



Doctor of Education: Leadership, Learning and Community

So Why Did It Matter?

A Mixed-Methods Exploration into the Impact of the Mandarin Immersion Journey for Alumni of Preschool to 8th Grade Schools

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Introduction: The purpose of this study was to understand how adult alumni of bilingual programs evaluate the legacy and benefits of this particular type of education.

Problem of Practice: Although bountiful research exists on the benefits of having a bilingual brain; higher academic scores, stronger executive functioning, delayed onset of Alzheimer's Disease, there is scant research to describe how these benefits impact the lives of bilingual speakers after they have become adults.

Research Method: This was a mixed-methods study. A quantitative survey was distributed to alumni of well-established Mandarin immersion schools in the Bay Area to explore their lived experiences and attitudes. Further trends then emerged after a series of qualitative interviews.

Summary of Findings: Contrary to the hypothesis, most alumni in this study were not using their Mandarin skills in any applicable way in their employment fields nor did they leverage their language proficiencies to find a job. These alumni do possess however a cultural competency and perspective taking aligned with world readiness standards.

Limitation(s) of Study: The study focused on alumni who attended independent schools and only in the Bay Area.

Implications/Significance of Study: The study found that the majority of the language alumni are not using their Mandarin skills for employment, as the education system in the U.S does not offer the bilingual student a consistent path to maintain their bilingualism post-middle school. Further research is required to explore educational models, domestically and internationally, that can lead to the adoption of programs that produce fully biliterate and cross-culturally competent students upon college graduation. This is imperative for the U.S to maintain their edge in a globalized economy.