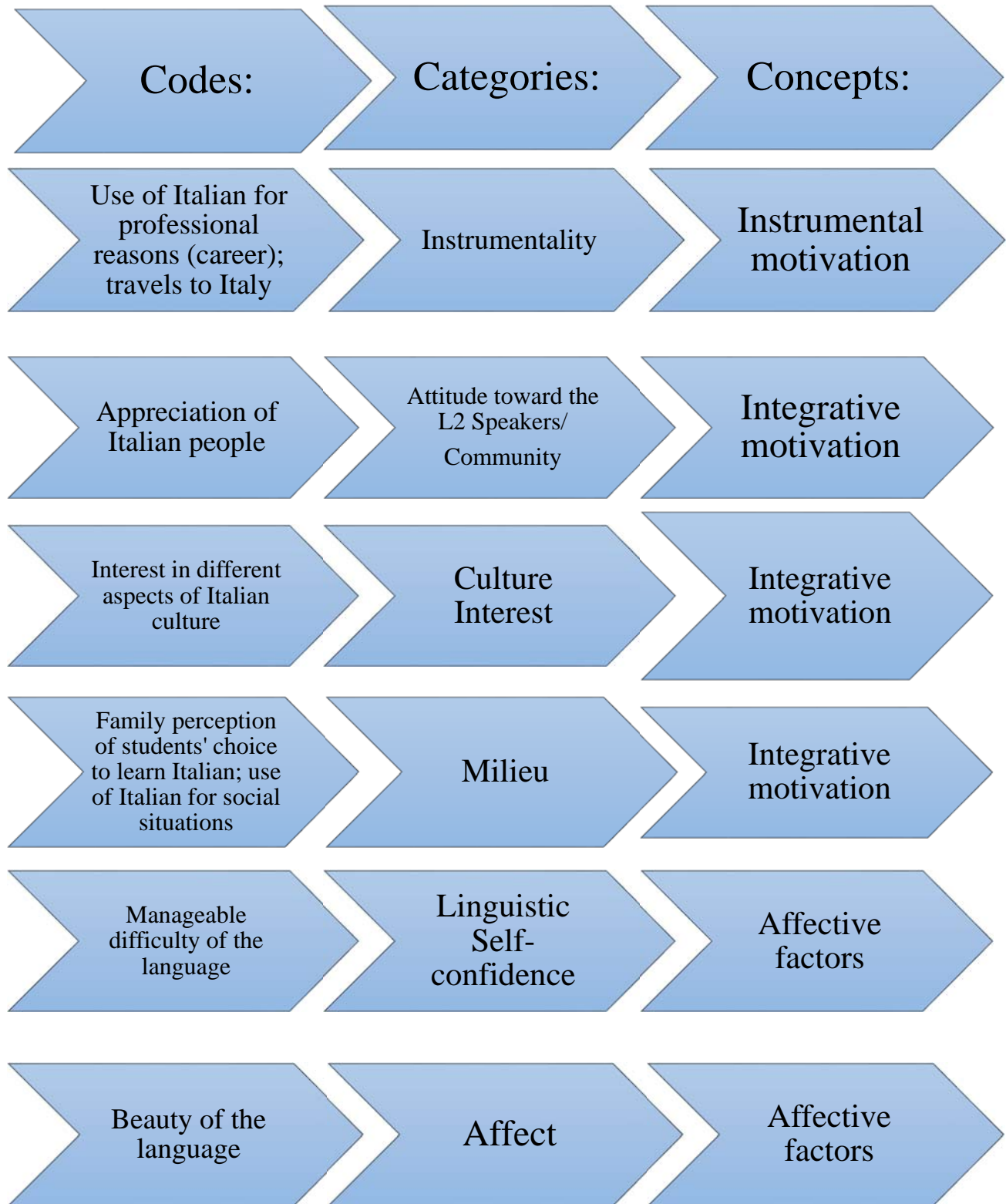
As far as their present level of Italian, the two high school students are in the same level class, AP Italian. Emily reported that she started to study Italian “about a year ago” and Mark “approximately two years ago”. Both Elvira and Tiffany are in the advanced level class at Società Dante Alighieri, and they have been studying Italian for a longer time compared to the high school students, Elvira “for 12 years” and Tiffany since 2005. Only the high school students reported that they have previously studied or are presently studying also other foreign languages. Emily studied Spanish in middle school and French in previous years in high school, attaining the highest level in this language. Mark studied Spanish in middle school and is presently studying French and Mandarin Chinese, in addition to Italian, at the high school and is taking classes of Japanese after school as an extra-curricular activity. The two high school students have spent several

years studying different languages, compared to Elvira and Tiffany who concentrated several years primarily on the study of Italian.

### **Motivational Factors Reported by Students**

In order to present the different motivational factors reported by the four students in the course of the interviews, thematic analysis was utilized to analyze the data from the transcripts, using the “Three Cs of Data Analysis: Codes, Categories, Concepts” suggested by Lichtman (2013). The following codes emerged in the students’ answers: use of Italian for professional reasons; travels to Italy; appreciation of Italian people; family perception of students’ choice to learn Italian; interest in different aspects of Italian culture; use of Italian in social situations; manageable difficulty of the language; beauty of the language. The codes were organized in categories according to motivational factors identified by Csizer and Dornyei (2005): instrumentality, attitude toward the L2 speakers/community, culture interest, milieu, linguistic self-confidence. A separate category for integrative motivation was not included, as some of the above mentioned categories can be considered as sub-categories of integrative motivation. Csizér and Dörnyei’s category of vitality of the L2 community was also excluded since the students’ responses did not mention that motivation. Another factor related to motivation, affect, was included instead, as it was reflected in the answers given by some of the students. The following figure shows the interpretation of the motivational factors reported by the four students during the interviews according to the “Three Cs of Data Analysis: Codes, Categories, Concepts” (Lichtman, 2013).

**Figure 1.** Interpretation of students’ motivational factors according to the “Three Cs of Data Analysis: Codes, Categories, Concepts” (Lichthman, 2013).



## **Instrumentality**

As previously defined in reference to the researchers whose works provide the conceptual framework of this study, instrumentality refers to the perceived benefits of learning another language for practical uses, such as work or travel. In their responses to the interview questions, the four students mainly mentioned career and travel as their types of motivations to learn Italian that are related to instrumentality.

### **Career**

Although none of the students indicated career as one of their main reasons to study Italian, all four mentioned the possibility of using the language in their present or future profession. Of the two high school students, Mark indicated his desire to live in Italy for some time in the future, “maybe to go for a year in college” being sure that “at one point or the other it will come with some work experience.” Emily mentioned that she hopes “to work doing some kind of international relation, so the more languages I know the better, and hopefully I can [also] use Italian.”

Of the two Dante Alighieri students, Tiffany reported using Italian in her secondary business as an English/Italian translator of websites and brochures related to tourism. Elvira instead sometimes uses Italian in her work at the purchasing department of a cruise line, as “we have ships all over the world and also in Europe, and we have to buy produce and dairy products in Italy.” Although the four students recognized the possibility of using Italian in their profession, they all saw this as an additional advantage, not as the most important motivation to learn the language.

## **Travel**

Of the two types of motivation related to instrumentality reported by the four students, travel is definitely the stronger. Travel to Italy had a big impact on all four students' decision to start to study Italian and to continue learning it. All four students reported having traveled to Italy several times, and that is was their first discovery of the country and its culture that motivated them not only to start studying the language but also to continue learning it, in order to be able to communicate with increased confidence and proficiency in their following visits.

At the high school, Mark reported that he travels to Italy almost every summer, due to his father's professional interests in the field of fashion, and that he has been to Florence, Rome, Venice and Milan several times. It was during a trip to Italy in the summer before high school, however, that, as he reported, "I sort of realized I could learn Italian, and I love the country so much that it is usually my favorite place to be, so I thought, why not knowing a language I care so much about." Emily also reported that she travels to Italy frequently, and that her parents also advised her to study the language for this reason. Her motivation to study Italian is also linked to her desire to visit a country that she finds "beautiful in its entirety" and to which she wants to feel close.

It was during a trip with a group tour visiting several countries in Europe that Tiffany went to Italy for the first time in 2005. She noted that of all the countries visited during that trip, Italy was the one she enjoyed the most, and that she "knew right away that [she] wanted to go back regularly, so that's why [she] decided to learn the language." Elvira also reported having visited Italy several times, five in total so far, and that the first time she went there she "fell in love with the people, the language, the culture and the

music...and said “I have to learn the language!” Learning Italian therefore serves a practical purpose for these four students who travel frequently to Italy, relating this type of motivation that they reported to learn the language to instrumental factors.

### **Attitude toward the L2 Speakers/Community**

As mentioned earlier, this type of motivation refers to the students’ desire to meet L2 speakers and to travel to their country. Three out of the four students explicitly reported this motivational factor as an important aspect of their desire to learn Italian. The interaction with Italian speakers in Italy was definitely a positive experience for them and an incentive to study the language in order to communicate with them.

At the high school, Mark referred that interacting with the people in Italy is probably his favorite aspect of being in contact with the Italian culture. He mentioned that he frequently travels to Italy with his family, and that he has made friends there with whom he likes to communicate in Italian. In addition, he reported how he enjoys the positive reaction that Italians show in general toward foreigners who speak their language, which also has a positive impact on his confidence when expressing himself in Italian: “Italians are so willing to help you and so surprised that Americans are learning their language, with Americans having practically no genealogical connection to Italy...so I think it’s really awesome.”

Both Tiffany and Elvira also expressed how their appreciation for the Italian people has an impact on their motivation to learn their language. In particular, Tiffany mentioned how she enjoys seeing the interaction between Italians when she is in Italy: “To me they are so much more open, direct and dramatic than Americans here, so for me

it is interesting [...] to watch them, as opposed to our boring, monotonous way of speaking to each other and not really saying what you are thinking a lot of times.” A desire to interact with Italian people in their language is therefore a factor that positively affects these students’ motivation to study the language.

### **Culture Interest**

This type of motivation refers to the appreciation of cultural products such as literature, music and films created by the countries where the target language is spoken. Culture interest was the motivational factors most frequently mentioned by the four students. A passion for the country and a great interest in different aspects of its culture were reported by all four students multiple times during the interviews.

At the high school, Mark mentioned that since he traveled several times to Italy, he had the opportunity to be exposed to many aspects of the culture of the country since he was younger and developed a great interest for Italian books, movies, TV shows and music. He reported that he enjoys listening to modern Italian music by artists such as Modà, Emma Marrone and Alessandra Amoroso, but also that he is interested in other aspects of the Italian culture and way of life, such as politics, the “incredible” food and people. In his words “There are so many parts of the Italian culture I love. I think more than in any other country, I really like all aspects.” Similarly, Emily also referred to her interest for all aspects of Italian culture and mentioned that due to her passion for art, art history, museums and architecture, Italy represents an ideal place for her to visit.

Apart from a general appreciation for Italian culture and a passion for Italy and its people that it is evident from their answers, both Tiffany and Elvira also reported a

particular interest for the opera that is also behind their passion for the Italian language. In addition, Elvira mentioned that due to her interest in history she particularly enjoys watching Alberto Angela's TV documentaries, which serves as an additional incentive to learn the language.

### **Milieu**

As previously mentioned, milieu refers to the influence of the immediate social environment, such as family and friends, on students' motivation to learn a language. Based on the students' answers, it was interesting to notice how the two high school students' parents had a different perception of their children's desire to learn Italian. Mark reported that his parents "were a little bit apprehensive just because it's not necessarily viewed as the most useful language in the world right now." Emily reported instead that her parents were very supportive of her choice to study Italian and encouraged her to take additional private lessons at Società Dante Alighieri in order for her to successfully meet the challenges of her AP class at the high school.

All four students reported their motivation to learn Italian in order to communicate with friends locally. At the high school, Mark mentioned his opportunity to speak Italian "with friends from school and from outside the school who went to school in Switzerland" or "with friends whom I met in Italy over the years ...[and] I definitely speak Italian with them, since their English is rather poor." Emily reported using Italian with classmates, or "other students who aren't Italian but just want to learn Italian, students who are of Italian descent and, of course, professors." At Società Dante Alighieri, Tiffany mentioned her motivation to learn Italian in order to communicate with



the people in her Italian class and also to speak the language with “the Italian people who own some places on Miracle Mile.” Elvira also mentioned her motivation for learning Italian so she could use it with her daughter and some directors at her work, apart from her classmates in her class at Società Dante Alighieri.

### **Linguistic Self-Confidence**

This type of motivation refers to a learner’s confident and anxiety-free belief that the mastery of a L2 is within his/her means. All four students implied that they were confident in their ability to learn Italian, which in general they did not find overtly difficult. In particular, Emily reported that her knowledge of French helps her with Italian, as these are both Latin languages. She added that already knowing another Latin language, like French, Spanish or Portuguese can be really helpful for someone who is learning Italian. In this sense, studying other languages and speaking Spanish can represent an advantage also for Mark and for Elvira when learning Italian.

Although all four students reported that they find Italian a relatively easy language to learn, they all indicated, however, that grammar can be sometimes hard for them, especially verbs. They referred to the conjugation of tenses such as the *Passato prossimo*, *Passato remoto*, *Imperfetto* and *Congiuntivo* as the most challenging aspect of the Italian grammar for them. When asked how much time they dedicate to the study of the language at home, Emily reported spending actually “about an hour every day”, in addition to taking private lessons at Società Dante Alighieri. Similarly, Elvira also tries to dedicate half an hour daily to her Italian homework, if she has the time. Talking to native speakers, reading, and listening to authentic material, however, were generally indicated

by the students as the best ways to practice the language. In particular, Mark, Tiffany, and Elvira suggested that watching movies, reading books and listening to radio programs in Italian, as well as interacting with native Italian speakers, are the most helpful ways to learn new vocabulary and to learn how to express themselves in an authentic way. Taking courses in Italy and studying from Italian textbooks were additional efficient ways to learn the language suggested by Tiffany.

### **Affective Factors**

According to the definition given in the Webster Dictionary, the adjective *affective* can be referred to an event or factor “Pertaining to exciting *emotion*” (1913 Webster’s Online Dictionary). Applied to the learning process, “Affective factors are emotional factors which influence learning”(www.teachingenglish.ork.uk). Extensive research carried out in Second Language Acquisition over the years shows that positive, as well as negative feelings and emotions can have an effect on the learning experience in the target language. In particular, in his Affective Filter Hypothesis, Krashen (1982) argued that these emotions act as an *affective filter*, representing a psychological obstacle that learners have to face when learning another language. The lower the filter, the more comfortable and effective is the learning experience in the target language. It can be guessed that the perceived beauty of the Italian language can elicit positive emotions that have a favorable impact on the motivation to study the language.

This kind of motivation linked to affective factors was mentioned by two of the students, Mark and Tiffany. Mark reported that he loves the way Italian is pronounced, and described the language as “very poetic, very pretty obviously, very rhythmic, and in a

way a lot like French, but a little more calm in its pronunciation.” Tiffany also mentioned that she likes the sound of the language and reported that she enjoys listening both to everyday Italian and to the language in the opera and in music too.

### **Summary**

According to information obtained from an interview with Claudio Pastor, Director of Società Dante Alighieri in Miami, the study of Italian enjoys a high status among other foreign languages studied in this city and holds the position of third place as a foreign language in popularity, after Spanish and French. Italian is present in the curricula of many of the schools in Miami-Dade County, where it is offered in about 25% of the high schools, both public and private, that offer it among other foreign languages in their curriculum, and in a number of schools that provide specific programs sponsored by the Italian Consulate. The teaching of Italian is one of the main objectives of Società Dante Alighieri, a cultural organization supported by the Italian government that aims at promoting the Italian culture and language in the community in general through the organization of courses of Italian and cultural events.

According to Pastor, the motivation to study Italian in Miami can be mostly attributed to the desire of people to connect with a culture that they love or, in some cases, to reconnect with the culture of their ancestors, which can be related to the integrative factors explained by Gardner and Lambert (1959). As far as the types of motivation reported by the four students interviewed, their answers were organized according to the motivational factors identified by Csizèr and Dörnyei (2005) and the most frequently reported factors were instrumentality (travel), attitude toward the L2

speakers/community, culture interest and linguistic self-confidence, most of which are also strongly related to integrative factors. For the participants, both in the schools and in extra-curricular language courses, the study of Italian in Miami is related therefore to the concept of integrative motivation.

## **CHAPTER V**

### **SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS**

The purpose of this study was to investigate the current status of the teaching and learning of the Italian language in Miami and particularly to identify the motivational factors behind student enrollment in Italian programs locally. To investigate the current status of the study of Italian in this community, an in-depth interview was conducted with Claudio Pastor, local director of Società Dante Alighieri, a cultural organization that works with the Italian government towards the diffusion of the Italian culture and the maintenance of the Italian language abroad. To investigate student motivations for enrolling in Italian programs locally, semi-structured interviews were conducted with four students studying Italian in two different settings, Società Dante Alighieri and a local private high school. The information obtained during the interviews with Pastor was presented in a narrative, organized into main topics related to the first two research sub-questions of this study. Themes emerged from the four students' responses to a list of pre-determined semi-structures questions. These themes were analyzed and organized based on the conceptual framework presented in Chapter I and were used to provide an answer to the third research sub-question.

This chapter presents a summary and holistic analysis of the responses given by the five participants in this study and further offers my personal conclusions. The findings of this study show that the study of Italian in Miami is mostly related to people's interest in the Italian culture and partially also to the desire of local people having an Italian descent to reconnect to the language of their ancestors. The motivational factors of

local students to enroll in Italian programs can be related therefore to integrative motivation. These findings can be useful when assessing existing Italian curricula and when creating new programs in the future, keeping into account that a more detailed knowledge of student motivation for studying Italian can help educators develop the appropriate materials and methods to be used to target the teaching of the language more effectively to people's interests and needs.

### **The Current Status of the Study of Italian in Miami**

This section presents a general description of the current status of the study of Italian in Miami based on information obtained from Claudio Pastor, Director of Società Dante Alighieri, during the interviews conducted for this study, as well as on my personal conclusions. Italian holds a high status among other foreign languages studied in Miami, presently occupying the third place after Spanish and French in local language programs. The study of Italian in this city is ranked higher than its general position in the United States, where according to the latest MLA report of 2013 Italian presently holds the fifth place after Spanish, French, American Sign Language, and German. The higher status of Italian compared to German in particular can be explained by the characteristics of the population in Miami, that being largely Hispanic has more cultural affinity and a stronger linguistic connection with Latin languages in general.

The strong position that Italian holds in Miami is remarkable, considering the diffusion of other foreign languages locally, beside Spanish. Languages of local relevance include Haitian Creole, Portuguese, and Miccosukee, which all occupy a prominent place in the local community. However, the local diffusion of these languages

is linked to different factors than Italian. Florida population is very diverse with regard to place of birth and language spoken at home. According to data from the Office of Economic and Demographic Research (2005), between 1990 and 2000 the percentage of the population in Florida who spoke a language other than English at home rose to more than 23%. In 2003-2004 Miami-Dade was “one of the three schools districts in Florida [with] more than 40% of their students with a home language other than English” (p.11). Haitian Creole and Portuguese are among the top five home languages other than English spoken in Florida, and Miccosukee is one of the two languages spoken by the Seminole Tribe of Florida ([www.semtribe.com](http://www.semtribe.com)). The relevance of these languages in the local community is due therefore to their status of home languages for an important percentage of Florida population.

Regarding the factors that have been historically linked to the diffusion of the Italian language in the United States, (a) Italian as a language related to arts, music, classical culture as well as culinary tradition, and (b) Italian as an important “community language” (Macchiarella as cited by Mason, 1997), the diffusion and the study of Italian in Miami are also related to these factors. As previously mentioned, locally the study of Italian is mostly linked to people’s interest in the Italian culture and partially also to the desire of local people of Italian origin to reconnect to the language of their ancestors.

Review of literature and information obtained from Pastor underline the important role that cultural organizations hold in the efforts of maintenance of foreign languages and cultures in a community. These efforts are also evident in Miami through the role of Società Dante Alighieri, an association that works in connection with the Italian Consulate General in order to propagate the study of the Italian language abroad. This

cultural organization has been holding an important role in the diffusion of Italian in the local community since 1997 through the organization of courses and cultural events, but was already present in Miami in the 1960s, taking part in the efforts of reevaluation of the Italian language that had started at the time. Following the general impulse toward the study of foreign languages that was taking place in the United States due to historical factors such as “the panic associated with the launching of the Sputnik by the Soviet Union in 1957” (Rosenthal, 2013, p. 54) and also to the acknowledgment of the existence of an increasingly diverse population in this country, the teaching of foreign languages became indeed an important national matter in the 1960s and also positively affected the teaching of Italian both at the national and the local level.

My decision to interview Claudio Pastor for this study was due to my knowledge of the important role that Società Dante Alighieri has been playing in the promotion of the study of Italian in the local community, both as an extra-curricular activity for the general public and in the foreign language curricula in local schools. The work of this cultural organization also contributes to maintain the current high status of the study of Italian and to attain the rank that it presently holds among other languages in the community.

### **Local Programs of Italian**

This study was not undertaken to present a detailed description of the Italian language programs offered in Miami, but rather to offer a general idea of the teaching of the language in this city, which was obtained through review of literature and from information received from Claudio Pastor in the course of this investigation on the



current status of the Italian in this city. Italian is taught at all levels of instruction locally, but particularly at the secondary level. At the high school level, Italian is presently taught in 25% of the high school in Florida and in Miami-Dade County, both private and public, many of which also offer the AP Italian exam. At the university level, Italian is taught locally at the University of Miami and at Florida International University at the undergraduate level.

Several high schools in Miami offer Italian among other languages in their foreign language programs. Among them, public schools such as Coral Gables High School, John A. Ferguson Senior High School, Law Enforcement Officer's Memorial High School, Mater Academy East Charter School, Miami Beach Senior High School, Miami Coral Park Senior High School, Miami Palmetto Senior High School, Saint Brendan High School, Trevor Packer High School, Somerset Academy High School, Westland Hialeah Senior High School and a number of private schools including the one whose two students I interviewed for this work also offer the Italian AP exam ([www.odli.us](http://www.odli.us)).

It is important to mention that in addition to the regular Italian programs offered by the aforementioned high schools, selected public schools in Miami such as George Washington Carver Elementary School, George Washington Carver Middle School, International Studies Preparatory Academy (ISPA) and International Studies Charter High School (ISCHS) offer specific Italian programs that are supported by the Italian Consulate. The organization of these programs is supervised by the *Direttore scolastico*, an expert in the Italian school system specifically working in this role at the Consulate and is sponsored by funds that the Consulate receives from the Italian government, which are distributed to the schools by the Organization for the Development of Italian Studies

(ODLI). Originally meant for the children of expatriate families living in Miami on a temporary basis, these courses are developed in line with the curricula taught in Italian schools, with the idea that once the families return to Italy their children could be directly reincorporated in the Italian school system without much difficulty. These programs are now also open to the general public, in that only about 10% of the students presently studying Italian in the schools where these programs are offered have Italian origin.

In its efforts for the maintenance and diffusion of the Italian language, the role of Società Dante Alighieri covers different aspects of the promotion of the culture and language in the community, including the organization of different types of extra-curricular Italian classes. The organization offers eight-week level courses that follow the programs established by the headquarters of the organization in Rome, in addition to private classes and group classes for corporate clients or diplomats who are interested in learning Italian for professional reasons. Pastor concluded that the strong interest existing for Italian in the local community, however, is also due to the fact that Miami's largely Hispanic population has a great linguistic and cultural connection with the Italian language and culture.

### **The Local Community and the Study of Italian**

This section is meant to provide a general description of the population that is interested in the study of Italian in the local community, based on information obtained from review of the literature and from Pastor's responses in the interviews. Pastor observed that Miami is rather unique compared to other cities in the United States where the study of Italian is also popular, as for example Boston and especially New York,

whose relationship with the Italian language is linked to the history of the Italian immigrants who settled there and for whom Italian represented largely what Mason (1997) referred to as a “community language” (p. 518).

In Miami the population interested in the study of Italian is more heterogeneous. As previously mentioned, demographic information show that Miami is not only one of the cities with the largest Italian-American communities in the state of Florida, but that it is also home to a large Latin American and Caribbean population of Italian descent and a transient place of recent Italian expatriation. In the last two decades especially Miami has seen the arrival of many immigrants from Argentina, Brazil and Venezuela who also have an Italian descent.

The presence of an Italian-Latin American community is reflected in the growing interest in the Italian language locally, as these immigrants coming from Latin America joined the Italian community living in Miami and contribute in keeping the interest for the Italian language alive. It is evident that hundreds of years of Italian immigration to both North and South America and a more recent movement of Italian expatriation to the United States are represented to great extent in the population in Miami and also largely benefit the interest for the language in this city.

### **People’s Motivations for Studying Italian in Miami**

This section presents a holistic analysis of the five participants’ responses to questions related to motivation asked during the interviews in this study. An investigation of students’ motivation for studying Italian in the local community was an important component of this study. In particular, this investigation of student motivation aimed at

discovering if the students' interest for the language derives from an attraction for the Italian culture or the possibility of using the language in their profession, therefore relating respectively to this report's conceptual framework of integrative and instrumental motivation introduced by Gardner and Lambert (1959). Historically, the study of Italian in this country has been linked both to cultural and ethnic factors (Adorno, 1996; Cardasco, 2001; Fucilla, 1967) which are strongly related to integrative motivation.

According to Pastor, the motivation to study Italian in Miami can be mostly attributed to the desire of people to connect with a culture they love or, in some cases, because they are Americans or South Americans with an Italian descent and want to reconnect with the culture and language of their ancestors. The same impulse to learn Italian in order to maintain their linguistic heritage that had characterized second and third generation Italian-Americans, starting a positive trend in the study of the language, can be seen also behind the motivation that brings some of the Italian-Latin American people living in Miami to study the language of their grand-parents. This idea can also be related to the integrative factors emphasized by Gardner and Lambert (1959). The interest for the language in the local community, however, is strong also due to the fact that the Hispanic population in Miami has a greater affinity with Italian than with other prominent foreign languages like French or German.

The four students interviewed partially referred to instrumental motivation in their responses when they recognized the possibility to use Italian in their profession, even though they did not mention this factor as their main motivation to study the language. Using the language for travelling, on the other hand, was the stronger motivational factor related to instrumentality reported by the students.

Three out of the four students explicitly reported “Attitude toward the L2 speakers/community” as an important motivational factor to learn Italian. They mentioned how the interaction with Italian native speakers and people who speak the language in general is a positive experience for them and gives them the incentive to study the language. The students mentioned how particularly the interaction with the Italian people in Italy was a source of enjoyment for them and how their appreciation for the Italian language is also linked to their appreciation for the Italian people.

“Cultural interest” was the motivational factor unanimously and most frequently referred to by the four students. A passion for the country and for many aspects of its culture was reported by the students numerous times during the interviews. An interest for Italian movies, music, literature, and art was mentioned by the students as an important incentive behind their interest for studying the language. A connection between the desire to learn Italian and people’s interest for the Italian music and the opera was already present in the United States since the Colonial times.

“Linguistic self-confidence” had also an important role in the students’ motivation to learn the language, as they generally found Italian a relatively accessible language in term of difficulty, apart from a few challenges represented by the study of the verbs. The students’ confidence in their ability to learn Italian can be related to the fact that many of the people who learn Italian in Miami are also Spanish speakers, and that the knowledge of another Latin language can represent a great advantage.

The motivational factors prevalently mentioned by the students are also related to integrative motivation. Both in the schools and in extra-curricular language courses, the study of Italian in Miami can be related to the concept of integrative motivation originally

elaborated by Garner and Lambert (1959) and to the subsequent elaboration of the concept presented by Csisér and Dörnyei (2005).

### **Conclusion**

Italian holds a strong place currently in Miami. Not only is there a widespread diffusion of the language in professional sectors including finance, business, and construction and in the hospitality sector (Pastor, 2008), but there is also a solid interest for the study of the language in the local community, both in schools and in extra-curricular classes. Concerning local people's motivation behind their interest for the language, the findings of this study are in line with research findings that historically the study of Italian in the United States has been linked both to cultural and ethnic factors (Adorno, 1996; Cardasco, 2001; Fucilla, 1967) and support that these factors similarly apply to the local community. This study concludes that people in Miami study Italian mostly for their interest for the Italian culture and, in the case of people with an Italian descent, most of whom are Latin Americans, also for their desire to reconnect with the language of their ancestors. Like in the rest of the United States, the study of Italian in Miami can also be linked to the concept of "integrative motivation" suggested by Gardner and Lambert (1959) and particularly to the additional motivational factors "Attitude toward the speakers/L2 community" and "Cultural interest" introduced by Csisér and Dörnyei (2005).

The investigation of the status of the teaching and learning of Italian in Miami that was carried out in this study can lead to investigate more specifically in future studies the curricula of local Italian programs. A suggestion for future research could be,

for example, an evaluation of the existing methods and textbooks of Italian, in order to see if they adequately represent contemporary cultural information, considering that the interest for the Italian language is strongly linked to an attraction for the Italian culture.

As Pastor observed at the end of his interview, for the people who decide to study Italian, the language offer them “the vast richness of what Italy represents, whether it is history, music, art, food or Italians with their character and their generosity”. Based on the information obtained in this study I concluded that the present and future of the Italian language in the local as well as in the national context looks positive, as the interest for Italian is not linked to economic or political trends but to a passion for the many aspects of the Italian culture or to a desire to connect with people and family. The current status of the study of Italian in Miami is positive and based on the perspectives of the participants in this study students’ interest for the language is linked to strong cultural factors. For these reasons, is can be assumed that there will be always interest for the language and Italian programs will always have a solid position in the study of foreign languages.

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## **Appendix A**

### **Study Informative Pamphlet**



## **YOU ARE INVITED TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY**

### **Title: An Investigation of the Current Status of the Teaching and Learning of the Italian Language in Miami: A Qualitative Study about Students' Motivational Factors**

Dear Student,

We would like you to take part in a research study. The investigator of this study is Antonella La Tegola, a master student at Florida International University. The study will investigate the study of the Italian language in Miami and what motivates students like you to choose to study this language.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. If you agree to participate, you will be interviewed twice for approximately thirty minutes at this institution. The interviews will include questions about the reasons why you chose to study Italian, how much you know about the language and how you are learning it.

There are no known risks related to the interview. Furthermore, you are entitled not to respond any question should you choose to do so. You may request to stop participating in the study at any time. Doing so will not place you at any risk with respect to any penalty or judgment at the school. In addition, there is no cost or gain related to your participation in this study but your answers will offer important information about the study of Italian.

You must sign a consent form if you choose to be part of the study. This form also explains the study. Additionally, you may ask questions about the study at any time.

Please note that all data in the research is private and will not be shared with school officials. The records of this study will be kept private and will be protected by the researchers. Nobody will know that you are in the study and the information you will give us during the interview will be kept anonymous and confidential. The results of the study will be presented without any reference to individuals.

If you would like to know more about this research, you can contact Antonella La Tegola at (305) 213-9433 or [alate001@fiu.edu](mailto:alate001@fiu.edu). If you are willing to participate in this study, please return the signed consent form to the director of this institution.

Thank you very much.

## Appendix B

In-depth interview topics/questions (Guided conversation with Claudio Pastor, Director of Società Dante Alighieri in Miami)

1. Biographical questions (How long have you been living in Miami? How long have you been the director at Società Dante Alighieri? etc...)
2. In how many primary and secondary public schools is Italian taught in South Florida?
3. Where is Italian taught in Miami? In how many public and private school?
4. When was the first Italian program implemented in Miami?
5. About how many primary and secondary school students are enrolled in Italian programs in Miami?
6. When was the Società Dante Alighieri inaugurated in Miami?
7. How many levels of Italian are offered by Società Dante Alighieri?
8. Are there courses for children and adults?
9. How many students are enrolled in the Italian courses at Società Dante Alighieri?
10. Are the numbers stable, rising or declining?
11. How are the teachers recruited?
12. Is there a connection between the students choosing to learn Italian and their ethnic origin?
13. From you experience, what are the main factors that motivate students to learn Italian in Miami?
14. How is the relationship with of the Italian language different in Miami than in other big cities in the United States?

## Appendix C

Semi-structured interview questions (Guided conversations with high school students/students at Societa' Dante Alighieri)

1. How old are you? (*ask only high school students*)
2. What grade are you in? (*ask only high school students*)
3. Where are you from?
4. What language (s) do you speak at home?
5. How long ago did you start learning Italian?
6. Does anybody speak Italian in your family?
7. Why did you choose to learn Italian (instead of one of the other foreign language offered at your school)?
8. What aspects of the language do you like the most and the least? Explain.
9. Do you find the Italian language easy or difficult to learn? Why?
10. Do you spend a lot of time studying the language at home?
11. Do you use the language outside school? Do you plan to use it outside school?
12. Do you think you will use the language in your (future) profession?
13. How do you perceive the other students learning Italian? Do you enjoy speaking Italian with them?
14. Do you know other people who speak Italian here in Miami? Do like being around people who are fluent in the language?
15. Is there a particular aspect of the Italian culture you enjoy? How does learning Italian help you develop a connection with the Italian culture?
16. What advice would you give to other students who are learning Italian?