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The Impact of Leaving a Strand Dual Immersion Program on Elementary Students

by
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**Dedication**

My work and thesis are dedicated to my family. Ernie, Chris, and Angelina, thank you for the support, patience, and love you have given me to ensure that my dreams become a reality. You have always cheered me on and encouraged me when I have wanted to give up on this journey. You are my inspiration and the reason I continued to work as hard as I did. You are my world and I love you all very much.

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**Abstract**

Extensive research has been conducted on dual immersion programs and their benefits; however, few studies have examined the impact that the dissolution of these specialized programs has on students. The participants of this study were part of a strand model dual immersion program that had been in place at their school site since the beginning of their academic career. Interviews were conducted with the students who were in the program, their parents, and the current teachers. The interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed, and coded for commonalities, and from the commonalities, themes were derived. The students were affected by the dissolution of the program, both socially and academically. Four themes that were derived from the data were: isolation, social uncertainty, academic changes, and accustomed to site. Recommendations were made to help the students deal with their feelings of isolation and social uncertainty such as having them join social groups or afterschool clubs. The students also noticed a change in their academics; they had been accustomed to learning math, science, and social studies in Spanish. From the interviews, the students are currently struggling in math and they feel themselves to be behind their classmates. Recommendations were made for small group instruction, strategic partners, word walls, and frontloading academic vocabulary to help those students who are facing academic challenges. This case study highlights essential data that can be used in future studies for stakeholders who are considering dissolving a specialized program at a school site.

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## Chapter 1: Definition of Problem

Dual immersion language programs are becoming increasingly popular in the United States. Parents and teachers alike see the benefits of educating students in multiple languages simultaneously. Most schools that offer dual language programs are dedicated to providing instruction for all students using a dual language instruction model. Although not common, some schools have opted to provide dual language immersion instruction for only one class per grade level; known as the strand model. The following research question is asked: "What happens to students who leave the program when a strand model dual immersion program is dissolved within the school to open up a new Dual Language Academy elsewhere in the district?" This study focuses on students who have been part of a cohort for a number of years and the way in which these students develop social skills to form new intergroup relationships within the general education classroom and at the playground during recess and lunch.

**Purpose of Study**

The purpose of the study is to explore the effects of dissolving a strand dual immersion program that was present in a school for over five years. The students in this particular program had been in a cohort model since kindergarten and the same students were in their class year after year. Thus, the students had the same classmates with whom they formed bonds and friendships throughout their academic career. The study focuses on this group of students and examines how they adapt and construct new friendships. The following research question is addressed in this study:

What is the impact of dissolution of a dual immersion program on students?

**Preview of Literature**

The strand model in a dual immersion program has one class from each grade level at the school as a dual immersion classroom. Based on the model, the cohort of students tends to stay together throughout their academic career with minimal change. Only rarely do new students join the cohort unless they have both the academic and language ability to keep up with the rest of the students. Because students are screened extensively for their abilities prior to joining the dual immersion program, very few leave the program due to academic or language difficulties. Students in a dual language immersion program are also more likely to develop cross-ethnic friendships due to the cultural diversity that is present in the classroom. For the program to be successful, the amount of student language models must be equal or close to equal. Although the Hispanic population at the school is large, students are carefully chosen on the basis of their language ability. Typically, in dual immersion classrooms, 50% of the students are English learners (ELs) (these are the Spanish models) and 50% are English only-speaking students (these are the English models). Research on strand dual immersion programs indicates that students who are part of such programs tend to embrace cultural differences and are more tolerant of one another, because of their cross-cultural understandings (Quintar-Sarellana, 2004).

**Preview Methodology**

In this study, qualitative research was conducted with observations and interviews of the dual immersion students who did not transfer to the dual immersion program in a school nearby. Observations were used to determine which students are socializing during recess and lunch, and in the classroom. Notes were used to determine any patterns of the students in terms of their forming friendships. In particular, notes were used to determine whether the students were

forming new friendships with former dual immersion students or with students from prior relationships or from outside school settings.

Interviews were conducted with students, parents, and teachers to gather information about the students' feelings about no longer being part of a cohort. The students discussed their process of making new friends and were asked to elaborate on the differences between the dual immersion classroom and the general education classroom. Parents were asked to discuss whether or not they noticed any changes in their child, emotionally and academically. Parents were also asked to discuss the possible impact of opening the new Dual Language Academy on their child. Of the teachers who were interviewed, two had been dual immersion teachers and could offer insights on how the students socialized with the other students. The teachers who were not dual immersion teachers, but who had former dual immersion students in their classrooms, were also interviewed about their experiences in having former dual immersion students in their classrooms.

The data that was gathered from the interviews was coded and themes were used to determine the successes and challenges that former dual immersion students experience outside of their dual immersion classrooms.

**Significance of Study**

This study is intended to gain a better understanding of the effects of the dissolution of a specialized program on the students who are not able to relocate to a new school with the rest of their cohort members. The study is also aimed at taking a deeper look at how students develop social skills when they are put in a general education classroom, where they do not have previous relationships with most of the students, though they have previously-formed relationships with other general education program students.

**Summary**

This study explores a dual immersion strand model and the benefits that come with being part of a specialized program within the school. It also discusses the repercussions that occur when the program is no longer offered at the school, due to a dual language academy being opened nearby. The study focuses on the development of social skills used by former students in the dual immersion strand model as they form new social groups.

**Definitions**

**50:50 Model**: 50% of the day is taught in English and the other 50% of the instruction occurs in the target language.

**Bilingual Cross-Cultural Language and Academic Development (BCLAD) Credential:** Teachers receive an education that enables them to teach Spanish and English language development (Quintar-Sarellana, 2004).

**Dual Immersion:** An additive bilingual environment in which students add a second language to their native language instead of replacing their native language with the second language (Warhol & Mayer, 2015).

**English Language Learner (ELL):** A student who is not yet English proficient and whose native language is something other than English.

**English-Only Student (EO):** A student who only speaks English.

**Strand Model:** The dual immersion program is situated in an English-language mainstream public school much as a transitional bilingual education program might be, with one

classroom out of two or three at every grade level dedicated to Spanish-English dual-

language instruction, and the other classes conducted entirely in English (Palmer, 2010).

**Two-Way Immersion:** Also known as dual immersion, this provides students with an

educational environment in which a second language other than English is learned.

## Chapter 2: Review of Literature

Many elementary schools in the United States now offer dual immersion programs to students, where they learn a second language other than English. Also called "two-way immersion" (TWI) programs, dual immersion presents an enrichment model of instruction rather than a remedial, transitional, or compensatory instructional model, as it is an additive bilingual environment where students add a second language to their native language, instead of replacing their native language with the second language (Warhol & Mayer, 2015). Students develop literacy in their native language while developing academic proficiency in their second language through subject-area instruction (Gomez, Freeman, & Freeman, 2005). Potowski (2004) states that the main goals of dual immersion are for all students to reach high levels of academic proficiency, bilingualism, and self-esteem, and to develop positive cross-cultural attitudes.

Typically, in dual immersion classes, 50% of the students are English-speaking-only students (EOs) and the other 50% are English Language Learners (ELLs). Quintanar-Serellana (2004) states that this environment facilitates cross-learning for both language groups and encourages social interaction among Spanish and English speakers. In this environment, students have the opportunity to learn from one another and have experts in each of the languages being taught. The importance placed on both languages provides opportunities to speakers of both Spanish and English to have opportunities to highlight their abilities (Lee, Hill-Bonnet, & Raley, 2011). Linton (2004) found that instead of regarding the children of immigrants as a liability with which the schools must deal, dual-language programs validate and make use of the children's language skills by placing them in a position to help native English-speakers become bilingual. According to Fortune (2001), teaching students how to interact and support one

another's academic and linguistic development is essential for the success of immersion

programs (as cited in Potowski, 2004).

Although a variety of models are used, this literature review focuses on the "strand"

model of a dual immersion program. The focus is on students who have been part of a cohort for

all or most of their educational career and the effects of entering a mainstream classroom after

leaving the dual immersion program when it is no longer offered at the school site (because a

new language academy opens within the school district). This study explores how the former

students learn to socialize with students in the mainstream classroom and how they develop new

social skills.

All of the students in this study were given the option of transferring to the new, dual

language academy, a decision made by their parents. Since the new school is a school of

"choice" and not the home school for many of the students, transportation is not provided, and

therefore, it would be up to the parents to provide transportation to the new school. Most of the

students who did not transfer to the new language academy did not have transportation. Because

many of the students in this particular school district are of low socioeconomic status, the private

transportation option was not plausible; they rely on the school bus to get to and from school

every day.

**Background to the Dual Immersion Program**

Various instructional models are used for dual immersion programs. In this study, a 50:50

model is used, where 50% of the day is taught in English and the other 50% of the instruction is

in the target language. In this case the target language is Spanish. De Jong and Bearse (2014)

state that linguistic equity is addressed by allocating at least 50% of the instructional time to the

minority language and by using the minority language for "high stakes" content matter. The

teachers in this study usually teach English language arts (ELA) in the first half of the day and then switch to Spanish in the second half of the day. Spanish is used to teach science, social studies, math, and Spanish language arts. Due to the lack of time, science and social studies are taught with Spanish language arts (SLA). Gerena (2011) noted that outside instruction, such a weekly library and computer lab classes are conducted solely in English because of the lack of personnel to conduct these instructional blocks in Spanish. Daily announcements, bulletin boards, and general oral and written discourse throughout the school is conducted in English (Gerena, 2010).

In dual immersion classrooms, the days or weeks are typically divided between the two languages of instruction, with the expectation that all students interact in only one language at a time (Palmer, 2007). According to de Jong and Bearse (2014), the use of minority language is protected by insisting that the two languages are separated for instruction. Since only one dual immersion teacher is available in each grade, the same teacher teaches the content in both languages. The dual immersion classrooms at this school site were self-contained. Most teachers would use a signal to tell the students that they are switching from one language to another.

All of the teachers who taught in the dual immersion program at this particular school site hold a Bilingual Cross-Cultural Language and Academic Development (BCLAD) credential. Quintanar-Sarellana (2004) states that this means that teachers have received an education that qualifies them to teach Spanish and English language development. Besides holding a BCLAD credential, the dual immersion teachers have received ample training, professional development, and grade level dual immersion collaboration time with the other dual immersion teachers in the school district. On-going professional development has been identified as a salient indicator of successful two-way bilingual immersion programs (Quintanar-Sarellana, 2004).

While many schools are dual immersion schools, the students who were enrolled in this particular dual immersion program were part of a "strand" program. Palmer (2010) defines this as a program that it is situated in an English-language mainstream public school (like a transitional bilingual education program), with one classroom out of two or three at every grade level being dedicated to Spanish-English dual-language instruction, and the other classes conducted entirely in English. The TWI program thus operates relatively independently from the mainstream program, while simultaneously integrating language majority and language minority speakers (de Jong & Bearse, 2014). In 2009, the first dual immersion cohort was created in a kindergarten classroom. The students were the only dual immersion students in the entire school. As the students progressed in their grades, a new dual immersion classroom was added. Therefore, the oldest participants in this study are currently in the 5th grade.

Because this program is a strand model, as the students age, the class sizes tend to decrease as students relocate or leave the program. To keep the number of students in the strand model equal to that of the mainstream classrooms, late entries to the program are allowed. Nevertheless, the grade of entry is crucial to the student's success. Quintanar-Sarellana (2004) states that English-speakers may enter at the kindergarten or 1st-grade levels. Spanish-speakers may enter at kindergarten, 1st grade, or 2nd grade. Bilingual students may be admitted at any grade level of literacy in Spanish and English.

In this particular dual immersion program, the students were chosen very carefully. Administrators and dual immersion teachers thought that, for the program to be successful, the students should be at a high academic level and have little to no behavioral issues, and their parents should be willing to be actively involved in their child's education. Rarely, does a student in the dual immersion program have special education needs. In any case, Palmer (2010)

states that the mainstream classrooms have more students who have been identified with special

needs, including learning disabilities and emotional disturbances, and more families are taking

advantage of their school's variety of social programs.

Some of the non-dual immersion teachers felt that the dual immersion students had many

benefits that were not available to students in the mainstream classroom. One such benefit was

the amount of parental involvement in the school. Because 50% of the students in the dual

immersion program are English-speaking only, the dual-immersion classrooms were thought to

involve more middle-class White parents who would tend to volunteer in the dual immersion

classrooms on a daily basis. Although some might believe that most of the middle-class White

parents in the TWI classrooms are only in the school because of the TWI program, several

mainstream teachers articulated an inherent unfairness in the visible discrepancy (Palmer, 2010).

Linton (2004) notes that, regardless of one's race or ethnicity, dual-language programs offer

students more options than those that are traditionally available in mainstream schools in the US.

The strand model of the dual immersion program was unique to the school, and the

collaboration of parents, teachers, and administrators was essential for the program to be

successful. Cervantes-Soon (2015) notes that for TWI programs to be a reality, they must be

attractive enough to politicians and parents of the dominant group. During the previous spring

term, the school began promoting the upcoming dual-immersion program, and informational

meetings were held to inform parents and community members that a dual-immersion bilingual

program would begin the following academic school year (Gerena, 2011). In the first year of its

implementation, it was crucial for parents to buy-in to what the new program was offering their

students. The parents needed to understand that the program was not a bilingual program where

the students would be learning English. In fact, the dual immersion program was completely

different and new to the school. Students would be learning Spanish simultaneously with

English. Native English-speaking students who are learning Spanish are thought to benefit from

dual immersion because they have native-speaking peers in the classroom, instead of relying

only on the teacher for the sole source of input (Potowski, 2004). The benefits of being part of a

two-way immersion program must be highlighted. Research indicates that bilingual children

display more flexibility in their thinking, and have greater awareness of linguistic meaning and

interpretation (Quintanar-Sarellana, 2004). Cervantes-Soon (2015) found that by combining

English-dominant and language-minority students in the same classroom, TWI promises to

deliver bilingualism, biliteracy, and high academic achievement for all.

The program is known to be unsuccessful if the various stakeholders do not work

together to achieve the goals. Collaboration was essential in this project as it provides the school

with a framework, and a vision for the potential success of the school-family collaboration

(Gerena, 2011). Linton (2004) states that dual immersion programs exist largely because of the

efforts of school administrators, teachers, and parents who get them started and make them work.

Future-oriented school administrators and/or parents are behind the initiation of such programs,

but their successful maintenance requires long-term commitment from school staff and parents

(Linton, 2004). Effective parent community and school involvement programs should involve

two-way communication, enlist support of the community, and expand the opportunities for

parent involvement (Gerena, 2011).

**Cross-Cultural Understandings**

According to Lambert and Hall (1993), an important goal of two-way immersion

bilingual programs is to enhance the understanding between two culturally and linguistically

different groups by enabling them to coexist in an environment that promotes social, linguistic,

and educational equity (as cited in Quintanar-Sarellan, 2004). A significant aspect of the dual

immersion classrooms that is not present in mainstream classrooms is the instruction of Latin

cultures from around the world. By prioritizing bilingualism and biculturalism, the dual language

option offers a striking deviation from mainstream schooling (Linton, 2004). Moll, Amanti, and

Gonzalez (1992) found that a curriculum that builds on the students' cultural and linguistic

background can enhance the students' academic growth (as cited in Quintar-Sarellana, 2004).

According to Block (2011):

> Much more recently, Potowski (2007) found positive attitudes toward Spanish among
>
> upper elementary school dual-immersion students, and De Jong and Howard (2009)
>
> found that two-way immersion programs have offered the advantage of breaking down
>
> stereotypes and developing positive attitudes toward both languages and their speakers –
>
> in contrast to mainstream programs but also to programs that have tried to help language-
>
> minority students but in the process have segregated them into linguistically and
>
> ethnically homogeneous groups throughout the day.

Dual immersion teachers make an effort to teach the students the history, traditions, and

customs of a variety of Latin nations. The importance of teachers to be informed about what goes

on in the lives of children is important for all students, but even more so in circumstances where

a significant difference exists between the dominant culture and the culture of the students

(Gerena, 2011). Materials such as books and regalia are available from a variety of Latin

cultures. Palmer (2007) notes that one of the explicit goals of TWI is to offer students a chance

to build bridges between their own culture and the culture and language of their classmates.

Students of Hispanic descent are able to learn more about their own culture and share what

traditions and customs they have in their own families. This opportunity allows them to feel

proud of their heritage and background. More recent studies of dual immersion education that have included components distinct from academic achievement have highlighted positive student attitudes toward Spanish in dual language programs and positive attitudes toward biculturalism, mainly in the context of the schools themselves (as cited in Block, 2009). Thus, students can embrace their culture and teach the other students something new. Palmer (2009) states that for language-minority students, the benefits are important, as learning in their home language supports their development of a healthy bicultural identity (as cited in Cervantes-Soon, 2014). A cohesive community of heritage language speakers can make a difference in the vigor of that language and its ability to motivate and create opportunities for young speakers (Pearson, 2007). As a result, the students in a dual immersion setting are more likely to develop positive cross-cultural attitudes.

Two-way bilingual programs that value the language and culture of minority students provide an excellent learning environment (Quintanar-Sarellana, 2004). Students who are not of a Latin heritage develop a higher tolerance for students who are not of their culture. A principal from Long Beach, California states in Linton's (2004) study, "They're much more accepting of people in general. These kids are more accepting of other cultures and other people" (p. 63). They are excited and eager to learn about new cultures and the customs and traditions. Frequently, these students share something that they have seen in their homes that is related to a Latin culture that they previously learned about. Research on TWI programs has consistently shown the positive social and academic achievement outcomes for all TWI students (de Jong & Howard, 2009).

**Cross-Ethnic Friendships**

Since the students in this particular dual immersion program were part of a strand (cohort) model, they have been together for a number of years. With the exception of a couple of students who left the program, the majority of students tend to only socialize with one another. Stern (2004) suggests that as a group becomes larger, its members will tend to interact only with one another, and the probability of intergroup relations will decline. De Jong and Bearse (2014) found that being together as a group allowed the students to construct a stronger TWI identity and build relationships across ethnolinguistic borders within the program. Outside of the academic settings, such as recess, lunch, physical education, or ASES (the after-school program), the dual immersion students often socialized only with one another. Although they are aware of the students in the mainstream classroom, they tend not to interact with them. Doubtlessly, the natural tendency for children, especially those who are in the early years of school, is to form friendships within their own classroom (Palmer, 2007). De Jong and Howard (2009) suggest that:

> Student integration is central to TWI programs for sociocultural and linguistic reasons. Student integration contributes to the development of positive intergroup relationships between language minority students and language majority students. It can break down stereotypes and develop positive attitudes towards both languages and language groups.

Since dual immersion students are chosen carefully, their classrooms tend to have the most cultural diversity of any classroom in the school. As a whole, the school's student population is about 67% of Latino descent. Because the dual immersion program is comprised of 50% English-only students and 50% ELLs, the classroom tends to have more non-Hispanic students, compared to the other mainstream classrooms. As a result, more cross-cultural

friendships form than anywhere else in the school. Gomez, Freeman, and Freeman (2005) found that a dual immersion program helps build cross-cultural school communities, and cross-cultural friendships among students and parents, relationships that probably would not have developed without the program. It is not enough to place students in an environment and expect to them to develop friendships and collaborative relationships; however, their parents are pivotal in showing them the way (Gerena, 2011).

The students in this program got to know each other very well and were able to identify each other's weaknesses. This is especially true when it came to having difficulty with a particular language. Morison (1990) suggests that children themselves are extremely sensitive and develop great compassion towards each other. Those who are bilingual often assume the role of translator, helping others even without being asked. Teaching students how to interact and support each other's academic and linguistic development is essential for the success of an immersion program (Potwoski, 2004). These students were extremely close to each other and protective and helping when needed. Stearns (2009) states that research on instructional techniques and cooperative learning has found that students who work together in mixed-race groups are more likely to help each other and less likely to feel socially threatened by members of other minority groups outside or inside the classroom.

**Effects of Leaving the Dual Immersion Program**

Due to the opening of a new dual immersion language school, the strand program at this particular elementary school was dissolved. Most of the students transferred to the new dual immersion school; however, a few students decided to stay for a variety of reasons. The most prominent reason being their lack of transportation, which is likely tied to their low

socioeconomic status, a common condition among students of Latino descent in this particular setting.

Throughout their schooling, the students in this particular stand model of the dual immersion program were together. Any school policies or practices affecting the students' social organization would likely influence their social relationships, regardless of voluntarily or involuntarily participation (Stearns, 2004). The unity experienced by these students as part of a cohort will no longer persist. Although the students in the mainstream classroom have been attending the same school and have made friends with the students in their classes, they probably do not experience the same degree of camaraderie as do the students in the dual immersion program. Stearns (2004) suggested that intergroup relations are more likely to occur when opportunities for contact are higher. Thus, if groups do not have any contact with each other, intergroup relations of any kind are unlikely. Social relations between two people are more likely to occur when the two people are close to each other in social space.

For the first time, the former dual-immersion students will be integrated with the students in the mainstream classroom, with students who have special education needs, and behavior and social issues. A child's adaptation is associated with a number of characteristics, including his or her psychological maturity, temperament, social skills, intelligence, and ability to learn (Monkeviciene, Mishara, & Dufour, 2006). These students must adapt to their new environment to continue having the academic and social success that they had in the dual immersion classroom.

In addition, the effect on the students of leaving the program should be considered. Schofield and Eurich-Fulcer (2004) found that anxiety about dealing with outgroup members is prevalent and can lead to avoidance of the very opportunities for contact that might help to

improve intergroup relations. This is especially true for the former dual immersion students who

do not attend the after-school program or participate in extracurricular activities outside of

school.

In a dual immersion program, parents are encouraged to volunteer in the classroom and to

work with their children on language skills at home (Quintanar-Sarellana, 2004). The students

will no longer have the support of the many volunteers in the dual immersion classroom who

were essential for the program. They not only assisted with the prep work for the teachers, but

they were prominent figures in the classroom. Many of the parent volunteers worked with

students on a one-on-one basis or with small group instruction. The students became accustomed

to having various adults help them as necessary, which was essential for their academic success.

Throughout their educational careers, the students identified themselves as being

different from the students in the mainstream classes. All of the students were aware of being in

a program that was distinct from the mainstream classrooms (Gerena, 2010). They were also

known as the bilingual students and they were proud of that distinction. The students were used

to being put on constant display in front of prominent figures in the community and school

district. Specialized assemblies were occasionally held to exhibit their bilingualism, and

generally, being an ELL was something to be proud of. Palmer (2010) found that, in the dual

immersion model, an explicit reversal of the dominant power norms took place in that the ELL

students were expected to serve as Spanish-speaking role models for their English-speaking

peers.

Most of the students who were not going to the new dual school were ELLs. TWI

education is one of the most promising approaches for English learners to date (Cervantes-Soon,

2015) and much of their academic success has been attributed to having the curriculum taught to

them in both English and Spanish. If a concept was too difficult for them in English, they had an

opportunity to learn it when it was taught in their native language. Thomas and Collier (2003)

confirmed that dual immersion programs offer the best kind of language maintenance for ELLs

and second language acquisition for native English-speaking students. The authors also

discovered consistent patterns across school districts that are generalizable beyond the individual

school contexts (as cited in Gerena, 2010). A curriculum that builds on the students' cultural and

linguistic backgrounds can enhance the students' academic growth (Quintanar-Serellana, 2004).

In a dual language classroom, knowledge of Spanish is something to be valued by both

the students and the parents. Since ELs were the model during Spanish instruction, their

confidence level rose. The parents of the students did not have to be ashamed of being unable to

communicate with the teacher since the teacher was bilingual. Cervantes-Soon (2015) found that

Latino parents in TWI programs are often grateful to be able to communicate with the teachers

and appreciate the school's efforts to help their children maintain their home language in strong

academic programs.

**Development of New Social Skills**

Since most of the dual immersion students have left the school, the former dual

immersion students found themselves in an unfamiliar position. They are now in a classroom

where they may have few or no friends. In a sense, they have been desegregated. They will not

even have the opportunity to see their dual immersion friends in social situations such as at

recess or lunch, because they are no longer on the same campus. For the first time in years, they

find themselves without their social support group, which could affect their ability to adapt to

their new educational setting. Researchers point to the relationship with peers as an important

factor in influencing school adaptation, especially making new friends and losing friends, social

rejection, and whether or not familiar friends are at the new school (Monkeviciene, Mishara, &

Dufour, 2006). The former dual immersion students are now required to develop or use social

skills that were infrequently used before.

**Summary**

Although much research has been conducted on the various dual immersion models, few

studies have examined the social effects of leaving a strand model within the school. This study

uses a qualitative approach to gather data on the effect of dissolving a specialized program in a

school on the students who did not continue with the program, instead staying with general

education classes in their home school.

**Chapter 3: Methodology**

This study used observations and interviews to gather data to determine how former students in a cohort of a dual immersion program are faring after their program within the school came to an end. The pseudonym LAP is used to refer to the school site where the dual immersion program was terminated. Most of the students in the program were in a cohort with the same classmates since they began their schooling. In the cohort for their former program, they did not need to develop the kind of skills that are necessary for forming new friendships.

**Design**

Interviews were conducted with students, former teachers of the dual immersion program, current teachers of the former dual immersion students, and parents of the dual immersion students. The purpose of the interviews was to gather information on how the students are socializing with the students in mainstream classrooms. Students were given the option to be interviewed individually or with their parents and/or siblings (who were also part of the dual immersion program). Teachers participated in a qualitative focus group interview. In gathering information during the interviews with former and current teachers and parents, notes were made about any social, behavioral, or academic changes that occurred with the former dual immersion students.

Qualitative group observations were conducted at various unstructured and structured situations, such as recess, lunch, physical education, and during general education instruction. The purpose of the observations was to determine how the students interacted with other students and how they are developing social skills to make new friends in their new environment. The researcher used a check-off list to keep track of whether or not the participating students were

socially interacting with other former dual immersion students or with other mainstream students.

**Participants**

        In this study, the participants were comprised of a combination of students, parents, and teachers in the former dual immersion program. Although all students of the strand dual immersion program were invited to attend the new Dual Language Academy that opened up within the district, some chose to remain at LAP for a variety of reasons, such as not having the transportation. Because the Language Academy is a school of choice, the district does not provide transportation to and from the school. Many of the students, who are of a low socio-economic background, do not have the means to get to the new school, which is not of walking distance for the students.

        Other students chose to stay at LAP because they were already bilingual and did not see the need to transfer to the new school. These students had attended LAP since kindergarten and did not want to leave their current school to go to a new school where the administration and staff would be unknown to them. The majority of the students who participated in the study are ELLs and of low socioeconomic status. Of the students who attend LAP, 45% are ELs and 69% are of low socioeconomic status.

        The parents of the students who were at LAP were also interviewed. The interviews were designed to gain insight on why the parents chose to keep their students at LAP. The parents were asked to describe how their children were faring in their general education classrooms.

        Former dual immersion teachers were interviewed since they can offer a unique perspective on being both a former dual immersion teacher and a current general education teacher, who has educated the participating students. The current teachers of former dual

immersion students were also interviewed to learn of their observations and any information they had on how the former dual immersion students were adapting socially in their classrooms.

**Setting**

The research was conducted at the elementary school (referred to as LAP), located in a rural town in southern California. Of the students who attend the school, 67% are of a Hispanic background, 28% of the students are White, and 5% of the students are of other ethnicities. Of the students who attend the school, 69% are from a disadvantaged socioeconomic status. The school offered a stand model dual immersion program for six years. For students to be part of the dual immersion program, they had to begin the program in kindergarten. Some exceptions were made for students who were at a high academic level and who already spoke Spanish. Due to the opening of a new Dual Language Academy, the program at LAP was dissolved, though all students were given the option of attending the new Dual Language Academy.

**Instruments**

An interview was designed to focus on the experiences of the students outside of the dual immersion classroom and within the general education classroom. It asks students to elaborate on their feelings about staying at their home school and, if given the option to attend the new school, would they do so. Students were interviewed individually, though students with parents participating in the study were given the option to be interviewed with their parents. From the interviews, the aim was to get some insight about how the students feel about their new environment. From the answers, themes were constructed and the successes and difficulties faced by the former dual immersion students were analyzed while the students built new friendships outside of the program.

Parents of the students indicated possible changes in the students' behavior and academic accomplishments.

An interview was designed for teachers to describe any insights about the former dual immersion program. Teachers provided their views about how the students are socializing in the classroom and performing academically, and they indicated any concerns or other remarks they had about the students.

Interviews were conducted once, though a follow-up interview was possible, on request. The interviews contained the main questions and additional probing questions to stimulate the interviewee to provide additional information.

Observations were conducted at both academic and non-academic settings to see how students socialized with their new peers. The observations were carried out in a natural setting so that the students would be expected to socialize naturally.

**Procedures**

The researcher requested permission for the study to be conducted with students, parents, and teachers at the school site. A letter was sent home to inform the parents of students about the purpose of the study and inviting their participation. The letter stated that their identity and the identity of the student would be protected at all times and that they were free to withdraw from the study at any time if they choose to. A date was scheduled for the interview with the participants. Parents, students, and siblings were permitted to be interviewed together or individually. Participants were interviewed once, though in some cases, depending on their responses, some were asked for a follow-up interview. Interviews were conducted to get an impression about how the students felt being without their cohort members during the beginning

of the school year. The questions also asked the interviewees to elaborate on their experiences with regards to forming new friendships.

Observations were conducted periodically and field notes were taken to determine if any patterns were emerging. The students were observed in unstructured settings such as recess and lunch to see how they interacted with other students. They were also observed in structured situations such as during instruction.

**Analysis**

The information gathered from the surveys was analyzed and used to create tables showing how the majority of students dealt with the dissolution of the dual immersion program. Observations were coded according to how the students behaved and responded in various social and academic situations. The collected data was analyzed for any common themes or patterns that emerged based on the observations.

**Summary**

Qualitative research was used in this study to gather information about how the students were coping without their cohort members. This methodology was also used to examine how the students were socializing and developing new relationships with other students.

**Chapter 4: Data Analysis**

The data was gathered from students, parents, and teachers in a dual immersion program that was in place at a school for a number of years. The purpose of this study was to gather information to determine the impact on students of the dissolution of the strand dual immersion program, after the opening of a new dual language academy in the district. The participating students chose to remain at their home school for a variety of reasons and have now joined general education classrooms.

Former students of the dual immersion program, their parents, and current teachers were interviewed to gather data about the impact that the dissolution of their program had on the students. All participants were given pseudonyms and the interviews were audio-recorded for accuracy, and for later transcription. The researcher transcribed the interviews, and then coded and charted them to find commonalities and differences in the participants' answers. The results were used to guide the study recommendations. In this chapter, the research data, analysis of the data, and its interpretation are presented.

**Presentation of Data**

Although parents and current teachers of former dual immersion students were interviewed for this study, their answers were used to compare and find correlations with the students' responses. For the responses to be pertinent, only those students who had been in the dual immersion program for a number of years were asked to participate. Table 1 provides basic information on each student participant.

Table 1: Student participants

| Identifier | Current Grade | Years in Dual Immersion Program | English Learner |
|---|---|---|---|
| Participant 1 | 5th | 5 years | No |
| Participant 2 | 5th | 5 years | Yes |
| Participant 3 | 4th | 4 years | Yes |
| Participant 4 | 5th | 5 years | Yes |
| Participant 5 | 5th | 5 years | Yes |
| Participant 6 | 5th | 5 years | Yes |
| Participant 7 | 4th | 4 years | Yes |
| Participant 8 | 4th | 4 years | Yes |
| Participant 9 | 4th | 4 years | Yes |
| Participant 10 | 3rd | 3 years | No |
| Participant 11 | 3rd | 3 years | Yes |
| Participant 12 | 3rd | 3 years | Yes |

From Table 1, student participants were in grades 3 to 5 and had been in the dual immersion program for 3 to 5 years. This year is the first time when the students were in a general education classroom. All of the participants had attended LAP since kindergarten and had not attended any other elementary school. Of the 12 participants, 10 were ELs.

Table 2 shows that only four parents participated in the study; however they were parents to six of the participating students. The parents who participated were parents to ELLs and they all spoke Spanish only; their English-speaking skills were limited.

Table 2: Parent participants

| Identifier | Number of Children who were in the Program | Current Grade of Student |
|---|---|---|
| Parent 1 | 2 | 5th (twins) |
| Parent 2 | 2 | 5th, 3rd |
| Parent 3 | 1 | 4th |
| Parent 4 | 1 | 4th |

Table 3 shows that the participating teachers all taught intermediate to upper grades. Only one of these teachers was a former dual immersion teacher. She was the 3rd grade dual immersion teacher, currently teaching the 3rd grade and is self-contained. The other teachers are all self-contained, general education teachers.

Table 3: Teacher participants

| Identifier | Number of Former Dual Students in Classroom | Current Grade |
|---|---|---|
| Teacher 1 | 3 | 5th |
| Teacher 2 | 2 | 4th / 5th Combination Class |
| Teacher 3 | 3 | 4th |
| Teacher 4 | 3 | 3rd |

**Data Analysis**

Interview responses were transcribed, coded, and charted to find the commonalities and differences of the participants' responses. From the charts, a number of themes were derived as: isolation, social uncertainty, academic changes, and accustomed to site. The themes were then used to determine the study recommendations for students to overcome the challenges due to the dissolution of the dual immersion program.

**Isolation.**

One of the most prominent themes discovered in the study was isolation. Students were asked to answer the following two questions to determine their feelings about not moving to the new dual language academy:

- Are you happy that you stayed at LAP? Why or why not?

- How do you feel about most of your classmates going on to the new Dual Language Academy?

Most students had mixed emotions about staying behind at LAP and not transferring to the Dual Language Academy with their classmates. Although they were happy to continue their elementary education at LAP, they missed their former classmates and friends. Of the 12 students interviewed, 9 (75%) stated that they felt sad and missed their friends from the dual immersion program. Participant 11 stated, "I feel sad because my friends went to the Dual Language Academy and I can't see them anymore." Most of the participants no longer interact with their former classmates.

One student recalled seeing some of her old classmates at a local city function. Participant 10 stated, "I feel sad because I saw Isaac and Jackson at the play and they didn't even recognize me. My hair has grown and I've changed and they don't recognize me."

Teacher 3, who currently teaches 5th grade, noticed that the students who were in the dual immersion program tend to prefer to interact with only those students who were also a part of the program. She stated,

> The former three dual immersion students tend to stick together. When I have them
> interact with the other students they are a little more shy and hesitant. When the
> researcher observed these particular three students in various school settings, such as

recess, lunch, transitions between classes, and before or after school, it was noted that

they are usually found together.

**Social uncertainty.**

A unique characteristic about the dual immersion program was that it was a strand model,

where one class per grade level is dedicated to dual language instruction. Because of the model,

students in the dual immersion program had been together since kindergarten. Little had changed

in the members of the dual immersion program, and the students were the same year after year.

They knew who would be in their class every year and who would be their teacher. These

students did not have to face the anxiety that most students face on the first day of school. This

year was the first when the students did not know who would be in their class or who would be

their teacher. Because the students faced a new social situation, the following questions were

asked:

- How did it feel being in a class where most of the students were different from those in
  previous years?

- What was your experience like, making new friends this year?

Many of the participants experienced anxiety that is associated with starting a new school

year. They were nervous about being in a new class with new classmates and an unknown

teacher. Six of the twelve (50%) participants used words "strange" or "weird" in describing their

feeling to be in a classroom where most of the students were unfamiliar. Although they had seen

many of the students in previous years, the participants had not formed relationships with them.

Participant 6, who was part of the cohort that had been in the dual immersion program the

longest, explained what it was like on the very first day of school this year. She stated, "The first

day of school was terrifying, because I didn't know everyone and I always had in the past."

Prior to being in a general education classroom, the students were certain about their social circles. They had formed bonds and friendships with students who they had been with in the same classroom year after year. This year was different for them and they now wondered about who they would socialize with. Participant 5 described her experience making new friends, stating, "It was hard to get new friends. We had to ask people if they want to be our friends. We had to look at them and decide if they were okay to hang out with."

**Academic changes.**

One of the biggest differences between the dual immersion program and the general education classroom is the presence of the second language in the dual immersion program. In the dual immersion program, language arts was taught in English, while math, science, social studies, and Spanish language arts were taught in Spanish. This created the 50:50 model for the program. Of the 12 participants interviewed, 10 were ELLs, who had the opportunity to re-learn the curriculum in their native language if they did not understand it when it was taught in English.

Another prominent theme that was seen in the collected data was the academic change experienced by most of the participants. When asked how the classwork was different this year compared to last year, many of the participants stated that they were struggling in math and felt that they were behind, compared to their classmates. Participant 11 stated, "Math is too difficult for me to learn it in English." Teacher 3 noted that of her three former dual immersion students, two of them had difficulty justifying and explaining how they solved math problems. They were able to do the computational portion of the math problems with little difficulty, but could not express in writing how they solved the problem. Both Teacher 1 and Teacher 3 stated that the

former dual immersion students in their classes tended to doubt themselves when asked to elaborate on answers.

The change in their academics not only affected the students, but their parents as well. Parent 2 stated, "I was able to help my child with her homework when math was taught in Spanish, but now I can't because I don't speak English. I don't understand the work anymore."

Another commonality that was found in the research was indicated by participants who said they missed learning Spanish, but were happy to learn more English. Participant 9, who is currently in 4th grade, stated "I miss math being taught in Spanish. We were so used to math being taught in Spanish for four years, and now it's not." Of the six students who stated that they would like to go to the new dual academy, five said that they would go to continue learning Spanish. Only one of the six participants said he would go because he missed his friends.

**Accustomed to site.**

The final theme that arose from the collected data was that many of the students were accustomed to the site, and they did not want to transfer to the new dual academy.

The participants were asked the following question to determine whether or not they would transfer to the new school:

- Would you like to go to the new Dual Language Academy?

Although the students missed their friends, 6 of the 12 student participants stated that they would prefer to stay at their current school rather than attend the Dual Language Academy. All six of them who would stay at LAP said that they had too many memories of their current school and would not leave. Participant 4 stated, "No, I wouldn't want to go because I've always been here at this school." Although the students stated that they missed their friends, they clearly identified themselves with the school and would not leave solely for their social relationships.

**Summary**

This chapter focused on analyzing the data that was collected from students, parents, and teachers who were associated with the dual immersion program. The questions they answered in the interviews were helpful in determining the impact they felt from the dissolving of the strand dual immersion program.

One of the prominent findings in this study is that all of the students were affected in one way or another by the opening of the Dual Language Academy. They were impacted in various ways ranging from isolation, social uncertainty, and academic changes. From the participants' responses, a clearer understanding was gained about the students' experiences this year in the general education classroom.

## Chapter 5: Conclusions, Recommendation, and Future Research

This research set out to find the impact that the dissolution of a strand model dual immersion program has on students who did not transfer with their classmates. The students who were part of the dual immersion program for a short time were impacted to a lesser degree than students who had been part of the program since the beginning of their academic careers.

### Findings

Of the 12 students who participated in the study, all had been impacted in one way or another. The affects included social and academic, and impacts to the students emotional anxiety. Some students adapted better to their new environment and seemed to be more well-adjusted; they did not express a need to transfer to the new Dual Language Academy for social reasons only. Although they missed their former dual immersion classmates, they had begun to form new bonds and friendships with their new classmates. Most of the students who mentioned that they would transfer to the Dual Language Academy would do so solely for the purpose of furthering their education in Spanish. They missed being in a bilingual setting where they could practice their native language while also receiving English instruction.

### Recommendations

Based on the data analysis, I developed some recommendations to help students deal with the impact of leaving the dual immersion program. The recommendations follow the themes developed from the research.

#### Isolation and social uncertainty.

Of the students who were interviewed, 75% mentioned that they felt lonely and they missed their friends at the beginning of the school year. They indicated that unstructured

situations, like recess and lunch, were the most difficult since they had few friends to socialize with. To help the students deal with their feelings of isolation, social groups should be available to them for participating in. When the students participate in small group social situations and interact with other students, their social anxiety that they feel in large group settings such as recess or even the classroom, can be decreased. The LAP school site has dedicated Friday as Board Game Day, and the teachers of the former dual immersion students can invite the former dual immersion students to participate. The teachers can give the students a few extra passes so that they can invite others to join in the social situation. When students invite other students, they can begin developing the skills for interacting with others in new situations.

The students can also be encouraged to participate in afterschool clubs. LAP has a variety of afterschool clubs that meet every day of the week, targeting different student interests. The clubs include: the Gardening Club, Science Club, Ceramics, Girls on the Run, Photography Club, Art, and the Spanish Club. Again, teachers can invite former dual immersion students and encourage them to participate. Space is limited to 30 students and the students are from grades 3 to 6. These activities can give the former dual immersion students opportunities to interact with a variety of students in smaller groups, in contrast to the large recess and lunch groups.

**Academic changes.**

The students participants mentioned that they have experienced academic changes. While some indicated that they missed learning Spanish, others said that they were having difficulty keeping up with their classmates. ELs, in particular, tend to struggle learning math when it is taught in English. In the dual immersion program, ELs learned math in their native language; in particular, they learned the vocabulary and expressions in Spanish and then applied them to solve math problems. Although the dual immersion teachers give lessons about transferring vocabulary

to connect Spanish to English, the students did not retain the words that are used in math, as they had been taught.

To help the former dual immersion students overcome their academic struggles, a "word wall" can be used in the classroom. The word wall should consist of an academic term, a student-created definition, and a picture. The display can help students quickly understand important terms, needed for their lessons.

To help the students that might be having academic difficulties, small group instruction should be offered. Students can benefit from working in small groups with the teacher and they may be more willing to ask for extra assistance if necessary. The teachers would be able to keep track of the students who are struggling academically and modify the instruction accordingly.

Many of the student participants who stated that they were having academic difficulties were ELs. They would benefit from explicit direct ELD instruction. The students would need to attend ELD instruction at least five times a week for thirty minute sessions. The students should also be categorized according to their EL level so that they be taught based on their English language needs.

**Limitations of the Research**

Interviewing students and parents about their experiences with leaving the dual immersion program was very beneficial. The students were enthusiastic about discussing their feelings about leaving the program. The parents who were interviewed were also eager to share their ideas about the dissolution of the program. The participants seemed to be relieved with the opportunity to finally discuss their experiences with someone who would listen to them. Nevertheless, during the data gathering, a few minor limitations to the research were apparent.

First, I did not interview and observe the students early during the school year and at several times throughout the year. If the data collection period had been longer, I may have been able to note more changes that the students had not already adapted to.

Second, not all of the students' parents were willing to participate in the interviews. Many were unable to participate due to their work schedules or were reluctant to participate for some other reason. Therefore, I only gathered the responses made by parents with children who were ELs. Thus, the responses to the interview questions may have involved some bias towards the lack of help the parents could provide to their children since their schoolwork was not exclusively in English.

**Future Research**

Further research is needed to determine possible long-term effects for the students who are no longer in the specialized program. Research should be conducted to determine whether or not the students have overcome their hardships that they faced this year. If the students still seem to be having difficulties, some measures could be implemented to help them deal with the impact.

In the future, a proactive approach may be beneficial for students who are leaving a specialized program and will be attending a general education classroom for the first time. Rather than waiting for the school year to begin, stakeholders could implement a strategy and provide opportunities for cohort members to socialize with the students from other classrooms. Although students have opportunities for socializing during non-structured situations, like recess and lunch, many cohort members tend to socialize only with others in their group. Teachers could extend invitations to those students who will be joining the mainstream classroom to join afterschool clubs. Moreover, opportunities should be available for any student to visit the school

counselor, so they may discuss their concerns or ideas with an adult who trained to provide

counseling to children.

**Summary**

      The students who were part of the dual immersion program were accustomed to specific

aspects that were unique to their program. When the program was dissolved at their school site,

the participants were faced with unfamiliar circumstances. Recommendations have been made to

help the students overcome their new challenges.

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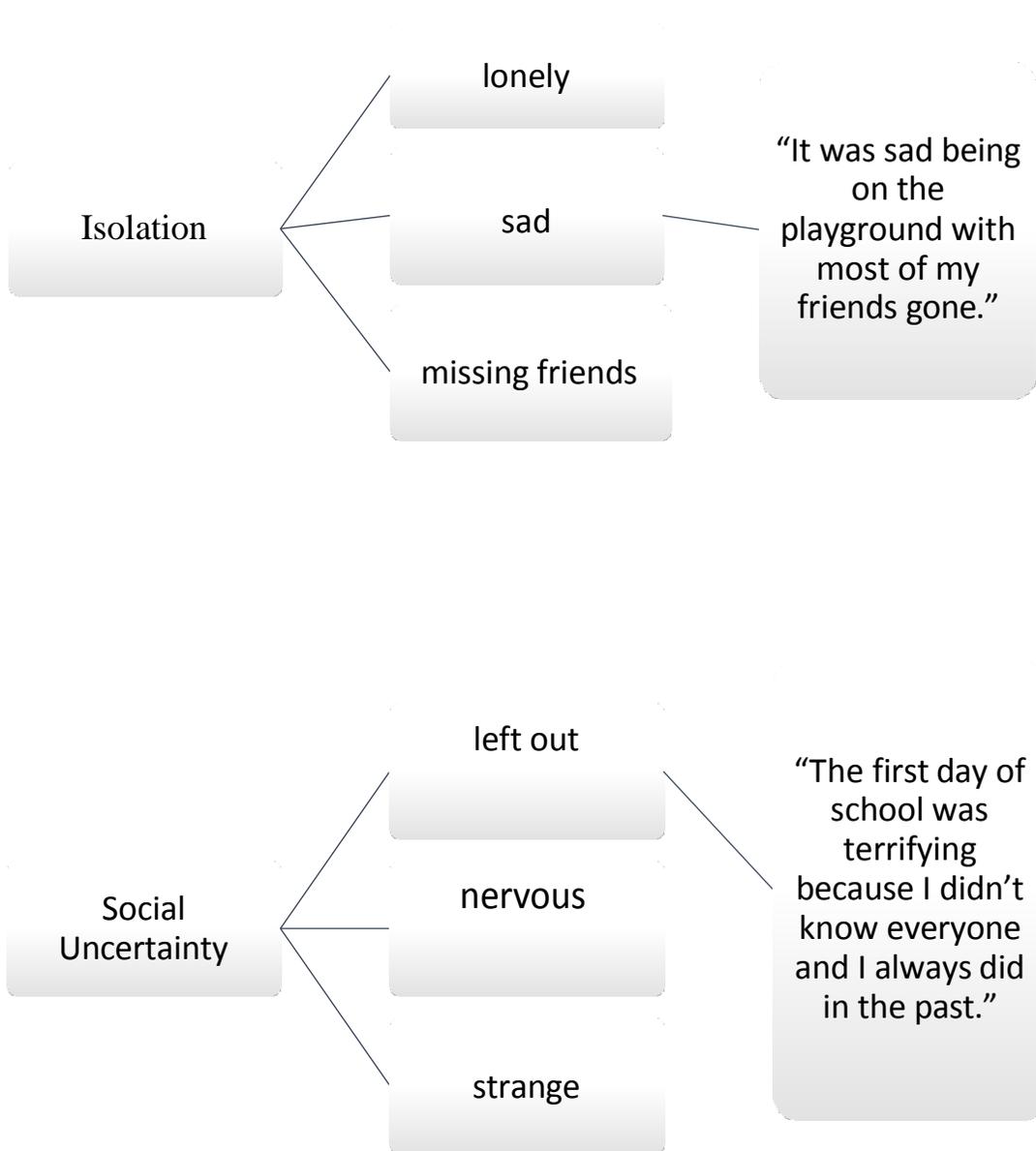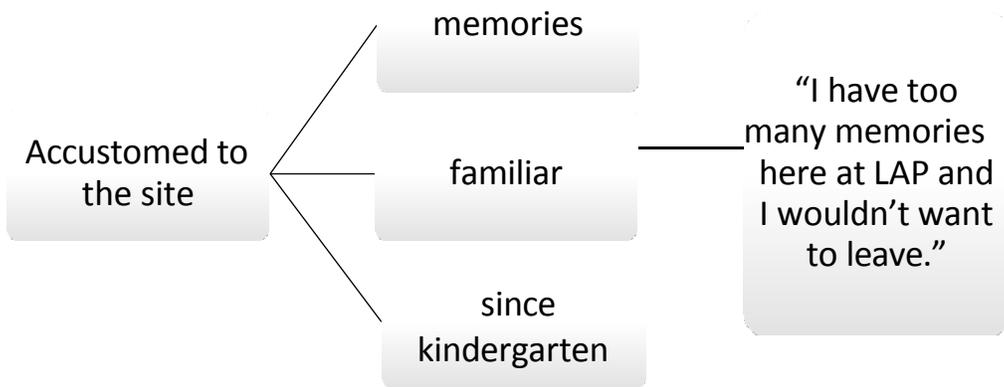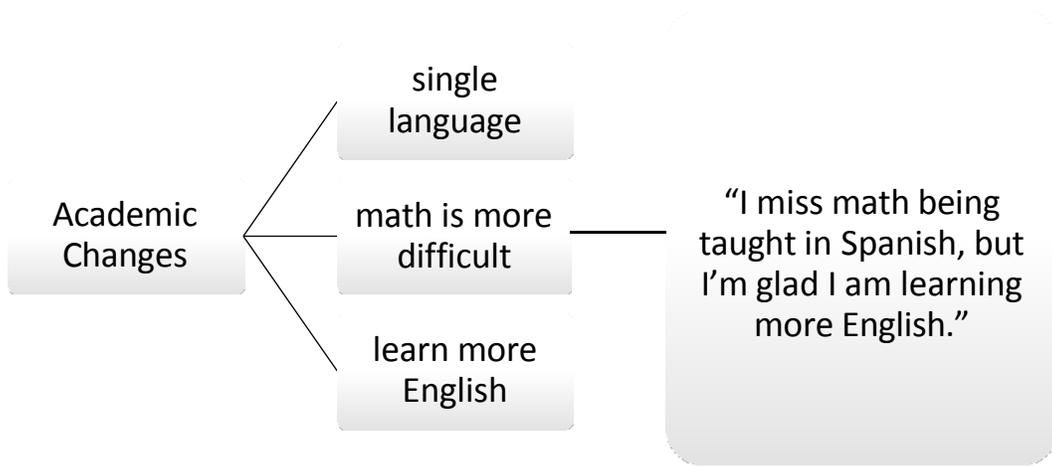
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**Appendix A: Themes**

Isolation
- lonely
- sad
- missing friends

"It was sad being on the playground with most of my friends gone."

Social Uncertainty
- left out
- nervous
- strange

"The first day of school was terrifying because I didn't know everyone and I always did in the past."

Academic Changes

- single language
- math is more difficult — "I miss math being taught in Spanish, but I'm glad I am learning more English."
- learn more English

Accustomed to the site

- memories
- familiar — "I have too many memories here at LAP and I wouldn't want to leave."
- since kindergarten

**Appendix B: Interview Questions for Former Students of the Dual Immersion Program**

Thank you for agreeing to be part of this interview. The interview will help gather data to explore the effects of leaving a strand dual immersion program that was present at the current school for many years. You may request to receive the results of the data analysis after it has been done.

1.  Are you happy that you stayed at LAP? Why or why not?

2.  How do you feel about most of your classmates going on to the new Dual Language Academy?

3.  What was your experience like making new friends this year?

4.  How did it feel being in a class where most of the students were different from the students in previous years?

5.  What is the classwork like this year?

6.  How is the classwork different this year than when you were in a dual immersion class?

7.  Would you like to go to the new Dual Language Academy?

**Appendix C: Interview Questions for Parents in Former Dual Immersion Program**

Thank you for agreeing to be part of this interview. The interview will help gather data to explore the effects of leaving a strand dual immersion program that was present at the current school for many years. You may request to receive the results of the data analysis after it has been done.

1. Why did you decide to keep your child at LAP?

2. What was your child's experience in making new friends outside of the cohort?

3. Does your child talk about his or her former dual immersion friends?

4. In what ways does your child still communicate with his or her friends who changed schools?

5. Has your child's attitude towards school changed? Explain.

6. What is your involvement like in your child's classroom this year?

7. Do you feel that your child is receiving the same quality of education as he or she did in the Dual Immersion Program? Why or why not?

8. Are you considering transferring to the new dual immersion school next year?

**Appendix D: Interview Questions for Teachers**

Thank you for agreeing to be part of this interview. The interview will help gather data to explore the effects of leaving a strand dual immersion program that was present at the current school for many years. You may request to receive the results of the data analysis after it has been done. Please think of all of the former dual immersion students when answering these questions. You may use pseudonyms to discuss specific students.

1. What are the demographics in your classroom? Are there more EL students?

2. How is the student interacting socially with the other students?

3. Does the student tend to socialize primarily with other dual immersion students?

4. Does the student talk about the dual immersion program?

5. How does this student compare academically with your other students?

6. What concerns or compliments if any do you have about this student?