

A Template Analysis of Teacher Agency at an Academically Successful Dual Language School

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Substantial evidence exists to support dual language (DL) education as a viable and enriching method of supporting high levels of academic achievement for both English language learners (ELLs) and English-speaking students (Christian, 1994; Lessow-Hurley, 1991; Lindholm-Leary, 2001; Thomas & Collier, 2003). Nonetheless, there are many challenges on the path to actualizing the potential of DL programs, including societal pressures and unsupportive educational policies. Dual language teachers are at the forefront of this struggle to raise academic standards for an increasingly diverse student body. As such, those who are successfully navigating these challenges possess information that can inform the collective knowledge base on methods of supporting and enhancing high academic achievement for all learners. Using Bandura's (1989) notion of human agency, this case study examined the characteristics of teacher agency at an academically successful DL elementary school.

The purpose of this research was to identify both the factors that *inform* teachers' sense of agency (antecedents) and the instruc-

Mainstream models of bilingual education view English language learners (ELLs) from a deficiency perspective and engage in the practice of subtractive schooling, which strips the learner of cultural capital that could benefit him or her in terms of educational achievement. Conversely, the dual-language (DL) model is additive in nature, seeking to add English to the student's body of knowledge while at the same time maintaining the first language. Evidence suggests that DL programs have the potential to foster both significant academic achievement and increased cultural awareness in the students they serve. Moreover, researchers have found a pervasive "culture of intellectualism" present in schools with effective DL programs. This culture is characterized by active engagement in learning, including the free exchange of ideas and the promotion of higher order thinking skills. As such, DL programs offer both language-majority and language-minority learners the opportunity to reach advanced levels of academic achievement. As with any educational program, teachers play a crucial role in the success or failure of these programs. Thus, successful DL teachers must draw from a variety of sources to make decisions about instruction in their classrooms. By building on Bandura's theory of human agency and applying it specifically to DL teachers, these findings can be used to inform the successful implementation and maintenance of new DL programs.

Summary

tional behaviors that *result from* that sense of agency (manifestations). The research question that guided the study was: What are the characteristics of teacher agency at an academically successful dual language school? Given the teachers' critical role in student achievement (Wright, Horn, & Sanders, 1997), examination of successful teachers can result in an enhanced understanding of effective teaching practices. These findings are significant because they acknowledge and inform the work of educators.

Literature Review

The setting for this analysis is an elementary campus that implements the DL method of bilingual education. Therefore, the review begins with an overview of the DL model of education, along with advantages and challenges to contextualize the study. Second, this review provides a definition of human agency, including explanations of both antecedents and manifestations of the construct. Finally, this account includes a discussion of the critical role played by an individual's beliefs with regard to his or her personal efficacy and the sources of those beliefs.

Dual Language Programs

Dual language programs take an additive approach to instruction. In other words, they support a perspective that respects the language resources possessed by all students and seek to add a second language to their repertoire of skills (Mora, Wink, & Wink, 2001). Lindholm and Fairchild (1990) suggested there are four overarching philosophical goals that define DL programs. These include high academic achievement in two languages, development of bilingualism and biliteracy, high levels of self-efficacy, and positive attitudes across cultures. Importantly, the cultural background of English language learners (ELLs) is viewed as a resource rather than a deficit; it is something to be used for building a culture of diversity within the school. Dual language programs are unique because they maintain the pri-

mary language while developing language and literacy in a second language. By serving both language minority and majority populations, DL programs establish a reciprocal learning relationship that is critical in achieving the challenging goals of the DL program.

Dual language programs are supported by research that demonstrates the cognitive benefits of learning a second language (Hakuta, 1986, 1987; Krashen, 1991; Smith & Arnot-Hopffer, 1998; Stewart, 2005). The challenging task of mastering two languages requires a high level of abstract cognitive processing (Hadi-Tabassum, 2005) and thus often leads to “increased cognitive skills, higher achievement in other academic areas, and higher standardized test scores” (Stewart, 2005, p. 13). This assertion is further supported by several studies that report higher levels of academic achievement for students who participate in DL programs than those in other bilingual programs or mainstream classes (Christian, 1994; Smith & Arnot-Hopffer, 1998; Thomas & Collier, 2003). Following almost 20 years of research on DL programs in large and small districts in 15 states, Collier and Thomas (2004) concluded that the DL model of education held “astonishing” potential for facilitating high levels of academic achievement in the students served under it.

Yet a key factor in reaping the cognitive benefits associated with bilingualism is the achievement of a balanced state of bilingualism and biliteracy (Kirk Senesac, 2002; Lindholm & Aclan, 1991; Lindholm-Leary, 2004/2005). This optimum level of language functioning is seldom achieved in either the more common transitional bilingual programs for ELLs or foreign language classes for English speakers (Estrada, Gomez, & Ruiz-Escalante, 2009; Hakuta, 1987). In contrast, DL programs support this balance of language proficiency by bringing together native speakers of both languages and tailoring curriculum to foster high levels of content knowledge accessible in both languages. Hence, DL programs support increased academic achievement for both ELLs and native English-speaking children by developing the learners’ thinking processes through pedagogically sound second language learning strategies.

Although these findings reflect the promise of DL programs, there are societal forces at work that present resistance to the implementation of these progressive programs. Lessow-Hurley (2005) suggested that language parochialism, language elitism, and language restrictionism are each factors in the larger phenomenon of language resistance. “Language parochialism” refers to the attitude that “holds multilingualism in low regard and fails to acknowledge the benefits of language sophistication” (Lessow-Hurley, 2005, p. 142). As the United States becomes a more global society, there will be an increased demand for individuals with proficiency in languages other than English to negotiate both business transactions and diplomatic relations (Metis, 2008). Nonetheless, the attitudes underlying language parochialism effectively hinder educational support aimed at increasing the number of bilingual and multilingual students needed to meet this demand. This situation is further exacerbated by “language elitism,” or the notion that “bilingualism is desirable for individuals of elevated status but unacceptable for members of ethnic minority groups” (Lessow-Hurley, 2005, p. 141). This has led to some puzzling outcomes. For example, it is generally considered a worthwhile accomplishment for an English speaker to master a second language, yet immigrant children are routinely expected to give up their native language in the process of assimilation (Lessow-Hurley, 2005). Thus, ELLs, who are uniquely situated to attain mastery of two or more languages, are routinely provided with an education that negates the benefits associated with their primary language while focusing on rapid assimilation of English (Mora, 2009). Notably, American attitudes toward language study are not widely shared throughout the world. It is quite common in foreign school systems for students to be required to learn two or more languages (Simon, 1980). Finally, “language restrictionism” refers to the “attempt to limit language use through government policy” (Lessow-Hurley, 2005, p. 145). The United States has a long history of engaging in this type of restrictive government policy. In a message delivered to the American Defense Society in 1919, Theodore Roosevelt declared, “We

have room for but one language here, and that is the English language, for we intend to see that the crucible turn our people out as Americans, of American nationality, and not as dwellers in a polyglot boarding-house" (Crawford, 1992, p. 59). This philosophy, along with the policies based upon it, has led to a "veritable cemetery of foreign languages, in that knowledge of the mother tongues of hundreds of immigrant groups has rarely lasted past the third generation" (Portes & Hao, 1998, p. 269). A current example is the federal educational policy articulated in the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) which "focus[es] support on enabling all limited English proficient (LEP) students to learn English as quickly and effectively as possible" (U.S. Department of Education, n.d., Promoting English Proficiency section, para. 1). By removing all reference to bilingual education, and labeling ELLs in terms of deficiency (Limited English Proficient), the federal government makes a very clear statement about the dominance of English and the relative insignificance of other languages. In sum, these policies do not support development of the balanced bilingualism that is linked to increased academic achievement.

Thus, the larger environment in which DL programs are embedded brings myriad pressures to bear on these programs that seek to promote additive bilingualism. It is in this conflicted environment that DL teachers operate (Palmer & Lynch, 2008). As such, the actions and behaviors of teachers are influenced by not only their knowledge of the tenets of the DL program, but also by these outside influences. At the same time, instructional behavior is mediated by the thoughts and beliefs of the teachers themselves (Ray, 2008). The confluence of these factors plays a key role in the effectiveness of teachers and ultimately in the success of the program (Freeman, Freeman, & Mercuri, 2005). This study uses Bandura's (1989) notion of human agency to tease out the factors that play a role in the process of teachers' self-regulation.

Theoretical Framework

Human Agency

The data generated in this study were analyzed using the lens of human agency as described in Bandura's (1989) social cognitive theory. Bandura asserted that "the capacity to exercise control over one's own thought processes, motivation, and action is a distinctively human characteristic" (Bandura, 1989, p. 1175). Human agency is therefore defined as an intentional act that results in a particular outcome (Bandura, 1997). Or in other words, it describes the process through which people intentionally change themselves or their situations through their own actions (Bandura, 1989).

Bandura (1977, 1993, 1997) expanded previous understanding of this topic by pointing out the false dichotomy between the views that human beings are either independent and autonomous agents or that their actions were shaped and controlled entirely by external influences (Skinner, 1975). By introducing the theory of emergent interactive agency, Bandura (1989) presented a model that demonstrates that people are neither autonomous agents nor mechanical responders to the environment. Rather, personal factors, external events, and behavior all operate as interacting determinants of human agency; hence, "agent causation involves the ability to behave differently from what environmental forces dictate rather than inevitably yield to them" (Bandura, 1997, p. 7). Critics have suggested that Bandura's theory does not account for the consistency that has been found in some behaviors and that it does not account for the biological or hormonal influences on behavior (Pervin & John, 2001). However, Bandura's theory has been generally accepted by the research community and has been used as the basis for many subsequent studies (Eisenberger, Conti-D'Antonio, & Bertando, 2005; Pajares & Urdan, 2006; Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2007). As such, this construct has clear implications for DL teachers who operate in programs that are not always supported by their environments.

Bandura went on to describe the process of emergent interactive agency by introducing the idea of triadic recipro-

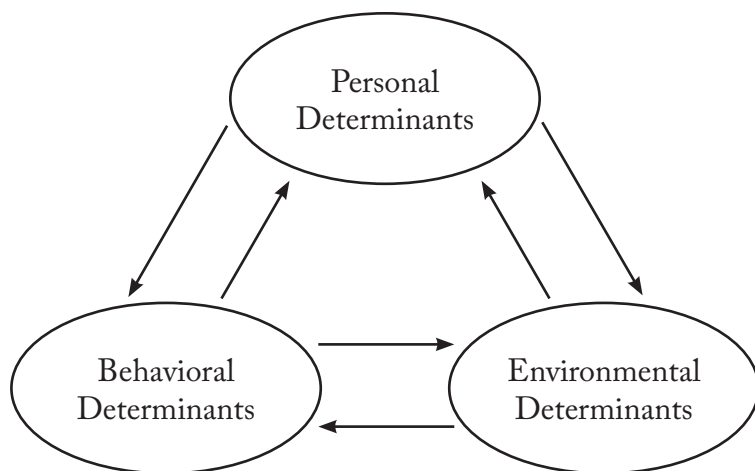


Figure 1. Model illustrating the relationships between the three major classes of determinants in triadic reciprocal causation (Bandura, 1997).

cal causation. This model illustrates the relationship between the three major determinants of human action: behavior, internal personal factors, and the external environment (see Figure 1). To elaborate on the idea that individuals are neither fully autonomous agents nor automatic responders to the external environment, triadic reciprocal causation describes how “internal personal factors in the form of cognitive, affective, and biological events; behavior; and environmental events all operate as interacting determinants that influence one another bidirectionally” (Bandura, 1997, p. 6). Thus, according to the model, all human behavior can be understood as the result of the interdependence between these factors.

Furthermore, Bandura (1977, 1993, 1997) suggested that human agency can be more fully understood by examining both factors that inform acts of agency and outlining categories in which human agency is manifested.

According to Bandura’s (1997) theory, understanding people’s beliefs about their ability to exert control over their situation, or their sense of efficacy, is a key mechanism in understanding human agency. For a fine-grained analysis of the construct, it

can be broken down further in terms of the antecedents and manifestations of efficacy beliefs. He outlined four categories of antecedents and four categories of manifestations that serve to differentiate sources and expressions of self-generated behavior. It is important to note that while this study looks at these phenomena as a series of events, they are in fact reproducing themselves in a continual cycle of interdependence, as suggested by the model of triadic reciprocal causation. Thus, the current study examines teacher agency in detail using Bandura's notion of human agency as a framework.

Antecedents

An individual's sense of personal efficacy is informed by four principal sources of information: mastery experience, vicarious experience, social persuasion, and physiological arousal (Bandura, 1994). Mastery experiences are instances when individuals are successful at completing a particular task. They are powerfully reinforcing to a person's sense of efficacy. Conversely, experiencing failure can undermine efficacy beliefs, especially if the individuals do not already have a firmly established belief about their ability to effectively accomplish a certain task. Second, vicarious experience is a situation in which individuals observe the success of other people similar to themselves, and this observation bolsters their own confidence. Social or verbal persuasion is a third avenue through which efficacy beliefs are formed. People who receive positive verbal persuasion to attempt a task are more likely to put forth greater effort and to sustain it. Lastly, physiological symptoms also can inform efficacy beliefs. People often interpret physical and emotional reactions to stress as indicative of poor performance. If people experience an aversive reaction such as anxiety or tension, they are less likely to expect success (Bandura, 1997). Thus, a variety of factors are at work in developing the self-efficacy beliefs that ultimately influence the manifestation of human agency.

Manifestations

Bandura (1994) went on to describe four processes through which efficacy beliefs are manifested in individuals' behavior: cognitive, motivational, affective, and selection. Each of these will be discussed in turn, emphasizing its relation to teacher behavior specifically. In the area of cognition, Bandura (1994) asserted that most human behavior is purposive and therefore dependent on prior thinking and planning. Individuals with a strong sense of self-efficacy tend to set more challenging goals for themselves and maintain commitment to those goals. They attribute the likelihood of their success to their own innate abilities rather than to circumstances outside of their control. This has been supported by Allinder (1994), who found that teachers with high levels of self-efficacy tend to spend more time in planning and organization. The motivation process is impacted because positive perceptions of self-efficacy produce higher levels of motivation. Individuals with a strong sense of self-efficacy tend to view failure as a result of insufficient effort, rather than a lack of ability. Relevant examples include the finding that teachers with higher levels of efficacy dedicate more time to working with students who struggle (Almog & Shechtman, 2007; Gibson & Dembo, 1984) and that these efficacious teachers are less likely to refer a student who is having trouble academically to special education (Meijer & Foster, 1988; Soodak, Podell, & Lehman, 1998).

Efficacy beliefs also can impact affective processes such as levels of stress, anxiety, and depression (Bandura, 1989). People who feel efficacious in controlling stressors in their lives exhibit less anxiety than those who believe they cannot manage such stressors (Lazarus & Folkman, 1987). The stronger the sense of self-efficacy, the better equipped the individual is to take on potentially threatening activities. In support of this notion, Guskey (1984) found that teachers who had higher levels of self-efficacy tended to be more enthusiastic about teaching and took responsibility for both positive and negative student outcomes. Finally, efficacy beliefs can influence individuals' selection processes with regard to activities or opportunities they will pursue.

For instance, people will generally seek activities that require skills and talents they believe themselves to possess, while avoiding occupations that require knowledge they do not have (Bandura, 1989). Accordingly, Glickman and Tamashiro (1982) found positive perceptions of efficacy to be related to teacher retention, demonstrating that those who feel they are effective teachers tend to stay when others who feel less effective might choose to leave. Likewise, teacher efficacy was found to be related to greater commitment to the teaching professions (Evans & Tribble, 1986), thus supporting the idea that people tend to stay in occupations where they feel successful. Overall, this theory provides a useful tool for analyzing the self-generated behaviors of teachers who have been successful in implementing the DL model of education despite external factors that may impede the development of bilingual learners.

Method

A qualitative instrumental case study approach was chosen because it offered an opportunity to better understand the general phenomenon of DL teacher agency by studying one particular case (Johnson & Christenson, 2008). Additionally, approaching this question from a qualitative point of view allowed for an exploration of new and complex areas of research in a way that brought forth the perspectives of the research participants themselves (Gay & Airasian, 2003). In this case, the perspectives of teachers from a successful DL school were critical in exploring factors related to teacher agency. As such, this method renders a thick, rich description of these successful DL teachers (Denzin, 1989). Data from interviews with the participants were audio recorded and subsequently transcribed to allow for data analysis. The clean data set was put into SuperHyperQual (Padilla, 2004) and analyzed using template analysis (Crabtree & Miller, 1999). This method allowed the researcher to use the a priori codes taken from the theoretical framework, including categories of both antecedents and manifestations of teacher agency, to analyze

the data gathered through teacher interviews. SuperHyperQual is a qualitative analysis software package that is comparable to the more traditional method of creating and organizing index cards to manage data. However, SuperHyperQual provides the researcher with a more flexible way to isolate and code various segments of text and finally to “chunk” these segments together forming exemplars of each identified theme. In short, this software allows data to be managed and analyzed in a manner that is both thorough and efficient (Padilla, 2004).

Setting

The school described in this study houses one of the longest running DL programs in South Texas. For purposes of this article, the school has been given the fictitious name, Bienvenidos Elementary. The program began in 1995 and is still operating today with increasing levels of success. Although Bienvenidos was located in a large, urban district, the school itself is relatively small, serving 321 students during the 2005–2006 school year. Admission to the school was based on a traditional system of attendance zones. Students who lived within the district-defined boundaries were eligible to attend Bienvenidos. A few transfers were allowed in compliance with district policies, but the vast majority of the student body lived in the immediate vicinity. The school held no special status as a magnet or charter school that would open enrollment to those outside the school community. The DL program at Bienvenidos was implemented as a result of the efforts of administration and faculty at the school. The principal, who initiated the DL program 13 years ago, was still leading the school. Thus, the teachers benefited from an administrator who was supportive and knowledgeable about the program. Nonetheless, although there were two other DL elementary programs in the district, central office level support for the DL program specifically was minimal. The overall demographics of the school were similar to those of the district, although Bienvenidos served a higher percentage of ELLs (see Table 1). Compared to the state, Bienvenidos served a larger percentage of students

Table 1Demographic Comparison of Bienvenidos
Elementary With District and State

	Bienvenidos	District	State
Ethnicity			
African American	3.8	8.8	14.7
Hispanic	87.9	87.8	45.3
White	7.4	3.0	36.5
Native American	0.0	0.1	0.3
Asian/Pac. Islander	0.9	0.3	3.1
% Econ. disadvantaged	82.6	92.2	55.6
% LEP	24.7	16.7	15.8
% At risk	63.2	67.5	48.7
# of students per teacher	14.5	16	14.9

Note. From Texas Education Agency (2009).

classified as economically disadvantaged, limited English proficient, and at risk. This is significant because these indicators often foreshadow lower rates of academic achievement (Fry, 2007), yet Bienvenidos has demonstrated consistent student success on state-mandated standardized exams.

The school utilizes the 90/10 model of DL instruction meaning 90% of instruction is provided in Spanish in the early grades, with English instruction gradually increasing until the ratio is 50% English and 50% Spanish in fourth and fifth grades. At the time the data for this study were collected, Bienvenidos' state accountability ratings demonstrated that it had outperformed both the district and the state for the previous 5 years (see Figure 2). This figure depicts the percent of *all* students who passed *all* state accountability tests that they were required to take. These assessments include reading and math tests at grades 3 through 5, writing in grade 4, and science in grade 5.

Furthermore, when the State of Texas began implementation of the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) to replace the former Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS), it began reporting the number of students who obtained

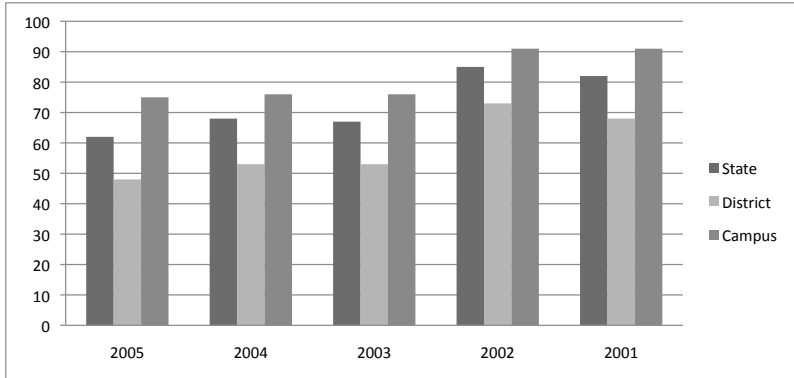


Figure 2. Percent of all students who met the state standard on all tests of state accountability. From Texas Education Agency (2009).

“Commended Performance” in addition to the percent who passed or met the minimum standard. According to the Performance Level Descriptors published by the Texas Education Agency (TEA), “Met Standard” is defined as “satisfactory performance; at or above state passing standard; sufficient understanding of TEKS (Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills) curriculum” while “Commended Performance” is defined as “high academic achievement; considerably above the state passing standard; thorough understanding of the TEKS curriculum” (TEA, 2009). Thus, data on the number of students who achieved Commended Performance is a more focused indicator of those students who are reaching high levels of academic achievement. A review of the levels of Commended Performance at Bienvenidos Elementary demonstrates that students at this school have significantly outperformed their district and have matched or exceeded the state for the past 3 years since this study was conducted, indicating that the high level of academic achievement continues (see Figure 3).

Participants

The participants were 4 teachers who were providing instructional services to students in grades 1–5 at Bienvenidos

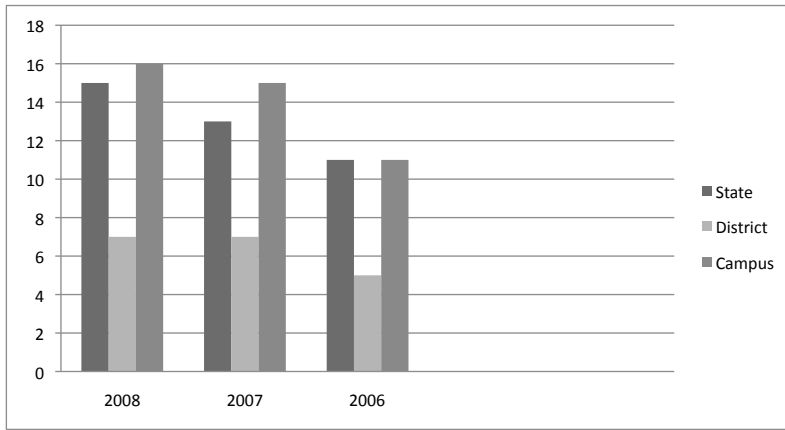


Figure 3. Percent of all students obtaining Commended Performance on all tests of state accountability. From Texas Education Agency (2009).

Elementary, a small, inner-city school in South Texas. They were chosen through a process of theory or concept sampling, which allowed the researcher to gain deeper understanding of a specific concept (Creswell, 2005). In this case, it was an in-depth analysis of teacher agency in a DL program that was successful in maintaining high academic achievement for the students it served. This purposive sampling technique was chosen because it allowed for targeting of participants who were “information rich” (Patton, 1990, p. 169). This particular school was chosen because of the aforementioned evidence of high-achieving students. An additional criterion for the participants was the requirement to have been teaching for at least 5 years.

Based on the stated criteria, 4 teachers were selected and all 4 agreed to participate in the study. They ranged in age from 28 to 56, had an average of 6 years teaching in the DL program, and had an average of 15 years teaching bilingual education in general. To avoid confusion in reporting the results, pseudonyms were assigned to each of the participants for use in this study. The grade levels taught by the participants varied: Roberta taught first grade, Lupe taught a second/third split class, Bonnie taught fourth grade, and Celina taught fifth grade.

However, all reported previous experience teaching at several different elementary grade levels. Roberta and Celina have been at Bienvenidos since the DL program was implemented 13 years ago, Lupe had been there 10 years, and Bonnie had been there for 3. Three of the participants were born in the United States and one was born in Mexico; nevertheless, all participants reported their native language to be Spanish.

It is of note that the 3 American-born participants reported that no bilingual program of any kind was offered to them when they attended school as children. Bonnie and Lupe attended private schools that implemented all-English immersion programs, although Bonnie was in Texas and Lupe was in Mexico. Roberta and Celina attended public schools in Texas and reported that few accommodations were made for their language differences. A final descriptor of each of the participants relates to the way they raised their own children, whether bilingually or monolingually. Lupe does not currently have children. Bonnie, the youngest participant, reported that she speaks to her infant son only in Spanish because that is what comes naturally to her. Roberta and Celina, whose children are now adults, both shared that they did not teach Spanish to their children. Instead, they chose to focus on English language skills because they felt at the time that this approach would be more beneficial to their children academically. The experiences of Roberta and Celina speak to the presence of societal pressures that lead to the neglect of the heritage language in linguistically diverse children (Rodriguez, 1982). At the same time, Bonnie, a young mother, reported a different attitude toward teaching her son Spanish. This generational difference in attitudes toward learning Spanish suggests a growing awareness of the benefits associated with bilingualism.

Data Collection

Data were collected through a series of semistructured interviews. Each participant was interviewed once, with interviews lasting from 1 to 3 hours. Each interview was conducted by the researcher using a common interview protocol to frame the con-

versation. The participants served both English dominant students and ELLs and were asked about their experiences as they related to instruction for both groups. The questions were designed to elicit self-reflection on the part of the participants with regard to the self-generated behaviors in which they engaged as a DL teacher. Further subquestions, or probes, were developed to gain a deeper level of information and to encourage elaboration. The data collection took place at the school, at the request of the participants, and was conducted in the spring semester of 2006.

Data Analysis

Because this exploration is grounded in Bandura's (1989) notion of human agency, the antecedents and manifestations of this construct offered themes that were of relevance to the analysis. Hence, the a priori themes characteristic of template analysis (Crabtree & Miller, 1999) were well suited to this evaluation. More importantly, template analysis provided a framework that allowed for constant comparison between the theoretical framework and the actual experiences of DL teachers. A potential limitation of this style of analysis is the chance of missing themes that do not fit within the framework. The researcher was attentive to this limitation during the data analysis phase of the project, paying keen attention to determine whether themes outside the antecedent/manifestation framework emerged from the data. However, no additional categories or themes relating to antecedents and manifestations of teacher agency were found in this study.

The transcribed data set was placed into SuperHyperQual and then systematically analyzed using the template gleaned from the theoretical framework. This template included the four categories of antecedents to human agency, along with the four processes through which agency is manifested. The researcher then became thoroughly familiar with the data set and subsequently began combing through the data looking for examples related to antecedents and manifestations of teacher agency. Following this analysis, a concept model was developed to elucidate the factors gleaned from the study that were interwoven

with teacher agency. The resulting model is a visual representation of the characteristics of agency demonstrated by DL teachers as they engage in the reflective practice of teaching in an academically successful program.

Findings

The model in Figure 4 is a visual representation of the data analysis. By using template analysis, the researcher was able to reduce a large, complex set of data to a clear and meaningful summary of teacher agency. In Figure 4, the teacher can be seen in the center, shaded circle. The teacher is placed there because it is her experiences that were the central phenomenon being investigated in this project. Above the circle, four rectangles represent Bandura's categories of antecedents or origins of teacher agency: mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, verbal/social persuasion, and physiological arousal. Underneath each heading are representative examples of these motivating factors as they were reported by the participants. The rectangles below, emanating from the center circle, represent the four processes through which teacher agency is manifested: cognitive, motivational, affective, and selective. As with the antecedents, representative examples of the behaviors reported by the participants are underneath each heading. Moreover, the bold bidirectional arrows connecting the boxes containing antecedents and manifestations attest to the reciprocal nature of these concepts. When manifestations of agency, such as teamwork and planning, are successful, they reinforce the sense of mastery that then leads to further agentic behavior. Thus, the cycle continues with behavior informing beliefs and vice versa. These findings provide a clearer understanding of the actual practices of these DL teachers. The theoretical framework offers a logical way of organizing this information, to assure a more complete view of the construct of teacher agency.

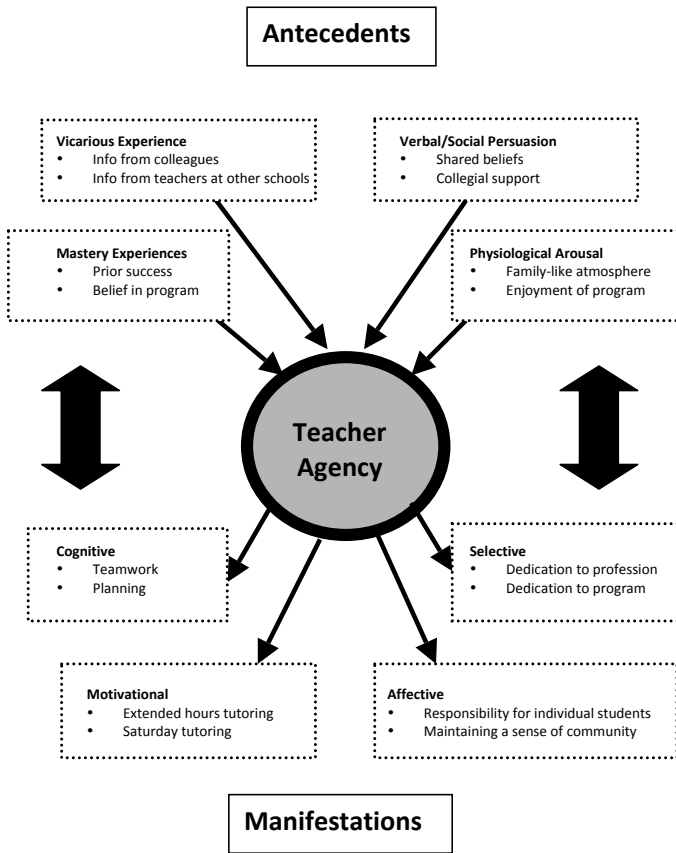


Figure 4. Antecedents and manifestations of teacher agency in an effective DL program.

Antecedents

The data set was combed to find specific examples of teacher behavior that were identified within the four categories of antecedents: mastery experiences, vicarious reinforcement, verbal/social persuasion, and physiological arousal.

Mastery Experiences. Previous studies have suggested that mastery experiences are the strongest sources of efficacy beliefs (Tschannen Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2007) and findings from this study support that assertion. The data contained many

examples of teachers drawing upon past successes to bolster their efforts at continuing achievement. Lupe provided an eloquent encapsulation of the strength behind mastery experiences with the statement, “It does happen, you just have to believe and just push it and be there” (individual interview, February 22, 2006). Celina again reinforced this idea with the statement:

This program does [work]. Because when I came here 10 years ago, the scores of the bilingual kids were not passing, I remember that. Then the first year they tested the kids from the dual-language program, they didn’t do well. But from that next year on, the kids just started doing better, not only passing but doing really well so I know this program works. The transitional program, it never worked. (individual interview, February 20, 2006)

Bonnie provided further corroboration with the comment:

I think it’s just something that happens and the kids know, and they can still handle both languages very well inside a classroom. They could survive if I sent them off to Mexico. They’ll be fine if I let them loose here in America. (individual interview, March 1, 2006)

These successful experiences with the DL model are compelling motivators for agentic behavior aimed at supporting the program and act as a buffer to external pressures.

Vicarious Experiences. The role of vicarious experience likewise emerged from the data. Roberta and Celina both said that their belief in the DL program had been strengthened by visits to schools in other cities and states. Participants specifically reported visiting Alicia Chacon School in Texas and Oyster Bilingual School in Washington, DC. Furthermore, they reported making numerous school visits to other DL schools during the 2006 National Association of Bilingual Education (NABE) conference in Phoenix, AZ. Not only did the participants report these

visits to be a source of motivation for adhering to the program, they further acknowledged that they are continually inspired by these model programs and bring back new ideas to enhance the program at Bienvenidos. Most recently, this collaboration with other DL programs has led to the teaching of a third language, Russian, to students at the school.

Verbal/Social Persuasion. Social persuasion also played a part in informing teacher agency. Celina spoke to the importance of respect for linguistic diversity being a hallmark of effective DL programs. She stated, “The good thing is the Spanish language does have a status in this program” (individual interview, February 20, 2006). The data also revealed that conversations among teachers reinforce and sustain this appreciation of diversity. Roberta addressed this with the comment:

These are such creative, talented, independent students. Their lives are so rich with things that people don’t realize or take into consideration. I’m worried about what I hear on the news. Like in Arizona, now it’s illegal to speak Spanish or send Spanish homework. (individual interview, February 23, 2006)

There was a belief shared and reinforced among these teachers that the DL model is the most effective and equitable program for their students. This confidence in the program translated into active advocacy for both the program and the students within it.

At the same time, collegial support emerged as another way in which social persuasion led to agentic behavior. When speaking of the pressure felt by teachers with regard to high-stakes testing, Roberta shared,

It’s like, “Just leave me alone to do my work, I know what I need to do,” but if you don’t experience it and go through the process then you don’t know what the other teachers are also experiencing in third and fourth grade. They have to do this all the time and they have to look at

those scores and the students have to know their scores so they can see how they are progressing. (individual interview, February 23, 2006)

This sense of empathy leads teachers to support one another and the students collectively. Unlike the traditional notion of the classroom as an isolated entity (Johnson, 2004), teachers at Bienvenidos enjoyed the benefits of a strong network of support from their fellow teachers.

Physiological Arousal. Finally, the data suggest that the participants were comfortable and enjoyed the overall climate at the school. Roberta declared, “Here at Bienvenidos I think we are really a close-knit type of family because we help each other” (individual interview, February 23, 2006). Celina provided further evidence of this healthy school environment. Even after discussing some of the challenges she faced, she summed up her comments by sharing, “I truly enjoy working in this program” (individual interview, February 20, 2006). Although participants did address challenges, such as the pressure resulting from standardized testing, each reported that overall, she was happy with the program and specifically that she was happy to work at Bienvenidos Elementary.

Manifestations

Further analysis revealed how teacher agency is manifested in purposive actions that support the program.

Cognitive. There was an abundance of evidence that the participants engaged in activities they felt would contribute to the success of their students and to the overall program in the school. Examples include extensive planning and working together as a team, both with other teachers and administrators. Lupe mentioned both planning and collaboration with the statement:

And we talk about what we see in the classroom and the students that we are concerned about and ask, “Well how are you doing it in your classroom?” and then we try to plan activities or things we are supposed to do with the school. (individual interview, February 22, 2006)

Bonnie followed up on the centrality of collegial planning by asserting:

It’s really just about how we are going to work it out. Like the writing camp, we would plan it, get together, talk about the kids, make the groups, a high, middle, and a low, and who would work together well personality-wise. Figuring out who is going to teach what in the writing camp and what to give in tutoring. (individual interview, March 1, 2006)

Further substantiation of the focus on teamwork is provided by Celina, who stated,

We are teamed up with another grade level so they help us with tutoring. We are teamed with second grade, and I have a particular teacher that helps me. Ms. Smith is the one that helps me and then Ms. Jones and Mr. Davis help Ms. Ramirez. We help each other. I tutor her kids sometimes if they’re having problems. So they help in that aspect too. And then we get together with the lower grade teachers to see what type of strategies they are using. If they are different we tell them go ahead and do it because some kid might say “this is easier than the other one.” So just expose them to a lot of different ways of getting the answer. (individual interview, February 20, 2006)

Clearly, the participants demonstrate that teamwork and planning are crucial components of a successful program.

Motivational. Throughout the interviews, teachers described academic activities that took place outside the instructional day. This supports previous research that has found more efficacious teachers attribute difficulties to a lack of effort rather than external influences over which they have little control (Guskey & Passaro, 1994). Comments such as, “We do tutoring after school and on Saturdays” and “We started in November and do tutoring twice a week, but in the last month I added a day for my three really low kids” speak to the dedication of this group of teachers. This finding is especially significant given the fact that tutoring is not a required part of the program; it is done voluntarily on the part of the teacher. At the same time, campus administration supports this effort by seeking to provide funds for tutoring when they are available.

Affective. “I think what helps me is reaching out to kids emotionally” (individual interview, February 22, 2006). This powerful statement provided by Lupe demonstrates the attention participants paid to the socioemotional needs of their students. She continued, “But to me, if you reach out to them, if you find their issues, you can help them. Because what they’re asking for is TLC, that’s all they really want is tender loving care” (individual interview, February 22, 2006). Finally, feelings of a shared sense of community emerged based on teachers’ discussion of the many community entities that provide assistance both in terms of time commitments and financial support. The teachers were proactive in maintaining and extending this sense of community in many ways. Examples include garnering financial support from the neighborhood association to provide art education for students, soliciting local corporations and businesses to provide mentors and tutors, and establishing good relationships with the small businesses in the area, which resulted in a solid network of support.

Selective. The professional histories of the participants speak to their selection processes. Lupe and Celina have taught in bilingual education programs for more than 20 years, Roberta for 15, and Bonnie for 6. Their dedication to the teaching profession

in general and to the program in particular is reflective of their efficacy in the field.

Discussion

Analyzing teacher agency at this high-performing school allowed the researcher to develop a more fine-grained image of the agentic behavior demonstrated by teachers in an academically successful DL program. School systems throughout the country have invested in attracting and retaining a high-quality teacher workforce in order to achieve the ambitious educational reforms expected by the American public (National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, 1996). The role played by DL teachers encompasses all of the challenges experienced by general teachers with the addition of teaching students in a way that will facilitate acquisition of a second language and balancing the demands of the program with larger societal forces that often are unsupportive of second language learning. As such, teachers who display a high level of self-efficacy and translate that belief into action are very valuable indeed. The information gathered during this study provides an overview of the process of agentic behavior and how it plays out in one DL elementary school that has demonstrated consistent academic excellence. These findings build on Bandura's notion of human agency, inform implementation and maintenance of new DL programs, and offer ideas for future research.

These findings build on Bandura's notion of human agency by providing evidence that DL teachers at Bienvenidos are engaging in behaviors that correspond to his antecedents and manifestations of agency. The analysis of this qualitative data set both supports the validity of Bandura's model and extends it to explain characteristics of teacher agency specifically. Careful consideration of the data corresponding to each of the four categories of antecedents and manifestations led to the creation of further subcategories that relate specifically to the participants in this study. These new categories reflect the antecedents and manifestations of agency that are particular to teachers in a suc-

cessful DL school. Furthermore, these subcategories, including teamwork, planning, shared beliefs, and collegiality, emerged from the data and are therefore grounded in the participants' own experiences. As such, these findings have the potential to increase understanding and appreciation of the role of teacher agency in accomplishing the goals set forth by the DL program.

This information also can serve as a point of discussion for school communities that are considering implementation of a DL program. Recent research indicates that the number of DL programs is on the rise; however, there are concurrent reports that many DL programs revert back to more remedial forms of bilingual education due to the external influences that do not support the program (Alanis & Rodriguez, 2008). These findings elucidate the self-regulatory processes of teachers at an academically successful DL school. Although the sample size for this study is small, these findings suggest agentic factors that may be associated with high student achievement. Thus, they can be used as a source of information in researching best practices for supporting and sustaining DL programs. Rather than focusing on the external factors, over which schools have limited, if any, control, the evidence gathered from this study suggests that agentic practices are associated with high student achievement and therefore warrant further study.

Given the evidence that DL programs can foster high levels of student achievement, it seems clear that further research into the inner workings of successful DL programs will render valuable information that can be used to perpetuate this model of success in other schools. Yet, there are many questions left to be answered. Questions that could be explored in future studies include: Does preservice training have an impact on the agentic behavior of new teachers? Does professional development have an impact on teachers' sense of efficacy in working with second language learners in a DL program? What kind of professional development is most effective in developing teacher agency for this population of educators? Does school climate affect the collective efficacy of teachers in a DL program? Additionally, further qualitative studies could be undertaken that would build on

the findings of this study. It would be worthwhile to increase the sample size to obtain information from a larger group of participants and to explore teacher agency in different geographic regions and in different grade levels. Exploration of these questions could increase our understanding of the factors that play a role in developing successful DL programs.

Limitations

Although these findings deepen our collective understanding of teacher agency, there are limitations to them as well. The purpose of using template analysis is to take a complex set of data and reduce it to a meaningful framework that can elucidate the core underlying concepts. This allows for a clearer understanding of the phenomenon being examined. However, there are potential limitations to this method of analysis. First, if too many levels of coding are incorporated, the desired level of clarity might not be reached. Second, if too few levels of coding are introduced, the resulting framework may not be an accurate or meaningful reflection of the phenomenon. Therefore, the researcher must strive to reach a balance of a priori codes that will render the most accurate analysis. In this case, Bandura's notion of human agency, broken down into both antecedents and manifestations, was used to develop the template for analysis. At the same time, it is possible that the use of an a priori theory in analyzing the data could have led to the neglect of other pertinent factors. However, the researcher was aware of this limitation and was vigilant in looking for additional themes as the corpus of data was continuously culled. Another potential limitation has to do with the coding process itself. By removing fragments of text for use in the coding process, it is possible that the data might lose some of their meaning. This threat of decontextualization is countered by both the researcher's attention to detail and the need to amalgamate the data.

A final limitation of this particular analysis is that it focuses solely on the role of the teacher. Although this focus is supported by literature that indicates that an effective teacher is the

most influential factor in student achievement (Haycock, 1998; Rivkin, Hanushek, & Kain, 2001; Sanders & Horn, 1998), it is likely that other factors had an impact on the quality of the DL program at Bienvenidos as well. Finally, while this study does attempt to provide explanations of teacher agency that can be useful to others working to build and maintain DL programs, caution should be exercised in generalizing to other settings.

Conclusion

Through the lens of teacher agency, instructional behaviors can be evaluated and considered within the larger context of school reform and reduction of the achievement gap. Given the “astonishing” potential of DL programs (Collier & Thomas, 2004) to foster high levels of student achievement and the concomitant difficulties in implementing and sustaining successful programs (Alanis & Rodriguez, 2008), there is a continuing need for this kind of exploration into the characteristics of successful DL programs. Furthermore, this study adds to the body of knowledge on the critical role played by DL teachers in raising student achievement and the importance of the decision-making processes in which they continuously engage (Ray, 2008).

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