Autobiographical Storytelling in English Language Arts Instruction: Fostering Literacy in the Elementary English Language Learner Classroom
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Background

- The cultural and linguistic profile of US classroom has become increasingly diverse, with English language learners (ELLs) as growing population
- ELLs disproportionately represent low-performing students compared to native English-speaking peers
- Difficulties in language-related skills correspond with protracted academic achievement
- Instruction that targets multiple aspects of language acquisition yield improved educational outcomes

Culturally-relevant teaching strategies that address individual learning needs and establish meaningful learning contexts are important for student success. Narrative-driven storytelling models of English language instruction that may serve as novel educational practice

Methods

In a comprehensive literature review, this study explored storytelling in relation to five focus areas:
- Classroom dynamics
- Interpersonal relationships
- Social-emotional development
- Engagement and motivation
- Academic performance

References


Conclusions

- Exposure to diverse narratives broadens cultural attitudes and improves interpersonal relationships in positive learning contexts
- Exploration of self-narratives legitimizes student experience and voice
- Recruitment of multimodal language skills in storytelling enhances academic performance
- Storytelling enhances engagement, which in turn facilitates motivation to learn and contributes to improved academic performance

Discussion

Storytelling-based instruction may be evaluated according to Gardner’s model of Second Language Acquisition:

Few frameworks for storytelling-based language instruction in diverse classrooms currently exist. From this study, four guidelines emerged:

(1) Acknowledge diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds
- Respect cultural and linguistic diversity
- Incorporate primary language in meaningful ways
- Remain sensitive to prior educational experiences

(2) Legitimize student experience and voice
- Affirm experience through collaborative learning
- Foster inclusive and extended classroom language
- Reinforce contextual definitions for learning

(3) Provide verbal and procedural scaffolding by teacher-storytellers
- Provide strategic cognitive support via verbal language modeling
- Reinforce learning via mediation, response, and corrective feedback
- Assess individual student performance and gains

(4) Support active student roles in learning
- Encourage peer collaboration during discussions
- Assign relevant and engaging activities to stimulate student interest
- Support exploration in novel learning environments

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