

Academic Sabbatical Activity Report

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Overview

During my academic sabbatical, I engaged in a research study focused on identity development of 6th grade bilingual students with a specific focus on biliteracy and biculturalism. This work provided valuable insights into bicultural identity formation and perspectives for students in local dual-language immersion programs.

Research Activities

Self-Portrait Activity: The students created self-portraits in which they drew themselves, and then they were interviewed one-on-one to describe their self-portraits, specifically focusing on their identity as bilingual individuals who had been in a dual-immersion program since TK or kindergarten.

Biliteracy Trees Project: In small groups, the students created "biliteracy trees," visually depicting and labeling different aspects of their bilingualism. The roots of the tree represented the foundation of their bilingual abilities, the trunk symbolized how bilingualism shaped their identity, and the leaves illustrated how they intended to use their bilingual skills to impact others. They then engaged in focus group conversations about these images, discussing their interpretations, experiences, and connections to their bilingual identities.

Data Collection: Collected quantitative data through semi-structured interviews and focus group conversation to understand how students navigate, integrate, and understand their bilingual identity. Students were allowed to use their full linguistic repertoire to respond, with many responding in both English and Spanish. All interviews were transcribed and are currently in the process of being thematically coded.

Findings & Contributions

- Identified key factors that support successful biliteracy development, including parental involvement, culturally and linguistically affirming teaching, peer network and support, and immersive language experiences.
- Gained insights into how students construct their bicultural identities within the school environment and the role of peer interactions in this process.

Future Applications

The findings from this study will contribute to ongoing research in dual-language and bilingual education and inform best practices for educators working with bilingual students. Additionally, this work may serve as the foundation for future publications, conference presentations, and curriculum development efforts aimed at fostering effective biliteracy education. I am currently

working on manuscripts related to this project, with the intention of submitting them to *TESOL Quarterly*, *The Reading Teacher*, *Multilingual Educator*, and *Bilingual Research Journal*.

Conclusion

My academic sabbatical was a highly productive period dedicated to understanding the interactions between bicultural identity, biliteracy, and dual-language education programs. The insights gained will be instrumental in shaping my future research and professional contributions to the field of bilingual education.