

A Collaborative Project Impacts Preservice Teachers' Understanding of Emergent Bilingual Students

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CSOTTE 2014

Background of the Problem

- The number of English language learners (ELLs) in U.S. schools continues to increase.
- Bilingual and ESL teacher candidates must become competent in effective practices in the instruction of ELLs.
- There is a need for more research in effective practices for bilingual and ESL teacher preparation.

The Project

- Bilingual and ESL teacher candidates participated in a collaborative project designed to help them understand effective practices to teach English language learners and develop their identity as educators.
- Each group designed a one-week ESL unit of instruction to teach language through content.
- Topic: Pet Welfare
- The best products were donated to a local teacher to use with ELLs.
- Each teacher candidate wrote three reflective essays (before, during, and after the project).

Context and Participants

- Hispanic-serving institution on the Texas-Mexico border
- 53 Bilingual and ESL Preservice teachers
- 49 females and 4 males
- 52 Hispanic

Effective Practices for ELLs

- teaching language through content (Herrera & Murry, 2011)
- organizing instruction using themes (Freeman & Freeman, 2007; NCTE, 2008; Short & Fitzsimmons, 2007)
- providing learner-centered instruction (Freeman & Freeman, 1998; Goldenberg, 2008; Meltzer & Hamann, 2005)
- validating students' first languages (Goldenberg, 2008; Meltzer & Hamann, 2005; NCTE, 2008)
- providing instruction that is comprehensible (Echevarría, Vogt, & Short, 2013; Krashen, 2008)

Bilingual Teacher Identity Development

Influenced by

- past experiences
- knowledge and experiences acquired in the teacher preparation program (Bustos Flores, Riojas Clark, Guerra, & Sánchez, 2008)
- first language and culture (Galindo & Olgún, 1996).

First Reflective Essays

- Before the project
- Development of bilingual and ESL teacher identity
- Intersection between participants' past experiences and current experiences in their teacher preparation program
- Expectations of the project

Second Reflective Essays

- During the project
- Cooperative Learning
 - Positive Interdependence
 - Individual Accountability
- Communication
- Division of work
- Time management

Third Reflective Essays

- After the project
- Learning effective practices for ELLs

Implications for Bilingual/ESL Teacher Educators

- Participants realized the importance of cooperation as part of their professional development.
- Collaborative projects are recommended in bilingual teacher preparation programs to facilitate the type of teacher collaboration that has been found to positively impact the achievement of ELLs (Russell, 2012; Short, Cloud, Morris, & Motta, 2012; York-Barr, Ghere, & Sommers, 2007).
- Preservice teachers shared personal experiences and connected those to the newly acquired knowledge in their teacher preparation program.
- Bustos Flores, Riojas Clark, Guerra, and Sánchez (2008) claim that educators begin to develop their identities before they start teaching.
- Reflective exercises are recommended to assess preservice teachers' knowledge construction and how they connect new understandings with personal experiences in the process of developing their identities as teachers.
- This collaborative project helped build confidence of bilingual and ESL preservice teachers.

For more details:

Rodríguez, A. D. (2013). Bilingual and ESL preservice teachers learn about effective instruction for ELLs through meaningful collaboration. *GiST Journal*, 7, pp.12-34