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Student-to-Student Communication in a Dual Immersion Classroom

by

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INTRODUCTION

A dual immersion classroom is a space in which academic, social, and emotional skills are learned in a target language; in my classroom, the target language is Spanish. The goal of dual immersion is to immerse English speakers with native Spanish speakers and bilingual students to support the development of bilingualism and biliteracy. Combining language minority and language majority students provides a structure where students reach high levels of academics, bilingualism, and develop positive cross-cultural attitudes (Potowski 2004). This is my second year in a dual immersion setting, and I have seen that by the end of an academic school year, most students are at grade level with reading and/or writing. With this success in mind, there is still a larger issue at hand. In my classroom, students may be meeting their learning goals in the target language, yet their oral production and use of the language with their peers remains at a minimum. In my classroom, I am the Spanish model of the language and therefore, my students do not hear me speak English. In our structured learning blocks, such as Language Arts and Math, there is an abundance of language practice opportunities including participation, modeling, collaboration, and whole group learning experiences. Within these times, there are sentence frames provided, vocabulary enrichment opportunities, and encouragement to practice the target language. Many students make great efforts to learn Spanish as a means of communicating with me. In addition, during these times, our Spanish speakers serve a purposeful role as the language models. This supports English-Only students with exposure to language accuracy. This type of support is designed to set the students up for success with their Spanish oral language production in hopes of increasing student-to-student communication. Although the structures are set in place, students do not necessarily put in the same level of effort to communicate with their peers in Spanish.

Statement of the Problem

Although students are striving to learn the language, they often go back to communicating with their peers in English and their practice of the target language is directed toward me. Student-to-student communication in the target language appears to be at a minimum in our classroom. This issue shapes students' development and success in the target language. Students learning "just enough" to pass will not suffice for them to truly develop and grow in a dual immersion setting.

Research Question and Subquestions

This study focuses on student-to-student oral language interactions and opportunities in the classroom. My research question is:

How can I foster an environment in which student-to-student communication in the target language is present throughout the day?

The following subquestions further guide this research:

1. How does my classroom environment facilitate or prevent student-to-student communication?

2. Where are there collaborative opportunities that can increase student-to-student communication in Spanish?

3. What is my role as the language model in facilitating student-to-student communication in Spanish?

Summary

This study was designed to explore how students interact with each other in a dual immersion classroom using the target language of Spanish. It looked at student interactions with their peers in the target language, as well as teacher-student interaction and the opportunities that facilitate student-to-student communication in Spanish.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Dual language education is a model of instruction that offers students the learning opportunity to become bilingual and biliterate members of their community. According to the Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL) organization (2019), immersion programs originally developed in Canada and were soon after established in the United States. In addition, dual immersion programs are on the rise in our country. Based off the CAL Dual Language Program Directory, there are 824 immersion programs in the United States; California has 292 programs and 271 of those programs have Spanish as the target language to be acquired.

Dual language programs vary in format and immersion is considered a technique and a program type (Center for Applied Linguistics, 2019). The Center for Applied Linguistics (2019) describes two-way immersion as a form of dual language education where we find the number of native English speakers and native speakers of the target language balanced and integrated so that both groups of students serve in the role of language model and language learner. Depending on what model the school finds fitting, an immersion program may be 50:50 or 90:10. An immersion program model that uses 50% of instruction with English and the target language is 50:50; an immersion program model in which instruction in the target language consist of 90% of the day and 10% in English is considered a 90:10 model. Generally, with each passing year, the level of instruction in English increases, and by third grade the instruction is 50% in English and 50% in the target language even within the 90:10 model. A program in which 50% of instruction is in the target language and immersion is used as the technique that requires the teacher to stay in the target language during instructional time. The language variation is structured as a model that sets up the opportunities for students to support one another with the language.

Language opportunities, student interaction, and teachers have been found to influence student communication in both languages in a dual immersion program. The literature reviewed discusses these and their role in student-to-student communication.

Language Opportunities in the Classroom

Providing positive opportunities for students to use the target language in the classroom has been found to shape learning and language production. In his article *Bilingualism For All*, Christian (2000) shares that, "an environment that promotes positive attitudes toward both languages and cultures, supports the development of full bilingual proficiency for both groups of students" (p. 2). Because bilingual proficiency is a goal in dual immersion classrooms, it is important that collaborative language opportunities for oral language communication are built into the instructional day.

Classroom structures have been found to influence target language use. Christian (2000), for example, found in his research on two-way immersion education, that factors such as extensive peer interaction, cooperative learning, and student-centered classrooms shaped language production amongst students. Christian (2000) also states that multiple opportunities for social interaction, group activities, and sustained opportunities for peer interaction influenced student-to-student communication. Likewise, Axelrod (2018) suggests in her research study of translanguaging that interactive opportunities vary from indoor and outdoor play to morning and afternoon circles, as well as small group work time. She argues that students in a dual immersion classroom need these collaborative settings and biliterate activities to increase their language practice amongst each other. This research puts forward the consideration that classroom structures are a critical consideration when teachers wish to increase Spanish use amongst students.

Social aspects of oral language production

Although the teacher's role is important in students' oral language production in the classroom, so are the social interactions students have with their peers. Palmer (2014) explains the idea of "dynamic bilingualism." This is a bilingualism that connects the language practices to a sociocultural context. It is argued that students need to be provided with language exploration in social settings (Axelrod, 2017). Through everyday practices and opportunities for language explorations, students have a higher chance to use the language as a mean to converse with one another. In the early primary years, students are novice to the target language in the classroom; they grow familiar with language expectations and ability to process commands and are communicating to the best of their ability (Axelrod, 2017). Language acquisition is very demanding meta-linguistically; students grow mentally tired from processing the language throughout their academic days. With all this in mind, there is an underlying factor, that considerably contributes to supporting language development. Thus, it is very common in the first years of a dual language program for students to go through a "silent stage" (Roberts, 2014).

Given the complexity of acquiring a new language, rather than reserving language interactions to direct request, we need to make it a platform in which student- to-student interaction is always developing. It is important to consider when seeking to increase student-to-student communication in a dual immersion classroom. We want students to move past the direct request and begin to use the language for extended conversations. For students to develop their language use and feel satisfied with their communication of ideas, opportunities need to be given to them. Bilingual proficiency is heavily influenced by language practices that allow children to learn from each other (Axelrod, 2017). For example, in her study of bilingual children in a head start classroom. She focused on the practices of emergent bilingual 4-year old's and the way they

"negotiated between/among their languages(s) with peers, teachers, and the larger context within they were learning." (pg.104) She found that a designated space allows for language practice and communication in the target language (Axelrod, 2017).

Teachers' Influence on Language Production

Research tells us that student attitudes toward Spanish are heavily influenced by the teacher's positioning (Potowski, 2004) and, thus, teachers influence language production. Although there are varying program models, in a 90/10 dual immersion classroom the teacher remains in the target language throughout the day. As a result of this structure, the teacher plays a key role in the development and encouragement of students' use of Spanish in the classroom both with the teacher and amongst the students.

One way that teachers influence oral language production in the classroom is by drawing on native students' speaking abilities. For example, De Oliveira's (2015) qualitative study on teacher development and use of Spanish to scaffold students' learning found that teachers actively relied on peer support and would draw from students who were proficient in either language as a source and strategy for students' oral language production. Oliveria (2016) further states that a teacher is able to foster the development of students' confidence in both languages by drawing on students' social language to build their academic language, develop their self-esteem, identity, and increase motivation. Likewise, Palmer (2014) argues that it is important that teachers consistently position students as emergent bilinguals and models of oral Spanish language. The intentionality and purpose of a teacher's role in a dual immersion classroom is of high importance in encouraging language production.

Moreover, the research shows us that a teacher's willingness to be open and learn from the children creates a space in which children can be language experts (Axelrod, 2017) and that

teachers can serve as a model of how drawing from a student's native language support the linguistic transfer and development of social skills in the language (Oliveira, 2017). This suggests that teachers, as the language models, need to be receptive to learning from and building on the language practices of children. Teachers can use this as a building block to support Spanish oral language production by students.

Positioning of Spanish and Oral Language Use

An ongoing struggle in dual language classrooms is the fight for the validity of the Spanish language identity when it is seen as a minority language. In her study of student Spanish use in the Midwest, Potowski (2017) shares the harsh reality that "Spanish in the United States exists under very different circumstances compared with countries where [Spanish] is the dominant, prestigious language" (p.123). Although dual language programs are designed to "rebalance power imbalances" (Potowski, 2017, p. 131) and bring cultural awareness to our classrooms, teachers run into the recurring problem of minimal student-to-student communication in Spanish within dual language classrooms because of the way that Spanish is seen by the students. Potowski's (2004) ethnographic study suggested that although students are able to communicate in Spanish, English clearly remains the dominant language for peer interaction (Potowski, 2004). As much as a teacher may model the language, set expectations, and provide scaffolds for the language, these identity investments shape students' peer-to-peer communication in the classroom in Spanish (Potowski, 2004).

Spanish Investment and Schooling

The argument we find from this research is that students "invest" in the language as part of their identity. These investments have been shown in the research to have a great influence on oral language production in schools. Potowski's (2004) study argues that each student "brings

different historical, social, and linguistic relationship to Spanish" (p. 77) which she believes influences the amount of Spanish used by students in a dual immersion classroom. Potowski found that although Spanish was the class language, students spoke English and struggled to remain in the target language. Potowski's major argument was that using Spanish seemed connected to the identity of being academically successful. Likewise, Palmer's (2004) findings of the external influence for language support confirms the "investment" that influences the oral language produced in the classroom. She concludes that if students know they will benefit from their investment in the language, then they will be more inclined to use it.

Potowski (2004) also explored the cultural environment of the school and the connection to investment and oral language production by students in Spanish. The school in which the study was done was marked as a Spanish-speaking space. For example, the hallways had Spanish work that was produced by students, school announcements, discipline, and general hallways interactions were all done in Spanish. Despite these efforts, students were still drawn to speaking English, which the author thinks is related to it being the dominant language in our society.

This literature suggests that oral language needs to start with students investing in Spanish language acquisition. Through support and constant opportunities of learning and language exploration, students may further develop their skills.

Conclusion

The literature on oral language development and production in dual language classrooms suggest that there are several factors that shape these experiences including language opportunities in the classroom, social aspects of language production, teachers influence on language production, and Spanish investment and schooling.

METHODS

This study was designed to better understand how and when students in my dual

immersion kindergarten communicate in the target language of Spanish. Using three different

forms of data collection, my goal to was to gain further insight on how my classroom

environment facilitated student-to-student communication. Through video recording,

observations, and a survey, I identified where students engaged in communication in the target

language. Finally, to expand this study and identify the factors that influence communication, I

observed my role as the language model in facilitating student communication through video

recordings.

My research asked: **How can I foster an environment in which student-to-student**

communication in the target language is present throughout the day. To pursue this

question, I asked the following subquestions:

1. How does my classroom environment facilitate or prevent student-to-student

   communication in Spanish?

2. Where are there collaborative opportunities than I can use to increase student-to-student

   communication in Spanish?

3. What is my role as the language model in facilitating student-to-student communication

   in Spanish?

Participants and Setting

The participants in this study included 18 students enrolled in a Kindergarten dual

language classroom at Hewitt Elementary of the 18 participants, 33% of them were native

speakers of Spanish. The criteria to be a native speaker is to have had Spanish be the

participant's first and main home language. The other 33% of the participants were bilingual. For

participants to fit the criteria as bilingual they needed to be able to speak and listen in both

English and Spanish at home. Lastly, the remaining 33% of the participants were English-Only, meaning participants only had experience speaking and listening in English at home. The other participant was myself as the researcher, a second year dual immersion teacher. My teaching experience has only been in a dual immersion setting. I am also a native Spanish speaker. I grew up speaking Spanish at home and became bilingual throughout my years in school.

The community where the study took place was located in Southern California in a city with a population of approximately 80,000 people. The main language spoken is English within this area. The average household income distribution ranges from $10,000-$25,000. The area is a community with a high level of substance abuse and a large homeless population. This study took place at an Hewitt Elementary school in this city. This school has an enrollment of 744 students. The school's population is 70% Hispanic/Latino(a), 12.9% White, 12.6% Black or African American, and 3% two or more races.

This was the second year of the Dual Language (DL) program at Hewitt Elementary. As of that particular school year, there were two kindergarten classrooms that were dual language immersion (DLI) and two first grade classrooms that were also DLI. The setting of the kindergarten classroom where research was done had a combination of students from both within and outside the neighborhood. Students were enrolled into the program and placed after their language had been assessed. Students were placed as English speakers, Spanish speakers or Bilingual speakers. The dual immersion program followed a two-way 90:10 model. This means that, ninety percent of the students' day was in Spanish and 10% of the day was in English. For the 10% portion of the day, the students switched from their classroom to the partner teacher's classroom for the Academic English Language Development (AELD) time block. The 90:10

model in this DL classroom allowed students from different linguistic backgrounds to support

each other's linguistic needs and be models of the language.

The classroom setting was on an extended day schedule. An extended day schedule

means that the Kindergarten students attend school from 7:50 am to 1:34 pm. This is the first

year in which the kindergarten students were at school for an extended day as opposed to a half

day schedule. The classroom has an instructional aide for 1.5 hours of the day. The lead teacher

is responsible for the teaching and the instructional aide supports with interventions and

language development. The classroom has a high presence of parent volunteers. There are

volunteers in the classroom three days of the week. To provide support in regard to the two-way

immersion, there are information session for parents. Parent volunteers are also encouraged to

participate even though they may not speak the language; parents who speak Spanish are used as

language models and supports for kindergarten activities.

Data Collection

In order to answer the research question and sub questions, I collected data through

student observations, surveys, and video recordings of student interactions with each other and

with the teacher. Data was collected over five weeks, from December 2018 until January 2019.

Observations

The primary source for data was focused field observations (Appendix A). This data

helped answer how the classroom environment facilitated or prevented student-to-student

communication (Sub-research question #1). Throughout the day, I focused on language arts

workshops, recess, writing, math, and other social opportunities. During this time, I looked at

how frequently students were interacting with each other and how they communicated in

Spanish. The observation protocol was designed to focus attention on the students' activities and

the duration in which students communicated with each other in Spanish. In addition, the

observations also focused on the frequency of students switching languages. I looked at the

participants, interactions, conversations, context, and the duration. To further analyze the

situation, I had a tally chart which I used to record how often I saw student-to-student

communication in Spanish.

Survey

The second instrument used to collect data was a survey (Appendix B). This instrument

answered the question regarding collaborative opportunities in my classroom that increased

student-to-student communication in Spanish (Sub-research question #2). This survey was

designed to be grade-level appropriate for kindergarten participants. It was used to understand

students' personal feelings towards speaking Spanish in learning blocks throughout the day. This

survey contained five different learning blocks and 4 emojis that represented a scaled 4-1 (4

being highest enthusiasm to speak Spanish and 1 being less enthusiastic feelings towards using

Spanish in that learning block). The first question was in regard to Morning Meeting. During

this time of the day the students are in a circle and have an oral share out. Students chose from

four emojis on the survey to answer how they felt about speaking Spanish during that time block

of the day. The second question was about computer time. Computer time consisted of students

using their Chromebooks to use a program called Imagine Learning, a software that develops

Spanish literacy and oral language skills. Students chose from four emojis to answer on the

survey how they felt about speaking Spanish during that time block of the day. The third

question was in regard to whole class rug time. This is where the class has "Taller de Lectura"

Readers Workshop. During this time of the day, the Spanish Language Arts curriculum is taught.

Again, students had to choose which of the four emojis corresponding to how they felt about

speaking Spanish throughout that time of the day. The fourth question was on journal writing time. The fifth question was on math time. Students chose from the same four emojis to answer how they feel about speaking Spanish during those time blocks of the day.

Video Recording

The third instrument that was used to collect data was video recordings of teaching. I looked at the data to gain insight on what time of the day student-to-student communication was either facilitated or prevented. This data provided more answers to the question of how my role as the language model facilitated student-to-student communication in Spanish.

Data Collection Timeline

Observations and data collection were completed over 5 weeks during the months of December 2018 and January 2019 (Table 1). The school was in session three weeks in December due to winter break. Data was collected for the last 2 weeks of December and completed in January. In addition, video recording was done daily and the student survey was given in in mid-January.

Table 1

Data Collection Timeline

Month	Data Collection	Days
December	Observations/interactions	8
	Video recording	Daily
	Observations/interactions	10
January	Video recording	Daily
	Student surveys	1

Data Analysis

Upon collecting the data, I organized it to identify themes that came up frequently and across the data collection methods. My goal was to gain more understanding of the context and events that led to student-to-student communication in the classroom. For this reason, the data collected was organized through a table that allowed me to break up the setting and highlight patterns and themes relating to the research question. This format was insightful in the sense that was able to give me a clear understanding of how language was organized in my classroom and how students interacted with one another because of it. Through the table used, I coded a (+) if the observations encouraged student-to-student communication. In addition, if what was observed did not lead to student interaction it was coded with a (-). Through this coding I looked across the various instruments used to collect data and found the themes and patterns that related to the research questions.

Summary

These data collection methods were designed to answer the research questions regarding how I could foster an environment in which student-to-student communication in which the target language was increased throughout the day. The analyses revealed two major findings: The influence of learning blocks on oral language production; increase of student-to-student communication though peer support; and the importance of the teacher providing resources that are accessible to students.

FINDINGS

The goal in Hewitt Elementary Dual Immersion program is to guide students through literacy and language development to reach the goal of bilingualism and biliteracy. After conducting this study, the observations, survey and video recordings revealed three major findings that contribute student-to-student communication: The influence of learning blocks on oral language production; increase of student-to-student communication though peer support; and the importance of the teacher providing resources that are accessible to students. In this chapter I will discuss and elaborate on these findings.

Finding #1: Influence of Learning Blocks on Oral Language Production

The learning block setting emerged as a factor that influences student-to-student communication in this dual immersion classroom. In the survey completed by 18 students, the kindergartners were asked to describe how they felt about speaking Spanish during the significant time blocks of the day (i.e. morning meeting, imagine learning, rug time, writing, and math) (Table 2). Using emojis representing a scale from 1-4 (1 being a sad face and 4 being an extremely happy face) student responses, showed morning meeting was the most preferred learning block where students most enjoyed speaking Spanish.

Table 2.

Students' preferences for speaking Spanish during learning blocks
*cells are highlighted green, ^ cells are highlighted in red

Learning Block	😋	😊	😟	😣
Morning Meeting	*61%	16%	.05%	16%
Imagine Learning	38%	*50%	0%	11%
Rug Time	28%	*50%	11%	11%

Writing	*50%	22%	17%	10%
Math	*61%	11%	.05%	^22%

- Some responses were left blank. Totals don't add to 100

Morning Meeting

The results from the survey indicated that students most enjoyed speaking Spanish during Morning Meeting. Morning Meeting is a collaborative and engaging time at the very start of the students' academic day where students are encouraged to share, interact, and converse in Spanish. Teachers and students sit in a circle for approximately 10 minutes engaging in conversations that change daily and are designed to engage the students. Topics range from favorite foods to sharing their weekend experiences. Out of the 11 students that voted morning meeting as their favorite, three were native Spanish speakers, five were bilingual students, and 3 were English only students.

During this time, students' oral language production was amplified because of the need and desire to share as well as support from peers. As is evident from the observation field notes below. Students, regardless of their language background, contributed in Spanish during this time. For example, during an observation on January 7,2019 students were sharing about how they can express kindness throughout the week. Jessica, a Spanish speaking student started by saying, "Yo puedo ser amable con todos mis amigos" (*I can be kind to all my friends)*. Jessica then handed the sun used as a visual for kindness to Beller, a native English speaker. At that moment, Beller hesitated to start her sentence and Jessica leaned in to Beller and repeated the sentence frame to her. Beller then smiled and filled in the sentence frame "ser amable (be kind). This support increased Beller's Spanish oral language production during this time.

Literacy Block

The literacy block in this classroom consists of forty minutes of literacy related activities in which students engage in a workshop model. During this time, students are engaged in activities vary in focus from phonics to reading and writing strategies. As is evident in Table 1 50% of students marked that they enjoyed speaking Spanish during this time. The field observations also suggest that student-to-student communication was high at this time. The first observation on January 10th, 2019 focused on students' oral language production and I observed an interaction amongst three students. The first student was Elizabeth. Elizabeth is a bilingual student who was very comfortable with both languages and spoke English and Spanish to her peers. The second student was Jessica, a native Spanish speaker who rarely spoke English and sought to interact with students that spoke more Spanish. The third student was Gloria, an English speaker who rarely spoke to her peers and to the teacher. The dynamic between the three students supported the claim that setting highly influences student-to-student communication. The workshop activity was a collaborative opportunity in which students were coloring by syllables in Spanish. This means that students colored each syllable a different color, ultimately revealing a final picture. Throughout this observation, the students' conversation revolved around the colors that would be needed to color in the syllables of the literacy activity. Elizabeth was translating the colors for Gloria while at the same time supporting Jessica with reading the colors. This exchange of conversations between the three students was a perfect example that students can and do communicate with each other in Spanish in class.

Jessica (Spanish only): Que colores necesito ? (*What colors do you need?*)

Elizabeth (bilingual): Necesitas morado y ahorita voy a …. (*You need purple and now I will…*)

Jessica (Spanish only): Rosado? (*pink?*)

Elizabeth (bilingual): Morado. (*purple*)

Elizabeth (bilingual): *Gloria morado is purple.*

Gloria nods in agreement.

Jessica (Spanish only): Where is the purple? (in English)

Jessica (Spanish only): Donde se pone el morado? (*Where do I put the purple?*)

Elizabeth (bilingual): Azul (switching back to translating to Gloria) Blue, Gloria.

Elizabeth switches to help Jessica in Spanish…

Elizabeth goes back to helping Gloria.

Elizabeth (bilingual): Alright Gloria, Amarillo, remember its yellow ok?

Gloria agrees.

This dialogue was set up by the workshop model, where students have the opportunity to communicate in Spanish and we can see the ways in which they supported each other. This data suggests that these students were willing to speak in Spanish given certain circumstances.

Mathematics Block

From the survey results (Table 1) the mathematics blocks was rated to be a common favorite block in which students enjoy speaking Spanish. 61% of 18 students surveyed agreed to preferring Spanish use. Yet, from the same survey results, the mathematics time block also had the highest percent of number one ratings. What this means is that from all the learning blocks, the mathematics learning block had the highest amount of students rate it at a 1. Although the survey showed that students enjoy speaking Spanish during this time block of the day, the observations suggest that they use it less. In an observation from January 15, 2019, students were at their table groups for the whole group math lesson. There were seven students per group and

four table groups in total. This whole group math lesson was on number bonds, a topic students

had previously been exposed to in both the content and to the academic language. Through this

observation, it was evident that the teachers used inquiry and repetition to encourage students to

use the target language. In one instance, the teacher directed her attention to a student who

usually does not participate in class. Following the encouragement from the teacher, the bilingual

student shared the answer in Spanish with her peers. As the lesson progressed for ten minutes, it

was noticeable that students engaged with each other less in Spanish in the whole group lesson

setting and only seemed to use Spanish when communicating directly to the teacher. In this

example students (two bilingual students) were using number bonds to break up sums to six:

Teacher: ¿Como Podemos poner seis en partes? Me gustaría escuchar a Darla.

(How can I break up six in two parts? I like listening to Darla.)

Loui: Maestra, tengo otra idea. (*Teacher, I have another idea.)*

Darla: Cuatro y seis y dos y cinco. (*Four and six and two and five.)*

Teacher: ¿Que tal si coloreas cuatro y dos? (*How about you color four and two?)*

Teacher: ¿Alguien tiene otra idea? (*Does anyone else have a different idea?)*

Loui: Tres y tres. (Three and three)

Teacher: Wow me encanta! (*Wow! Great I love it)*

Meanwhile, other students converse with one another in English about a broken pencil,

and other ways to break up six. It seemed in this observation that the students did not use,

Spanish as a means to communicate the math information because the teacher was not present.

The observations confirmed the survey data that students are not enjoying speaking in Spanish

during the mathematics block. The observations revealed that participation in the form of

conversation needed to be cued for students to converse with each other in Spanish during this time.

Peer Support in Learning Blocks

A unique characteristic of a dual immersion program is the community that emerges as a result of the rigorous language challenge students experience together. The data collected reveals that students, as peer supports, increase student-to-student communication in Spanish throughout learning blocks.

The first instance where this theme emerged is through a video recording taken during literacy workshops on January 15, 2019. There were two students, Sandra-- a bilingual student— and Alexandria—an English speaker. While students were at their literacy workshop stations, they seemed inspired by my study to try their Spanish, looking at the camera before Sandra stated, "Let's try it in Spanish—Donde está la B?" (*Where is the B?).* Both students began to play with the letters and dialoguing in Spanish, using phrases they are familiar with such as: "gracias amiga" donde está" "es mía" "mi nombre" ("*thank you friend", "where is", "it's mine", "my name"*). The challenge presented by being filmed seemed to encourage the girls to take on the challenge of both speaking to each other in Spanish. The students shared ideas, practiced the language, and collaborated with each other. This is an example of two students with different language skills working together to communicate with one another in Spanish. This is one example of the ways in which collaborative opportunities can increase student-to-student communication.

Summary

Examination across these three different learning blocks have been insightful to the factors that influence and increase student-to-student communication during learning blocks. The findings suggest that opportunities, the students involved, teacher intervention, and peer support shape the times of day when students speak Spanish peer-to-peer in the classroom.

Finding #2 Providing Students Accessibility to Resources as a Language Support

This finding is supported through the field observations, survey, and video recordings. The data collected through these methods of research revealed that the teacher providing students accessibility to resources as a language support increased student-to-student oral Spanish communication throughout the day in the dual immersion classroom.

Sentence Frames

Sentence frames provided by the teacher supported students' Spanish oral language communication in the classroom in this study. This was evident in the field observation conducted on January 15, 2019. During this field observation, students were in their morning meeting, seated in a circle, and discussing how their weekend was spent. The sentence frame provided to students was one they were familiar with, "Yo fui a __(*I went to* ___)" ; the teacher had been using these sentence frames for morning meeting consistently. Ninety-five percent of students used the sentence frames with confidence during this observation, supporting them in engaging in the morning meeting question in Spanish. It is important to note that this sentence frame was a simple sentence which students already knew, but in addition to the sentence frame, the teacher used visuals to provide possible answers to students who needed a bank for answer options. This involved the use of a small whiteboard where the sentence frames were written out and the sentence frame was reviewed orally. As the teacher provided examples of what could be

the possible answers, she quickly sketched out response examples, such as the park, home, Target, etc. What the observation reveals is that, upon seeing the possibilities, students were able to personalize their response to the sentence frame. The scaffold seemed to open up opportunities for oral language production and increase Spanish oral use. This morning meeting observation had 95% participation in Spanish.

The use of sentence frames remained consistent throughout the observations as supports for oral Spanish language production, regardless of the learning block. On January 7, 2019 an observation previously mentioned, students relied on the use of sentence frames to successfully contribute to the morning meeting conversation. Students used " Yo puedo" *(I can)* as a starter for their input. The accessibility factor for sentence frames indicated that students know how to utilize their language support, and in return unlock the language needed in the moment.

The observations also reveal that although students rely on teacher-directed language supports (such as the use of sentence frames), they are able to independently use them when communicating with their peers in Spanish. This is seen in a field observation conducted January 28, 2019. Students were being introduced to the Spanish Language Arts unit topic, "Holidays and events we celebrate." The teacher had already explained the topic, showed the video opener, and had shown the big book with visuals on different holidays and events we celebrate. The teacher also sketched on the easel different holidays students may celebrate (including a cake, a pumpkin, a clover, a bunny, and a Christmas tree) based on their suggestions. These efforts were planned ahead as a scaffold that would lead to independence and Spanish use for students when using the sentence frame. Similar to the first example of s sentence frame with sketches as response supports, in this observation students were asked to share their favorite holiday/event

using the sentence frame "Me gusta_____" (*I like* ___*)*. This is an interaction between two students:

> Beller (English-only speaker): I like Easter.
>
> Jayla (Bilingual) : Oh yes, I like Easter too!
>
> Beller: I like birthday and I like todos.
>
> Jayla: Me gusta todos. (*I like them all.)*

This is another example of how teacher-directed language supports, in scaffold form involving sentence frames, provided students with accessibility to oral language use and an increase in student-to-student communication.

Summary

Two major findings from this study describe factors that contribute to student-to-student oral Spanish language communication in a dual immersion classroom. This study found that the learning block influences students' enjoyment and oral language communication; and the role of accessibility to resource as a language support for student-to-students oral language communication.

Discussion and Implications

The purpose of my study was to better understand how I can foster an environment in my dual immersion classroom that would lead to student-to-student communication in the target language throughout the day. The subquestions were:

1. How does my classroom environment facilitate or prevent student-to-student communication?

2. Where are there collaborative opportunities that can increase student-to-student communicating in Spanish?

3. What is my role as the language model in facilitating student-to student communication in Spanish?

The findings of this study led to two prominent themes that describe student-to-student oral Spanish communication throughout the school day.

Influence of Learning Blocks on Oral Language Production

The first finding stresses the influence of structured learning blocks on oral language production. In this study it is evident that students need to have learning blocks structured by the teacher that provide multiple opportunities for oral language production and interaction with peers. It is important that these opportunities are carefully structured and open to students throughout the day. The data collected was able to connect to subquestion #1--How does my classroom environment facilitate or prevent student-to-student communication. We can see that having a setting that allows for multiple opportunities of language interaction results in students increasing their communication with one another in Spanish. This finding connects to the literature reviewed by Christian (2000), where he suggest that multiple opportunities for peer interaction influences student-to-student communication. This finding suggests that student-to-

student communication can be increased if the setting and structure is appropriate. This study

also suggests that there are language dynamics occurring throughout learning blocks that support

and encourage student-to-student communication. Axelrod (2018) suggests in her study that

collaborative settings and activities increase language practice amongst this study, which aligns

with my experiences in this study.

Providing Students Accessibility to Resources as a Language Support

The second finding in this study revealed that student-to-student communication

increases through peer support. This finding connected to sub question #2 "Where are there

collaborative opportunities that can increase student-to-student communicating in Spanish?" It is

important to note that collaborative opportunities are critical moments that serve as opportunities

for unity and language development among students. Palmer (2014), describes the importance of

positioning emergent bilinguals as models of oral Spanish language. He states that having

students model and the language can develop a students' confidence in both languages. The data

collected for this study likewise suggests that students willingly take and accept support from

their peers. A space that allows students to know they can rely on each other for language

development creates a unity through a common language. All students have the need to

communicate but not all student have the suffice language to do so effectively. The promising

aspect of this dual immersion program is that with the wide range of language skills in the

classroom, students can use each other as language supports and find success in the common

challenge which in this case presents itself as student-to-student communication. These research

findings are promising in the sense that student-to-student communication can be increased

throughout the day with the correct structure of learning blocks and peer support.

Limitations

This study was limited in its focus on only one dual immersion classroom. In exploring more dual immersion settings, I could have developed further understandings about whether these findings are unique to my own classroom. In addition, the study of another dual immersion classroom may have provided more insight into the oral language production of other kindergarten dual immersion classrooms. What I have presented here is still important because, through this study, further understandings about the factors that shape student-to-student oral communication have been revealed.

Implications

These findings have implications for teachers working in early childhood dual immersion classrooms. Teachers in the future, and myself as an educator, should consider how to structure learning blocks to facilitate student-to-student oral communication in the target language. This study has allowed me to learn and explore the issues that are preventing student-to-student communication in my own classroom. Becoming aware of the factors that increase oral language production has encouraged me to be proactive in the learning blocks by creating opportunities that facilitate this kind of communication throughout the day. My classroom practice has been inspired through the findings and it has challenged me to think of the multiple language opportunities I can implement in my classroom to support and encourage student-to-student communication. In addition, recognizing how peer support shapes oral language production has solidified my intentions to use students' own language as resources. These findings have raised my awareness and refreshed my consciousness of effectively structuring my dual immersion classroom to be a space that invites collaboration and where the teacher embodies the role of teaching bilingualism and biliteracy.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Observation

Date:	
Content Area:	

Participant	Interaction	Conversation	Context: (what part of the day/schedule)	Observation	Duration

Observation continuation- Tally Chart

Student-to-Student communication in Spanish-Tally Chart

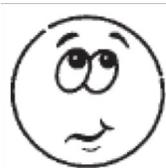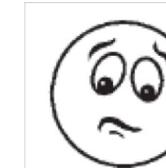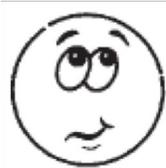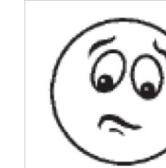| Date	Student:	Student classification: English only (EO), Bilingual (B), Native Spanish speaker (NS)	Context	Tallies	Total

Appendix B

Student Survey

Name :_____   Survey:

Spanish use in the classroom
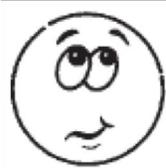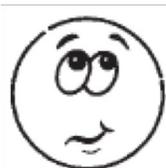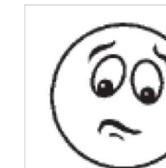
	Me gusta hablar español durante la junta de la manana.
	Me gusta hablar español durante las computadoras.
	Me gusta hablar español durante el Taller de Lectura.
	Me gusta hablar español durante el diario.
	Me gusta hablar español durante las Matematicas.