

Classroom Practices and Conversations About Race, Ethnicity, and Heritage in Elementary Bilingual and Monolingual Classrooms



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Introduction

- As a result of rapid immigration growth, the United States has become increasingly linguistically and culturally diverse
- Dual language immersion (DLI) has garnered increased interest (Bailey & Osipova, 2016)
- DLI programs have a range of academic and cognitive benefits (Lindholm-Leary & Genessee, 2014), but little research has examined how these programs support children's developing ideas about ethnicity and race
- Having conversations in the classroom about race and ethnicity fosters the development of students' racial and ethnic understanding and identification (Phinney et al., 1997)

Research Questions

- (1) How do teachers talk about race, ethnicity, and heritage with their 3rd grade students?
- (2) How do these conversations differ by the program structure within the school (i.e., DLI versus English Medium Instruction; EMI)?

Research Site

- A university-affiliated, community-based, laboratory school in Southern California
- Mission statement: "dedicated to addressing the needs of children from diverse backgrounds"
- Racially and ethnically diverse
- Primarily upper middle class (Median income bracket of \$150,000 \$199,999)

Data Source

• Data come from a larger longitudinal study evaluating the impact of participation in a dual language (Spanish-English) immersion track on children's academic, linguistic, and socioemotional outcomes

Participants

 3^{rd} Grade Teachers (N = 8)

		DLI (n = 3)	EMI $(n = 5)$
Gender		Female = 3	Female = 3 Male = 2
Highest Degree	Bachelors	0	2
	Masters	3	3
Race	European American	1	4
	Latinx	2	0
	Not Reported	0	1

Methods

- One teacher interview
 - focused on activities or lessons used to promote conversations about race, ethnicity, and family heritage (adapted from White, Mistry, & Chow, 2013)
- One 30-minute classroom observation in each class
- Fieldnotes and artifact document analysis

How Teachers Talk About Race, Ethnicity, and Heritage

Using children's literature and

discussions to bring up conversations

"So, I think the main thing is just sharing and encouraging kids to share. If they have different experiences, highlighting those, whether it's through literature, the types of books that we read, we've definitely had some moments where kids share deep things."

"We just always are looking at

making sure everybody feels

respected... we want to make sure

that we highlight differences, but in

a way that celebrates them to make

sure that everyone feels that like

differences are not something to

make fun of... they are differences in

a good way."

"I think day to day there's

for the most part it doesn't

feel like there's a real deep

awareness or a real

reflection in terms of their

culture..."

ting those, terature, the read, we've ments where

Incorporating multiple perspectives

Celebrating differences in racial backgrounds

Teachers think their students are

Teachers are aware of and focus on racial diversity in their classroom

extremely, sort of, or not really aware

of racial diversity

Diversity means more than just racial diversity

"We intentionally plan our lessons so that it's not really like you know in a traditional history book where you're learning history through a particular... lens, right. Like from the you know American lens. We're really trying to find the people who have been marginalized and learn it from their perspective."

"Within the student body, there are many mixed-races... we would have like half African-American but they're half African-American from Latino countries, so not necessarily African-American, but African-Latin American. We also have White students from like White racially, but their family originated in Argentina and they're ethnically Jewish."

"What I love about [the school] is that the diversity is more than just race."

Teacher Talk in DLI Classrooms: The Great Wall of LA



-Something wrong
-It happened in the past
-Wars
-Discrimination

-Against people's race, culture, and how they acted. Really just who they were -Against Native Americans, refugees, and Black people

WHAT KIND OF DISCRIMINATION?

"The Indigenous assimilation was when the Europeans changed the clothes of the Native Americans, cut their hair, and changed the culture... Basically tried to make the Native Americans look and act like the Europeans. The Native Americans did not like it. Many Native Americans lost their culture forever."



"This drawing is about the Olympics when the people of color won lots of races and sports. The people of color were winning many medals and some Whites did not like it."

Students selected a

historical moment from the

Great Wall of LA for a

project

Teacher Talk in EMI Classrooms: The History of LA

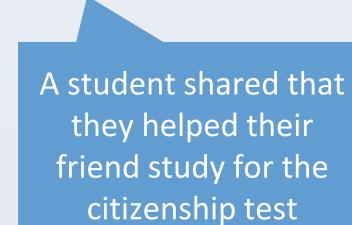
Story about one of the Lost Boys of Sudan who comes to America

Class discussed people who move to America and what it means to be a citizen

A teacher shared that her mother became a citizen of the U.S.

Teacher Reflection:

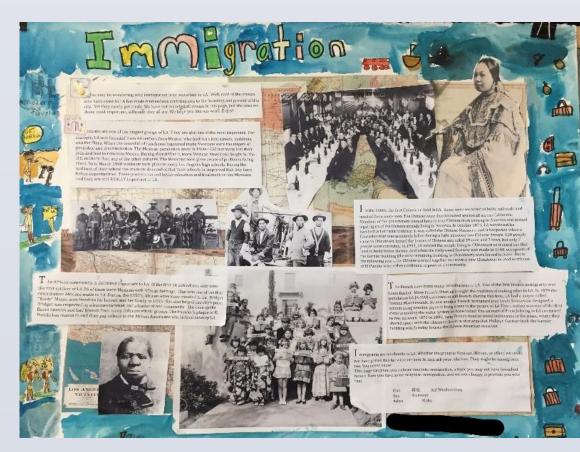
"We're talking a lot about immigrants and so all these different cultures immigrating to California and... They interviewed their parents 'how'd you get here?'... to learn about where they came from and who they are."



KATHERINE APPLEGATE

OME OF THE BRAVE







Conclusion

- DLI programs provide an important context for lessons and conversations about family heritage
- Other school contexts also need to find ways to discuss these topics with children because having conversations about racial background at school can promote positive identity development and foster more positive intergroup attitudes

"How amazing it is that we can share and learn from people that are different than us." (3rd Grade Teacher)

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- References available upon request
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