

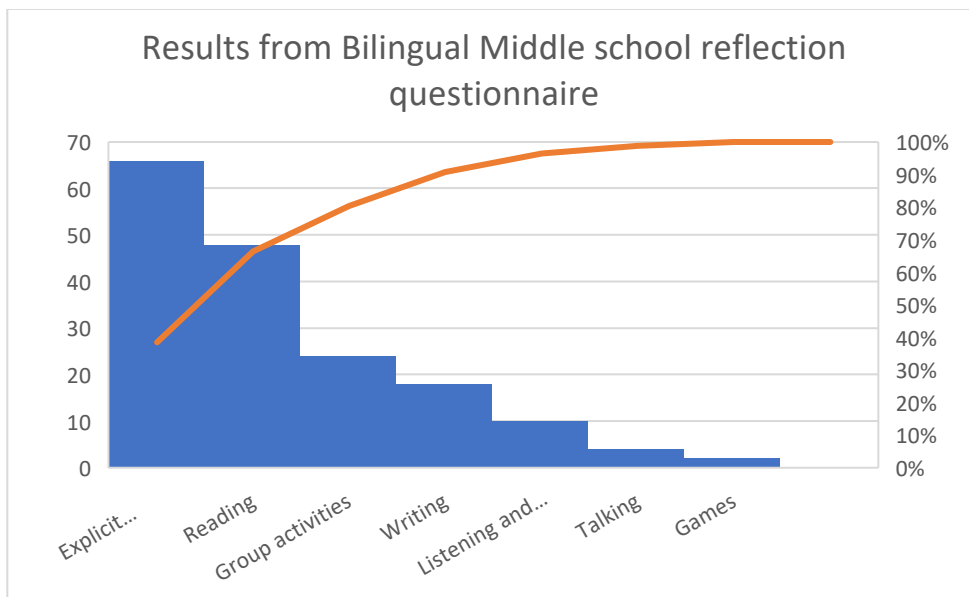
How much grammar do students appreciate? : A case-study of a middle school dual language program in San Antonio

The aim of a dual immersion program is to systematically plan instruction that advances students language proficiency across grade levels. While there is an extensive research, personnel support and curriculum design for dual language instruction (Collier & Thomas, 2004, 2014; Cloud et al, 2000; Krashen, 1999; Lindholm-Leary, 2001), there is still a lack of research that specifically emphasizes the instruction of literacy skills specific to 6th-8th, at middle school level. At this stage, students have begun to use their language and literacy skills across subject areas in school and are able to use language functionally. This translates into the student's ability to intake explicit feedback in order to apply error correction as a learning strategy (Cloud et al, 2000).

In this study, we utilized a reflection questionnaire on the students' writing skills and then, reflected on which materials and methods worked in order to move students toward progress in their writing skills in Spanish.

At total of 186 middle school students responded to a reflection questionnaire that inquired which of the features in class were the most helpful in developing their written Spanish. 38.3% of the students replied that the explicit instruction which includes orthography, grammar, vocabulary and specific verb instructions were the most helpful in developing their Spanish written proficiency. The second highest response was reading activities 27.9%, followed by interaction/ group activities 13.9% that targeted a task-based writing activity. Aural activities and continuous writing practice was of 10.4%.

We suggest that students, specifically at the middle school stages, are ready and find it useful when they receive explicit input in Spanish in order to improve their literacy skills in their heritage language.



Keywords

Dual Language Program, Heritage language instruction, Bilingualism, Literacy development

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