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LANGUAGE LEARNING: ACCESS AND EQUITY

A MASTER'S THESIS
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY
OF BETHEL UNIVERSITY

BY
ASHLEY N. BONSEN

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LANGUAGE LEARNING: ACCESS AND EQUITY

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AUGUST 2022

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Abstract

As humans evolve, so do their languages, cultures, and practices. In a world that is becoming increasingly connected and multilingual, access to language learning has never been more important. What remains open to question are modern perceptions of and access to language learning for everyone from English language learners to students with disabilities and mainstream students alike. This literature review was conducted to investigate perceptions of multilingualism and the factors that influence access to language learning. In sum, three salient elements play into this social calculation: beliefs about multilingualism, socioeconomic effects on language access, and racialized inequities inhibiting access to language learning.

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Language is an inherently important part of one's cultural identity and how a person views the world (Glynn & Wassell, 2018). A deep-seeded passion of mine has always been the Spanish language and culture. From the time I was in elementary school, I have been privileged with the opportunity to learn Spanish through my public schooling experiences. My curiosity was piqued with my first Spanish class in fourth grade and continued to grow each year that passed. Although I never had any immersion experiences over the course of my K-12 school years, my desire to experience this was intense. Therefore, when I entered college, I decided that one of my majors would be Spanish. I knew I wanted to study abroad and be immersed in the Spanish language and culture of which I had grown so fond and which had captivated my passion. I specifically chose a college that had a robust study abroad program that enabled me to spend six months in Argentina, nearly double the time of a typical study abroad program. This opportunity gave me the ability to spend as much time as possible in "my second home." I am forever grateful for the cultural, language, and personal growth I experienced during that time and it truly shaped who I am as an adult today.

Over the course of my lifetime, in my travels, work, and community involvement, the majority of the comments and feedback I receive from monolingual, bilingual, and multilingual people alike is that they are impressed with my ability to speak Spanish and are equally intrigued that I am bilingual. As flattering as that is, it has always troubled me that as a white woman from the United States, I am hailed as excellent for being bilingual, whereas my Hispanic friends and non-native English speaking community members are commonly chastised for only speaking their first language, or only speaking limited English. This sentiment seems to be congruent across the globe. For example, young, white, Princess Charlotte of Great Britain was bilingual at

the age of two; “her bilingualism was seen as inherently valuable and worth celebrating. In the case of the majority of low-income bilingual students from racialized backgrounds entering nursery school, their bilingualism is typically seen as a challenge that must be overcome” (Flores & Rosa, 2019, p. 146). Again, as for me, this poses a personal and professional dilemma. That is, why is access to language learning impacted on an individual level by one's socioeconomic status, and at a state and national level by what the educational stakeholders and policymakers in certain regions of the country prioritize?

According to Baggett (2016) enrollment in world language classes in the United States is affected by socioeconomic and ethoracial status of the student. In schools where more than 50% of the student population was white, more options of languages and levels were offered than schools with majority students of color. Glynn and Wassell (2018) mentioned that once students move past the “novice” level of language classes, white students comprise the majority of the students in the class. This brings up the concern that not all students get to play when it comes to learning world languages in schools.

Unsurprisingly, I can corroborate this statistic with my own experience based on the demographic makeup of the classes I teach at Wayzata High School. Although 77% of students at Wayzata High School are white, my observations mirror the trend that language classes become increasingly less diverse than in its respective student population as the level increases (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019). My Spanish 1 classes are my most diverse groups of students. Typically, these classes are comprised of approximately 50% white students, 4-5 Black students, and the remainder of the students represent various racial backgrounds. Generally, my Spanish 2 classes have been made up of 2-3 Black students, while the majority of the students are white or Indian/South Asian. Once my students reach Spanish 3, typically 0-1

Black student is enrolled in the course; whereas, the makeup of the class is almost exclusively white and Indian/South Asian students.

At the state level, I have seen evidence of policy and legislation made with the best of intentions; however, the intended versus actual impact (particularly on students of color) continues to perpetuate the inaccessibility of language learning for students. Kelly (2018) discussed bills from Arizona (SB 1242) and California (SB 1174), both of which were previously English-only education states. The intent behind both bills was to expand bilingual education; however, the intended impact proved to continue to disproportionately leave out students of color in Arizona. California's bill did allow for all students to participate in dual language programs on the basis of economic benefit and national security. Additionally, Valdez et al. (2016) discussed state level policies in Utah that continue to perpetuate language learning opportunities for white, wealthy, English-privileged students. Their research concluded, based on demographic findings, that Dual Language (DL) education and programs were "largely being used to privilege the already privileged by often housing these programs in schools with high-value-capital demographics" (p. 620). The researchers concluded that in order to have more inclusive DL education, society must reimagine how we discuss policy regarding these types of programs and prioritize equity and heritage as much as the importance of globalized human capital (Valdez et al., 2016). These state level policy examples tie back to the point that language learning can be elitist in nature on a systemic level by being offered more heavily to specific group(s) of students while consciously or unconsciously leaving out others.

Internationally, I have also seen that familial socioeconomic status greatly influences perception of, and success in acquiring an additional language. As English is widely considered an international language, the international studies reviewed discussed learning English as a

second language (L2). Butler and Le (2018) conducted a study in China which showed that parental belief of the importance of English in their child's life increased as parental socioeconomic status increased. Additionally, it was indicated "that parents' educational and income levels influence children's speed of L2 learning as well as their degree of mastery of L2" (Butler & Le, 2018, p. 6). It is important to note that parents with a higher socioeconomic status have the resources and ability to provide their children with additional opportunities to acquire language whereas parents with lower socioeconomic status may not. Furthermore, there were strong indicators that parents who reported using English at work were likely to have a higher SES and educational attainment, thus perpetuating these values onto their children (Butler & Le, 2018).

Similarly, Abbasian et al. (2020) had comparable results from a study with Iranian high school students. Reading and listening comprehension scores in students' L2 (English) increased as parental SES increased. "Furthermore, the findings specified that in the EFL [English as a foreign language] context of Iran, parents' highest education level was the most powerful predictor of reading and listening comprehension. The results also revealed that parental educational priorities and social status affected L2 literacy skills" (Abbasian et al., 2020, p.10). These international studies parallel research done in the United States and yielded similar results, indicating that access to language learning can highly depend on factors such as social and economic status.

Definition of Terms

The following is a list of key terms that will be used throughout this thesis. Their definitions and relevant information are provided.

Dual Language (DL) Program

This term is also known as *two-way* or *bilingual education*. An educational program found in certain schools where instruction is presented in two languages, English and an additional language. The goal of DL Programs is to have students become bilingual and biliterate in the target languages (Chávez-Moreno, 2021).

English Learner (EL)

An EL is a student who has limited English proficiency, who typically comes from another country, and whose main language spoken in the home is not English. ELs are provided reasonable accommodations and are tested annually to measure their progress with English. In the United States, Spanish is the most common language spoken by ELs (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.).

Seal of Biliteracy (SoBL)

SoBL is “an award made by a state department of education or local district to recognize a student who has attained proficiency in English and one or more other world languages by high school graduation” (Heineke & Davin, 2020, p. 621). This seal - noted on a student’s high school diploma - indicates they have mastered proficiency in listening, speaking, reading, and writing in both (or all) languages.

Research Question

Access to language learning is not always equal. This topic is important to the field of education because we, as community members and educators, owe it to all of our students to begin to break down the unfair barriers that disproportionately leave out minoritized groups of students. As such, this thesis will explore the question: Which factors most prominently play into the perception of and access to language learning?

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

Chapter II reviews published literature about various factors that affect access to language learning for certain groups of people. This information identifies and perhaps magnifies systemic issues in language learning opportunities for people based on socioeconomic status and race. Research for this thesis was obtained from the following search databases: ERIC, EBSCO MegaFILE, ProQuest Education Journals, and Google Scholar. The following search terms were used alone or in combination to narrow the research: “access,” “language learning,” “world language,” “race,” “socioeconomic status,” “class,” “multilingualism,” “second language,” and “community perception.” The searches were narrowed to only include peer-reviewed scholarly articles, journals, and e-books. Originally, data was collected at a state level. Due to the insufficiency of national research on the topic, a few studies with international data were collected as well. Populations represented in this research range from preschool to high school age students. To ensure relevance of this thesis, only research published between the years 2015-2022 have been used. This chapter is organized into three main sections: community perceptions and beliefs about the importance of bilingualism, how socioeconomic status impacts language learning, and inequities of access to language learning.

Beliefs About the Importance of Multilingualism

Of the 30 articles reviewed for this project, 19 of them referenced perceptions and beliefs about the importance of multilingualism for all people in some way. The general sentiment that emerged from all of the reviewed articles was that the idea of multilingualism is widely viewed as positive.

Butvilofsky and Gumina (2020) studied the attitudes bilingual students have about themselves in regard to their multilingualism. Their research question was “What are bilingual

students' perceptions of their bilingualism as interpreted through Bourdieu's constructs of habitus and capital?" (p. 200). The authors selected 39 fifth-grade students to participate in this study during the 2015-2016 and 2016-2017 school years; students all attended the same school and were all identified as Latinx or English Language Learners.

The researchers collected Spanish and English writing samples as qualitative data for this study in which the students responded to questions about their bilingualism. The first writing sample was collected in Spanish, the prompt asked students to discuss how knowing two languages helped them in school and their personal life. Two weeks later, writing samples were collected in English. The prompt was, "Think about your experiences learning Spanish and English. Was it hard? Was it easy?" (Butvilofsky & Guminap, 2020, p. 202). Butvilofsky and Guminap (2020) also interviewed two focus groups and analyzed the transcripts as part of their data collection. The authors carefully selected students to participate in the focus groups based on a set of bilingual parameters. Focus groups were created based on students' writing samples, their insight into their own bilingualism, and teachers' assessments on students' ability to meaningfully contribute to the study. Findings from both the writing samples and the focus group interviews demonstrated that bilingual and multilingual students view their language ability as a multifaceted asset in their lives. Thirty-seven of the 39 students directly spoke to their bilingualism, providing opportunities both at home and in the community to better their lives in social, cultural, and economic ways.

In addition to students' perceptions of their multilingualism, educational stakeholders play an important role in community perception of multilingualism. Moeller and Abbott (2018) identified the importance of multilingualism and multiculturalism and desired to influence stakeholders at the local, state, and national levels to view these topics as an essential part of a

student's education. The authors reported that the best way to spread awareness about the benefits of multiculturalism and multilingual education is through advocacy, largely supported by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL), who are considered the national standard for language education. Another way the researchers noted the power of multilingualism may be channeled is to utilize and recognize heritage speakers and encourage them to use their home language. Previous generations of immigrants were forced to stop speaking their native tongue, yet today, society has begun to realize the potential multilingual members of society hold and the richness they bring to their communities (Moeller & Abbott, 2018).

Previously held societal attitudes about the challenges of acquiring another language have always been a barrier to the advancement of multilingualism, "however, research in the past two decades of empirical studies has not only debunked these myths but has also revealed the multitude of benefits and added value to individuals at all points along the lifespan" (Moeller & Abbott, 2018, p. 17). Such added value can be seen in enhanced brain function and plasticity, language processing skills, and increased academic success. The authors highlighted that multilingualism has its benefits not only in the cognitive and professional domains but also with one's social and intercultural skills. Moeller and Abbott (2018) believe the best way to create the "new normal," or normalizing language and culture education as a core subject, is to bring awareness and to influence parents and policymakers to implement these changes.

In a similar study, Saint-Paul and Hendley (2016) discussed research based on brain science about language learning. The purpose of the article was to prove that learning a language as early as possible would yield the best results for language acquisition. In order to introduce language to young students, the program entitled "Fun with Languages" was formed by

Saint-Paul and Hendley. There was a pilot study for the “Fun with Languages” program in 2013 in which seven elementary schools, all residing in one county in Kentucky, participated for one hour a week for ten weeks in the program. The program used qualitative research methods by collecting information via interviews of different stakeholders - parents, teachers, and administrators - regarding their beliefs about multilingualism. Following the positive feedback from participants and stakeholder interviews in 2013, the program received a grant to continue the efforts and expand into three more counties. By 2015, “Fun with Languages” had expanded to nine different counties, and had expanded from elementary schools into the middle schools as well. Saint-Paul and Hendley (2016) were proud of the positive feedback from their study participants and that they established “connections between some of the major stakeholders involved in early language learning: parents, teachers, and administrators” (p. 22). The authors sought to continue to push this vision forward by boosting “the visibility, acceptability, and presence of foreign languages at all levels of education” (p. 22).

In a complementary study, Osa-Melero et al. (2019) investigated how community-engaged research and teaching could “connect our classrooms, our research interests, and strengthen our Spanish program” (p. 359) across linguistics and literature departments. As noted by previous research, community-engaged teaching provides a mutual benefit for all educators and students in the process. Sixteen college students, all of whom identified as white English-speaking, were matched 1:1 with Spanish-speaking children in small cohorts of 2-3 student-children pairs. College students majoring or minoring in Spanish were selected from two upper-level university courses: one entitled “Theater” and the other “Conversation and Composition.”

Mixed research methods were concurrently collected, including both qualitative and quantitative data sources over the course of one semester. As well, the researchers used reflection essays from college students and Likert-scale surveys. The following two themes emerged from the reflective essays. First, according to the authors, “many” students said, after this program, that they would like to alter their career paths to work with Spanish-speaking populations and “contribute positively to the Latino populations in their community” (Osa-Melero et al., 2019, p. 366). Next, the reflective essays and quantitative data results revealed that students’ overall comfort in both speaking and listening to Spanish improved over the course of the program. College students reported a 28% increase in comfort with their oral Spanish abilities, and a 10% increase in comfort with their listening skills in Spanish (Osa-Melero et al., 2019).

Under this heading, it is prudent to include perceptions of multilingualism for students with disabilities. De Valenzuela et al. (2016) sought to identify the inclusion or exclusion of students with disabilities or in special education from language learning opportunities. The specific area of concentration in this study was part of a larger study which looked at multiple aspects of participation of students with disabilities in school settings.

Seventy-nine experts in the fields of special education or language education were interviewed for this study. These experts were considered key informants and were policy makers, professionals, and advocates. This international study conducted interviews in various locations with said experts, “three in Canada [Vancouver, British Columbia (BC); Montréal, Québec (QC); and Halifax, Nova Scotia (NS)]; one in the United States [Albuquerque, New Mexico (NM)]; and two in Europe [Manchester, England, United Kingdom (UK) and Nijmegen, Netherlands (NL)]” (de Valenzuela et al., 2016, p. 35). Interviews were conducted with trained researchers and lasted 60-90 minutes. To decipher the results, researchers created a coding

scheme to deduce emerging themes. These themes were then analyzed using an internet-based qualitative software program.

All interviewees stated that inclusion was the ultimate goal, although how and what was considered inclusion varied from location to location, and was not uniformly practiced (especially when the disability is considered more severe). Time and scheduling conflicts were discussed as a barrier to the ability to participate in a language learning class as students with special needs were typically assigned classes that help meet their IEP goals and “core curriculum” over a language course. Parental involvement and perception of multilingualism also played a role in classes students get, as bilingual parents who advocate for their child were (per the study) more likely to receive access to language courses than other parents. Additionally, as reported by the informants, some parents feared that a language course would overwhelm their child. Finally, it was noted that the geographical region in which a student was located played a large factor in language learning, as funding and staffing issues can create a learning desert for some communities around the globe (de Valenzuela et al., 2016).

Similarly, Wight (2015) examined pre-existing literature focused on language learning opportunities for students with disabilities. The author cited many benefits to language learning for all students and looked into practices and policies that excused students from the opportunity for language learning based on their abilities. Wight’s (2015) research was driven by questioning why foreign language exemptions exist for students with disabilities while also providing opportunities for more inclusive world language environments.

Wight (2015) noted that some parents and administrators viewed language and culture classes as less essential than core curriculum classes and therefore unnecessary for students with disabilities. Contrary to that belief, Wight (2015) pointed out that our society is an increasingly

global environment, and all students should have access to courses that prepare them for real world situations. Essentially, exemption from courses such as math and English are never an option, so why should language and culture courses be? According to Wight (2015), there is a lack of evidence as to how world language courses are beneficial because of state standards and testing. Wight (2015) argued that when thinking of exempting students from a course based on ability, educators should first consider how to change their teaching methods to better accommodate these learners, instead of barring them from the opportunity, for data has proven that all students benefit from accommodations and modifications that best suit their needs. According to the author, potential alterations for world language classes could be differentiated learning, smaller class sizes, additional times on assignments and tests, reduced amount of content (e.g., vocabulary), frequent review and repetition, and alternative assignments.

Impact of Socioeconomic Status on Language Learning

Socioeconomic status has proven to play an integral role in access to and acquisition of language both nationally and internationally. Wood et al. (2018) observed the relationship between home literacy and standardized-test performance by focusing on a group of bilingual (Spanish/English) children of low socioeconomic status (SES). Sixty-five participants were selected from Florida public school kindergarten classes. These children were considered bilingual; the dominant language in home was Spanish and the language of instruction in school was English. Ninety-one percent of the families participating in the study said they were eligible for free or reduced lunch, 9% of families did not reply (Wood et al., 2018). Researchers collected both qualitative and quantitative data. Surveys with Likert scales were used to quantify frequency of home literacy exposure, whereas open-ended questions about types of literature and child's preference collected quantitative data. Authors also collected data from five language and

literacy assessments. Findings from this study support previous research that families spend an average of 25 minutes a day reading to their children. Although insignificant in Wood et al.'s (2018) study, previous data has shown that children from low SES families are read to less often than other children (Howard et al., 2014; Senechal, 2006). Vocabulary abilities of these children were slightly lower, but still within the normal range on language measures. Significant relationships between home literacy activities and bilingual language abilities, interest in reading, and phonological awareness were found, suggesting that home literacy contributes to language and literacy development of dual language learners (Wood et al., 2018).

In a related study, Lou et al. (2021) sought to examine the association between a young group of Spanish-English dual language learners and their socioeconomic status, to better understand whether socioeconomic status affects a child's language acquisition. Researchers pose the question, "Do children from different SES backgrounds vary in their ability to learn from their language environment? If so, why?" (Lou et al., 2021, p. 2). The authors gathered 108 dual-language-learning participants ranging from three to five-year-olds who resided in Florida, Delaware, Pennsylvania, or Massachusetts.

Lou et al. (2021) gathered data on the family's socioeconomic statuses, which was measured by caregiver's educational level, as well as the child's dual-language home experience and home literacy education where caregivers reported exposure to both Spanish and English in addition to literature in the home. Furthermore, children were asked to participate in the *Quick Interactive Language Screener: English Spanish version (QUILS:ES)*, a "computerized interactive assessment designed to examine DLL preschoolers' English and Spanish comprehension" (Lou et al., 2021, p. 5). Results confirmed the authors' hypothesis that children from higher socioeconomic status backgrounds performed better on language acquisition tasks in

English and Spanish than children from low socioeconomic status backgrounds. Home literacy environment was also richer in families with a high socioeconomic status which directly related to a child's depth of vocabulary and syntax. These results were concurrent with research done among monolingual peers from varying socioeconomic statuses demonstrating the link between socioeconomic status and language acquisition (Lou et al., 2021).

International data on socioeconomic status and language learning parallel that of national data. Butler and Le (2018) investigated how parental social-economic status (SES) influenced their child's English acquisition over time with a group of Chinese middle schoolers. Participants for this study were selected from a larger longitudinal population of K-12 student cohorts; Butler and Le (2018) focused on the middle school cohort. The middle-school cohort included 189 students (99 male, 90 female) and their guardians. The longitudinal study took place in an eastern coastal city in China over a three-school-year period.

Surveys were given to students and parents at the end of each school year. Parental surveys asked about SES, educational levels, and parent behaviors to aid English acquisition. Student surveys used a five-point Likert scale and asked students to report their motivation, competence, and anxieties around English learning. Butler and Le (2018) also monitored the results of student English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) tests at the end of each academic year; ESOL tests assess English proficiency. Both parental SES and educational levels showed a positive correlation to student English achievement. Additionally, "highly educated parents maintained their expectations over time, whereas medium- and low-educated parents gradually lowered their expectations over time" (Butler & Le, 2018, p. 10).

Abbasian et al. (2020) sought to investigate how familial socioeconomic status (SES) and parental educational attainment impacted their children when learning English as an additional

language. Students were of Iranian descent. The researchers observed performance of comprehension in reading and listening tasks in English. Three hundred students participated in this study; all of them were Iranian high school seniors, ages 15-18, who were learning English as an additional language. The sample population was specifically chosen based on placement test scores in reading and listening comprehension. Quantitative data was collected in many ways including accessing information from the Ministry of Education which included SES and parental education, using a Quick Placement Test to group learners based on their language proficiency, listening comprehension based on a short test, and a modified Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) to judge reading comprehension.

Findings concluded, several times over, that familial SES greatly impacted and predicted students' success in English language acquisition. There were statistically relevant and meaningful associations to backup this claim. Notably, the strongest predictor of good reading and listening comprehension was based on the highest educational levels of the parents. Furthermore, parental educational priorities and their social status was another strong predictor of English language acquisition for their children.

In 2016, Mueller Gathercole et al. offered more international data on socioeconomic status (SES) and bilinguals' performance on linguistic measures. The authors also examined bilinguals' performance on cognitive measures based on SES. Four research questions centered around parental educational level and profession regarding linguistic and cognitive performance on tasks by participants. Based in Wales, the data was collected from 732 children, 594 of whom were bilingual in English and Welsh, and 138 of whom were monolingual in English.

Standardized vocabulary and grammar tests were administered to participants over the course of two or three days in both English and Welsh. General results of the study were in line

with findings from previous research, in that language performance improves with age, and performance on home language (L1) tests were higher than performance in L2. Data from both the English and Welsh vocabulary and grammar tests provided a positive correlation between language and socioeconomic status. Essentially, the higher a person's socioeconomic status, the higher they scored on the assessments regardless of whether they were monolingual or bilingual (Mueller Gathercole et al., 2016).

In a complementary study, Bonifacci et al. (2020) compared literary skills of three groups of Italian second graders: language minority bilinguals, monolinguals with high socioeconomic status (SES), and monolinguals with low to medium SES. "The main research question of the present paper was to assess if there were differences in literacy skills, including decoding, spelling, reading and listening comprehension, between language minority bilingual children with low SES and monolingual peers with similar or higher SES" (Bonifacci et al., 2020, p. 244). The study consisted of 58 children from a primary school in Lombardy, Italy. Thirty-six children were monolingual in Italian, and the remaining 22 children were bilingual with their L1 being something other than Italian. All bilingual children were identified to have low or medium SES, the 36 monolingual students were divided into groups of low to medium SES (20) and high SES (16). All students were tested on their literacy skills (decoding, reading comprehension, and spelling) using standardized tests. Additionally, teachers completed questionnaires regarding students' scholastic achievements, and families were given questionnaires to share the students' linguistic history.

Results of this study were multifaceted. First, no significant evidence differences were found between monolingual and bilingual students in their decoding skills. On the contrary, oral comprehension showed a significant difference for bilingual students, scoring between eight to

ten points lower than their monolingual peers with low to medium SES and high SES, respectively. Finally, monolinguals with high SES outperformed both monolingual and bilingual students with low to medium SES (Bonifacci et al., 2020).

Inequities of Access to Language Learning

The studies that follow explored the inequities of language learning at a state and national level. Valdez et al. (2016) noted Utah's push, since 2007, to "mainstream" dual language (DL) education and questioned which students benefited most from these programs. Researchers used critical discourse analysis of DL policies then employed a quantitative analysis of student demographic data to compare two time frames (pre and post-2006). Upon the evaluation of their research, Valdez et al. (2016) found three major themes. First, there was a lack of general equity in DL policy as only one of the documents mentioned inclusion of children of all backgrounds and abilities. Second, there were explicit biases of globalized human capital and implicit biases of classism. That is, all DL policies, "showed some degree of a pattern of privileging economic themes and interests by consistently using phrases such as 'compete in a global society' and 'economic development benefits'" (Valdez et al., 2016, p. 612). Third, there was a shift in community thinking where multilingualism was seen as valuable and showed acknowledgement of local multilingual communities. This shift, however, was tainted by the view that elite or academic multilingualism is superior to folk or home multilingualism.

Continuing to look at Utah as an example, Delavan et al. (2017) noted the increase in Utah's dual language (DL) programs over the last several years and wanted to observe how equitably promotional materials portray different language learners. The language acquisition groups they focused on were heritage (language other than English spoken in the home), maintenance (people who want to maintain their language acquisition), and world language

(“typical” language courses offered in schools). The authors collected data from 2010-2015 in regard to the promotional materials used for Utah’s dual-language education model. Materials were collected with keyword search phrases (*dual language immersion* and *interview*) that were produced by USOE.

Using critical discourse analysis, the authors observed how the three groups of focus - heritage, maintenance, and world language - were represented in promotional materials. Delavan et al. (2017) focused on a visual assessment of race and potential affiliation with one of the focus groups for each person depicted in materials. Findings revealed that materials were focused on White, world language course offerings misdirecting audiences to see “world language constituency as the protagonist - the hero, the most important character - while the maintenance and non-White heritage constituencies were marginalized as minor characters” (Delavan et al., 2017, p. 91).

Oliveira et al. (2020) shined light on the inequities found in Dual Language Bilingual Education (DLBE) programs specifically in regards to Brazilian immigrant Portuguese-speaking students, who attend a Portuguese/English DLBE program. Data for this study came from a larger three-year research project focused on Brazilian immigration to a Massachusetts public school. Data collected included field notes from classroom observations, interviews with four teachers, 13 school personnel, 22 students and their parents conducted in English and/or Portuguese. Field notes and interviews were coded into eight broad themes. Findings of this data showed three fascinating dynamics of this Portuguese/English DLBE program. First, the community view and perception of the value of Portuguese as a language was not strong. Second, Brazilian students did not receive the same amount of support and instruction as their English-dominant peers. Third, classroom instruction in Portuguese did not lend itself to further

language development of Brazilian students. All of these results shared a direct link to the perpetuation of inequities and inequalities Brazilian immigrant students face.

A complementary study by Gomez and Cisneros (2020) questioned the access of dual language programs (DLP) in Arizona, which has historically supported English-only education. Researchers posed the following question, “What are stakeholders’ perceptions of DLPs and the context in which DLP operates in the state of Arizona?” (Gomez & Cisneros, 2020, p. 3).

Twenty-four DLP stakeholders - principals, world language coordinators, and language acquisition directors - were invited to participate in this study; nine of those participants were interviewed in depth about DLP in Arizona. Interview data was coded into categories based on emergent themes. Results of this study showed the systematic exclusion of minority language students from DLP due to the restrictive English-only policy in the state of Arizona.

Stakeholders noted the paradox of excluding ELL students from DLP as wrong, but felt that their hands were tied. The expanse in DLP while continuing to exclude ELL students from this educational opportunity reinforced the “interest by the dominant culture in ensuring the development of bilingualism for native English speakers, affording them further academic, social, and economic progress, while at the same time foreclosing this opportunity for language minority, non-native ELLs” (Gomez & Cisneros, 2020, p. 12).

In Texas, Wall et al. (2022) explored how access to two-way dual language (TWDL) programs was affected by institutional processes for Latinx and Black students at Springwall ISD. Research questions were, “1. What are the perceived purposes of DL by different stakeholders in Springwall? 2. What are the processes for TWDL program site selection, for marketing these programs, and for student access in Springwall ISD?” (Wall et al., 2022, p. 91). The researchers conducted qualitative interpretivist research which was a followup investigation

from a larger study which “explored the district’s implementation of dual language from 2010 to 2015 across a number of dimensions” (Wall et al., 2022, p. 91). The authors used thematic analysis when going through interviews to search for themes. Two main themes emerged: inattention to equity and equity efforts. Results from the data “suggest that these programs were designed and made available primarily for children of White and affluent professionals, and that working-class Latinx families only sometimes had access” (Wall et al., 2022, p. 92), whereas African-American students were frequently left out of the conversation about TWDL programming and institutional processes limited access for these students.

In a similar study, Chávez-Moreno (2021) used a critical race ethnographic lens to analyze educational equity for Latinx students in an English-Spanish dual language (DL) program. The author developed two research questions to guide this study, “How does whiteness function in the program practices and policies of a racially diverse secondary-level DL program? What complications arise for schools seeking to offer educational equity to Latinxs?” (Chávez-Moreno, 2021, p. 1108). This study took place over a fifteen-month span in a Midwestern U.S. community where there had been a sizable increase in Latinx population. The study specifically focused on a middle and high school with students who had originally come from the DL elementary school. Documentation used in this study included the State’s bilingual Education act, newspaper articles, district reports and documents, policy on bilingual education, and 14 years of school board minutes. Observations and interviews were also used to gather data. Thirty-nine participants were interviewed including staff, community members, and students. “Interviews allowed me to notice similarities and differences in how participants experienced DL, and their understanding of how the program affected the educational experiences of diverse youth” (Chávez-Moreno, 2021, p. 1116).

Chávez-Moreno presented four main findings in this study. First was the promotion of DL education for white students, curriculum and materials were geared towards white English-speaking students. Additionally, the waitlist for white students to get into the program was very long; this shows that the marketing for the program was not targeted to Latinx families. The original thought process behind the DL program was to improve educational outcomes for Latinx students; however, funds used for this program demonstrate how Whites received the benefit of this resource. Second, Chávez-Moreno discussed the maintenance of racial hierarchies. The school tracked and “policed” Latinx students' acquisition of English by having them take standardized tests in English and use their elective credit to enroll in a remedial recovery English course. On the contrary, white DL students did not have to be tested in Spanish, and they were allowed the opportunity to take a different elective of choice. Third, Chávez-Moreno discussed the exclusion of Latinx students from DL programs. The author noted Latinx students were disqualified from DL education because they were deficient in English or Spanish. Additionally, there were not enough resources to adequately provide bilingual teachers, causing some Latinx students to be excluded from this opportunity. Finally, Chávez-Moreno (2021) noted the lack of recognition for Latinx students in regard to the Seal of Biliteracy. This prestigious seal has evidence of supporting the White English-dominant student, yet many Latinx students lacked the prerequisite for obtaining this seal.

Continuing to look at the Seal of Biliteracy, Subtirelu et al. (2019) analyzed policies around the inequities of implementation of the Seal of Biliteracy in California schools. Upon conclusion of the analysis they suggest policy improvements for the future. Subtirelu et al. (2019) collected data from 2,669 schools in California in the 2015-2016 school year; 1,872 did not participate in the Seal of Biliteracy Program, whereas 797 did. Although fewer schools

offered the Seal of Biliteracy Program, the schools that did were the more populous; as a result, 64.4% of California high school students attended a school where the Seal of Biliteracy was offered. Subtirelu et al. (2019) conducted a meta-analysis of different policies in educational language such as, “(a) promotional and policy discourses and (b) material effects” (p. 373). These analyses took place over three phases, which ultimately led to four findings. First, the Seal of Biliteracy must be accessible to “language-minoritized students that have often been ignored or undervalued by educators” (Subtirelu et al., 2019, p. 383). Second, the Seal of Biliteracy has been designed in a way that favors native English-speaking students who are studying another language in a formal education setting. Third, when schools get to decide whether or not to participate in the Seal of Biliteracy, many low-income and schools with highly diverse student populations do not participate in the program. Fourth, the authors suggested that state education departments should monitor “representation of marginalized groups in the program” (Subtirelu et al., 2019, p. 385) to ensure it is accessible to all students.

Observing the Seal of Biliteracy at a national level, Heineke and Davin (2020) discussed promoting biliteracy across the United States by exploring how the Seal of Biliteracy has advanced through several states. Heineke and Davin (2020), in conjunction with The Seal of Biliteracy organization, contacted main stakeholders in each of the 23 states and D.C. that offered The Seal of Biliteracy to ask them to participate in this study; 19 stakeholders agreed to partake.

Research was conducted with narrative inquiry and qualitative methods. The majority of the information was received via interviews conducted with open-ended questions either in print or orally, depending on the preference of the stakeholder. Heineke and Davin created a coding scheme to organize and group data. In response to their first research question Heineke and

Davin (2020) concluded that all states had groups of allies connected with “interested lawmakers to sponsor the bill within the state government” (p. 627). After the bill was sponsored, each state chose their own set of goals and targets. Additionally, it was noted that there was minimal opposition to this program, even in traditionally right-leaning states. Heineke and Davin (2020) noted that the main stakeholders for each state varied, however generally they were administrators, language educators, parents and members of immigrant communities, and different organizations with vested interests in, “language, culture, education, government, and business” (p. 631). Due to the varying nature of stakeholders and paths chosen by each state to enact the Seal of Biliteracy each journey is state specific, some states included private schools where others did not, some states focused on large urban and suburban areas whereas others focused on centralized locations. Additionally, target languages and the prioritization of said languages varied due to the cultural and linguistic makeup of each state (Heineke & Davin, 2020).

Jones (2016) assessed the inclusiveness of language learning strategies used within Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) classrooms. The author argued that current strategies are not focused on the socioeconomic and socio-political needs of learners. Jones (2016) sought to answer the question, “What learning strategies do those on the margins in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts use?” (p. 856).

Jones (2016) conducted a meta-analysis drawing on the research of many pedagogical and TESOL scholars to look at different learning strategies. The author reported that many scholars believe English is taught in an elitist way in which the cultural values are centered around Western values which is disadvantageous to any student coming from a subordinate culture. Another strategy presented was “allowing students to maintain their first language,

culture, and experiences” (Jones, 2016, p. 850) while simultaneously having exposure to and lessons in English. Jones (2016) concluded that “learning strategies discourse neglects some of the most vulnerable populations around the world” (p. 864), especially those who have limited access to quality education. The author also insisted that further research needed to be done to provide concrete documentation of strategies used with at risk learners.

Considering the previous study, Valdés (2020) used a historical framework to report that students of Mexican origin in the United States face systemic barriers “endured in public schools by minoritized and racialised peoples in the American context” (p. 549). In this report, Valdés (2020) discussed both historical and current demographics of Mexican-origin people in the United States and how this population is affected by the “language borderization process” (p. 549). Valdés (2020) defined this process as “state-sanctioned mechanisms and procedures used to identify and categorize children as required by school accountability mandates” (p. 549). This process is highly detrimental to Mexican-origin students, or students that speak any language other than English, given that the United States educational system operates almost exclusively as English-only. Consequently, this process causes English Language (EL) students to be separated from their peers and “labeled” based on their English proficiency. Although potentially constructed with good intentions, this causes “classifications [that] have frequently served as rigid demarcations that exclude particular groups of students, which consequently deny them entry and access to educational opportunities and challenging instruction” (Valdés, 2020, p. 554). Unfortunately, the language borderization process offers only a narrow separation from *support* to *marginalization*. According to Valdés, in order to effectively educate students of Mexican origin, our society must dismantle our current process so that we do not continue to perpetuate

the current opportunity gap that is dividing native English speakers and their non-native English speaking peers.

When observing private schools, Bouabré (2019) investigated world language instruction in K-12 U.S. Christian schools in the 2016-2017 school year. The author sought to answer many research questions including the number of schools providing world language classes, the languages offered, grade levels participating, and the sequencing of the curriculum between elementary, middle, and high school. Participants for this study were school leaders from the 2,913 schools in the Christian school associations. Of the 2,913 schools surveyed, 991 responded. Data related to the research questions were collected from surveys sent via email. “Comparisons were investigated by examining the responses of schools by their association affiliation, school size, and school location” results were also compared to previous studies (Bouabré, 2019, p. 244).

Findings recognized that the size of the school, particularly schools with more than 100 students, played a larger role in offering languages than the school’s physical location. The most common languages offered in K-12 U.S. Christian schools were Spanish, Latin, French, American Sign Language, Chinese, and German. These languages were more regularly offered at the secondary level as opposed to the primary level.

Glynn and Wassell (2018) opined that the ability to participate in world language education is not equitable. This led them to inquire about the largely inaccessible world language education for minoritized groups. Glynn and Wassell (2018) conducted a meta-analysis of various researchers who argued that the United States has one of the most systematically unequal schooling systems in the developed world. “Disparities between White students and minoritized students prevented equal access to rigorous academic coursework” (Glynn & Wassell, 2018, p.

18). Glynn and Wassell argue that the lack of access to world language education for students from minority groups and underfunded schools is a significant social justice issue.

Glynn and Wassell (2018) examined data from ACTFL (American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages) and AP (Advanced Placement) Exams over a range of years to identify disparities in language learning opportunities based on race. The authors cited three main issues facing access to formal language learning, all of which stemmed directly from systemic and social justice issues. First, Glynn and Wassell (2018) asserted that multilingual and multicultural students face the devaluation of their culture and language of origin. Such devaluation of their native languages make students less intrigued to participate in studying an additional language that they may not feel a connection with. Next, the authors confronted the elitist ideals of language learning, which is systematically in place to “weed out the academically weak students.” Testimonies included 128 Black students who reported that their counselors encouraged them to take courses “less challenging” than world language classes (Glynn & Wassell, 2018, p. 23). Finally, the authors discussed how curriculum and instruction in World Language classrooms are often presented from only one side of a given issue. Historically, curriculum has been presented from a “Eurocentric bias, which make it difficult for non-White students to relate” (Glynn & Wassell, 2018, p. 24).

Race

Racial disparities are a deeply ingrained issue in our educational system. Baggett (2016) wanted to look at types of world language classes offered at different schools in North Carolina, specifically for the 2013-2014 school year. Baggett also wanted to observe patterns of enrollment information of world language classes in both the middle school and high school levels. The researcher sought to determine whether their findings would be similar or different from that of previous research conducted by Finn (1998), which found that Black students were less likely to be enrolled in World Language classes.

The sample size for Baggett's (2016) study was quite large as it only required data collection of student demographics and course offerings for each middle and high school. Baggett looked at language and course offerings for 103 middle schools and 108 high schools in North Carolina. The researcher collected data already published on the internet to gather information regarding the total number of languages offered at each school and the types of courses offered (e.g., Beginner to AP). Data was put in chi-square tests to analyze the results and compare observed versus expected enrollment in each language and level according to student demographics. Specific to middle school,

the sample revealed a statistically significant dependency between the combination of gender and ethnoracial status and enrollment in world language classes . . . For example, black male students, Hispanic male students, and Hispanic female students were underrepresented in world language classes. (Baggett, 2016, p. 167)

The results for high school students enrolled in world language classes were congruent with results for middle school students, "Specifically, black male students, black female students, Hispanic male students, Hispanic female students, and American Indian male students were

underrepresented in world language classes” (Baggett, 2016, p. 169). The overall findings in this study were consistent with that of previous researchers that gender and race influence enrollment in world language classes.

Additionally, Flores and Rosa (2019) published a report that dove into the intersections of language and race to demonstrate the vastly different way that bilingualism is framed based on a person’s social status. A notable and recent example of this phenomenon was the reaction to Princess Charlotte’s ability to speak two languages at the age of two. She received great praise and celebration for her accomplishment. In contrast, “in the case of the majority of low-income bilingual students from racialized backgrounds entering nursery school, their bilingualism is typically seen as a challenge that must be overcome” (Flores & Rosa, 2019, p. 146). Essentially, it can be said that multilingualism is viewed differently based on the SES of the speaker, and this trend appears to be consistent across wealthy English-speaking nations. Flores and Rosa (2019) emphasized the “subtractive versus additive forms of language learning;” (p. 146) and they noted that immigrant children are tossed onto a deficit mindset path whereas English speakers have the ability to “learn additional languages with no threat to their home languages” (p. 146). Language learning and language acquisition opportunities are continually subjected to raciolinguistic ideologies centering around elite monolingualism over minoritized multilingualism which is detrimental to multilingual non-White speakers of lower socioeconomic status.

Legislation and Policy

Legislation and policies greatly impact access to and quality of language learning opportunities. Circling back to the Seal of Biliteracy, Davin et al. (2018) studied the implementation of the SoBL in three school districts in Illinois. The purpose was to gauge challenges and successes according to different stakeholders, with the ultimate hope of guiding

the way for other school districts to successfully execute a SoBL program. Participants were selected from three suburban Illinois high schools. Surveys were administered electronically to all world language and English as a second language teachers, interviews were conducted with directors of world language and ESL programs at each of the schools. A mixed-methods study collected both qualitative and quantitative data from the stakeholders. “The researchers developed a coding scheme based on emergent themes corresponding to the research question” (Davin et al., 2018, p. 279). Findings noted two main successes of the SoBL which were adjustments to instruction and assessment and increased enrollment and retention in World Language classes. The first point indicated “a shift toward more proficiency focused approaches” (Davin et al., 2018, p. 280). This shift in proficiency was largely guided by current best practices from ACTFL (American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages), the national standard in world language education. The second point noted an explosion in enrollment in Spanish courses and an increase in French courses. Chinese and Latin course numbers remained about the same, although one educator noted that it did help with retention, however not with initial enrollment. Along with these successes, challenges presented themselves such as “lack of extended sequence of study and dissemination information about the award” (Davin et al., 2018, p. 283).

Nalubega-Booker and Willis (2020) inspected the policies and implementation of bilingual and multilingual education in an Illinois public school district through the personal experience of an Ugandan immigrant student (Kendra) and her family. The purpose of this study was to “examine the disconnect between the rhetoric and practice of second language/bilingual laws in one school district in a Midwestern state, with regard to the experiences of an African immigrant whose has a diverse linguistic background” (Nalubega-Booker and Willis, 2020, p. 1).

The researchers used critical race theory to discuss U.S. perception of second language education, then used critical policy analysis to obtain and analyze data specific to state laws and district policy in comparison to lived experience. Nalubega-Booker and Willis (2020) found many discrepancies between written policy and actual implementation. Illinois state law for ESL programs stated students should receive instruction appropriate to their age and grade level; however, Kendra's experience revealed that she was placed in an ESL class that was too easy for her and she was not offered sufficiently rigorous academic opportunities. Another inconsistency between law and practice was the absence of an ESL parental advisory committee, something of which Kendra and her family were not made aware. Program facility was not located near mainstream classrooms and program staff never spoke Kendra's home language, which added to Kendra's self-reported sense of isolation and lack of representation. The final disparity between law and experience was the absence of district support to overcome the language barriers that blocked Kendra's equal access to ESL students. In conclusion, this study illustrated the scarcity of culturally competent resources for ESL students, particularly those of African descent.

Freire et al. (2017) highlighted how Latinx students' educational interests have not been at the forefront of policy makers' minds when making decisions about dual language education. Utah has seen a rapid increase in the prioritization of bilingual education, however not all students are represented proportionally in policy and promotional materials. Freire et al. (2017) asked the following research questions, "How equitably are Latina/o interests addressed in the state DL policy? How equitably are Latinas/os portrayed in Utah State Office of Education (USOE) DL-related promotional materials?" (p. 276). Data for this study was collected from a larger set of data that spanned nearly a decade (2008-2015) and focused on Utah's dual language policy. The researchers used

a qualitative content analysis of Utah Senate Bills 41 and 80 and the Critical Languages Program Rule (2012), which sets guidelines for new DL programs in Utah, as well as a critical discourse analysis of DL-related content on USOE websites to determine how these documents depict and cater to Latina/o interests. (p. 277)

Results of this study show that policies have been made with White, English-dominant interests as the focal point at the expense of Latinx interests “through the repeated use of hierarchization and textual silencing of Spanish and Latina/o heritage and maintenance constituencies” (Freire et al., 2017, p. 281). In regard to promotional materials, it was observed that Latinx students were misrepresented and, “that Spanish speakers were the most visually exoticized language group across the materials” (Freire et al., 2017, p. 284). The authors noted this was a misappropriated opportunity to “celebrate diversity” when in actuality it represented the exoticized group hierarchically lower in terms of status.

In a related study, Kelly (2018) studied how two pieces of legislation would affect English and bilingual learners. The bills originated “from the state legislatures of California (SB 1174) and Arizona (SB 1242) that proposed to expand bilingual education” (Kelly, 2018, p. 1) which was in stark contrast to the previously held tradition of English-only education. Kelly (2018) sought to answer the following research questions, “1. Who is bilingual education for? 2. Why is bilingual education offered? 3. What is the role of bilingual education for English learners?” (p. 2).

Kelly (2018) analyzed the two bills while using a “direct content analysis to code and interpret the text of each bill” (p. 8). The researcher then created three coding categories, who, why, and EL, to examine and compare each bill. At the time of the study, California included all public school students, whereas Arizona limited access of bilingual education to students who

were already fluent in English. Interestingly, both states offered bilingual education for “economic or national security reasons” (Kelly, 2018, p.12). Finally, the two states offered remarkably different ideals when determining bilingual education for English Learners (ELs). That is, California offered a range of programs to ELs and fluent English speakers alike; additionally, it would “remove the anti-bilingual education default” (Kelly, 2018, p. 15). The Arizona bill did not change the English-only policy default, and excluded EL students from bilingual education programs.

This chapter explored and discussed the perceptions of multilingualism and language learning across the United States and throughout the world. It drew attention to how socioeconomic factors can positively or negatively influence one’s ability to acquire additional languages and how access to language learning is impacted by various factors including race and policy decisions. Chapter III will provide an analysis and evaluation of the research question as well as share limitations of this research and implications for future research on this topic.

CHAPTER III: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This literature review was conducted to identify the prominent factors that play into people's access to language learning. In an increasingly global society, the importance of being able to bridge cultural gaps by acquiring an additional language has never been more crucial (Saint-Paul & Hendley, 2016). Thus, identifying factors that help encourage or discourage who has access to language learning is vital. Educators need to use a strengths perspective and asset framework to see how multilingual students or students learning additional languages benefit the classroom community as a whole.

This thesis explored the research question "Which factors most prominently play into the perception of and access to language learning?" Upon analysis and evaluation, three predominant factors impact this access: society and people's beliefs about language learning, impact of socioeconomic status on language access, and inequities of access to language learning with a focus on how race and legislation/policy perpetuate who receives or does not receive these opportunities.

Society and People's Beliefs About Language Learning

The first section of the literature review focused on different beliefs about the importance of multilingualism. Over time, there has been a significant shift in how American society values multilingualism and language education. According to Butvilofsky and Gumina (2020), multilingual elementary school students view their language abilities as an asset to both themselves and their communities. Saint-Paul and Hendley (2016) and Osa-Melero et al. (2019) observed how community-focused programming can greatly benefit not only students, but also present the positive impact of language learning to educational stakeholders, which in turn can help support and fund this type of programming. Research tells us that learning multiple

languages increases cognitive flexibility (with few, if any downsides), and has a positive effect on metacognition.

Perception of language learning seems to be a bit different in the educational community's mindset as it pertains to students with disabilities. Both De Valenzuela et al. (2016) and Wight (2015) noted that students with disabilities tended to be excluded from language learning for a multitude of reasons (e.g., not being able to fit in their schedule, parents/guardians afraid that a language course would be too difficult for their student). Both studies opined that language learning opportunities would be beneficial for students with disabilities and hoped that these opportunities would become supported by more mainstream funding in the future. Given a plethora of development interventions, investing in robust programming with multilingual teaching and learning shows itself to be a proven tactic to promote advanced cognition, regardless of ability or age.

Impact of Socioeconomic Status on Language Access

The second section included studies that focused on the impact of socioeconomic status on language learning. Socioeconomic status affects access to language learning both nationally and internationally. Wood et al. (2018) observed elementary students in Florida, and Lou et al. (2021) gathered multi-state data from students in Florida, Delaware, Pennsylvania, and Massachusetts. This national data displayed the significant impact of socioeconomic status on language acquisition and the connection between language learning and a family's socioeconomic status (SES) is (i.e., the higher the family's SES, the more likely that student would have the opportunity to participate in language learning and be successful). Results from international studies share this same sentiment. Four international studies (Abbasian et al., 2020; Bonifacci et al., 2020; Butler & Le, 2018; Mueller Gathercole et al., 2016) gathered data from

Iran, Italy, China, and Wales, respectively. These studies shared that socioeconomic status not only impacts the ability to have access to language learning but also is a strong predictor of how successful a student will be in acquiring that language. According to Butler and Le (2018), in regards to Chinese students' performance with English acquisition over time, "students whose parents were in the low income group performed more poorly than students whose parents were in the high income group" (p. 12). Quite simply, socioeconomic status either boosts, or diminishes children's access to language learning.

Inequities of Access to Language Learning

The third section was organized around the communicated inequities of access to language learning; the reviewed articles drew specific attention to the manner in which legislation and policy and race served as key indicators of access to language learning. Valdez et al. (2016) and Delavan et al. (2017) used Utah as an example of a state looking to make mainstream DL education more common. Unfortunately, Utah's push to mainstream DL education has come at the expense of already marginalized students which continues to perpetuate an inequitable educational experience for minority students. Oliveira et al. (2020), Gomez and Cisneros (2020), Wall et al. (2022), and Chávez-Moreno (2021) all shared that students of color are disproportionately left out of DL programming, and they are frequently left out of the conversation that pertains to creating culturally inclusive curriculum. This highlights the continuation of the mindset that minority students must adapt to traditional American curricular offerings instead of having a culturally and linguistically representative curriculum that speaks to them.

Subtirelu et al. (2019) and Heineke and Davin (2020) suggested that the Seal of Biliteracy is a good way to help address the gap facing students of color who may already know

and speak another language at home. However, since the SoBL is a state initiated award, implementation of the program varies from state to state. Additionally, socioeconomic status continues to perpetuate this inequity, as schools with more funding and community buy-in are more likely to institute this program. In addition to the SoBL, other legislation and policy making decisions around language learning play a role in who gets access to these services. Kelly (2018) observed that “the Arizona bill restricts bilingual education to students who already speak English fluently, making the program unavailable to English learners” (p. 1). If states want to prioritize bilingual education then they truly need to prioritize the bilingual piece of it. As Freire et al. (2017) reminded us, especially in communities with large populations of certain groups of people, minority students and community members need to be at the forefront of educational stakeholder’s minds when making policy decisions, particularly as it relates to bilingual or multilingual education.

Professional Application

Based on the overall data, it is evident that language courses are beneficial to all students regardless of race, class, gender, country of origin, or ability. Language helps develop who we are as people, it has a place in every classroom in all curriculum. Our nation and our world are becoming more diverse and interconnected than ever before. According to the U.S. Census, the multiracial population “was measured at 9 million people in 2010 and is now 33.8 million people in 2020, a 276% increase” (Jones et al., 2021). Additionally, “although the White alone population decreased by 8.6% since 2010, the White in combination population saw a 316% increase during the same period” (Jones et al., 2021). In Minnesota, as of 2017, one in twelve residents were foreign born, and 11.7% of Minnesotans speak a language other than English in their home (Minnesota State Demographic Center, 2018). It is therefore increasingly important

that we celebrate this diversity and that people have the opportunity to learn how to communicate with others from outside their respective communities.

All teachers, not just language teachers, can foster an environment where multilingualism is encouraged and celebrated. In both unseen and obvious ways, teachers set the tone and lead by example when it comes to welcoming languages, experiences, and perspectives in their classrooms. A simple “hello” in the student’s native language promotes a welcoming and culturally inclusive environment. Wight (2015) reminds educators that all students benefit from curriculum alteration and suggest that teachers try the following strategies to the best of their ability: differentiated learning activities, smaller class sizes, additional time to complete assignments and exams, reduced amount of vocabulary at a time, frequent review and repetition, explicit linguistic teaching, and alternative assignments that still meet the learning targets but allow students to be successful in a way that works best for them. Specifically, for teachers of any content area in the United States who have the privilege of having an EL student in their mainstream classroom, it is best practice, as an educator, to be willing to modify lessons to best accommodate and celebrate what this EL student brings to the classroom community.

Limitations of the Research

As it pertains to access to language learning, there is not an abundance of research from which to draw. While I dove deeper into this research, I began to identify the ways in which specific factors played a role in language learning and searched with those terms in mind as well. Overall, the majority of the studies were qualitative (18 out of 30). These studies utilized interviews and surveys to collect data. As well, there were only eight studies on this topic that offered substantial quantitative data. The lack of quantitative data could be considered a limitation of this research because quantitative data is generally considered to be more objective

and can be easier to quantify than qualitative data (subject to the context and constraints of a particular study).

Of the literature reviewed, eight studies pulled data from school district or state levels to obtain information such as race and socioeconomic status; however, only two studies (Chávez-Moreno, 2021; Oliveira et al., 2020) used in-class observation. Additionally, as there was a limited amount of data specific to the United States on this topic, I pulled from international research. The information obtained from Butler and Le (2018) with data from China, Abbasian et al. (2020) with data from Iran, Mueller Gathercole et al. (2016) with data from Wales, and Bonifacci et al. (2020) with data from Italy all yielded results congruent to that which was observed in the United States. That is, the higher a family's socioeconomic status is, the more likely the student will have access to and success in learning an additional language.

Implications for Future Research

I continue to wonder why people in the United States learn different languages at a lower rate than peer countries. Research is needed to identify why the U.S. is so far behind other countries in prioritizing multilingualism from birth and early childhood ages. Per pupil in K-12 education, the United States spends more than any other developed nation with unremarkable results. Considering the strength of U.S. exports and exchanges in a naturally multilingual world economy, it seems the U.S. educates its students in an unnaturally monolingual way.

Additionally, further exploration of how race and class play into access to language learning in the United States is crucial to educational equity. Several studies were available for certain states (i.e., Arizona, California, Utah); however, other states were either mentioned in only one article or were not mentioned at all. Considering the majority of educational funding and policy making is done at a state and local level, more state-level data is needed from each of

the 50 United States and its territories to accurately paint a picture of access to language learning in the United States.

Finally, Minnesota, specifically, should document the way(s) in which their K-12 educational system fosters language learning for its students. Further exploration of Minnesota's educational equity and access to language learning is necessary; in this body of research, only one study by Glynn and Wassell (2018) briefly mentioned Minnesota.

Conclusion

I set out to identify who receives access to language learning and why. I was curious whether factors such as race, class, and socioeconomic status had an impact on language acquisition. Of the 30 studies included in this review, it seems fair to say that the three aforementioned factors greatly influence someone's ability to receive access to and support in acquiring an additional language(s). Hopefully, in the future, all 50 states will strive for equity as it pertains to who receives access to language learning. All students, regardless of background should be able to participate in DL programs regardless of their mother tongue. Additionally, states need to prioritize and streamline dual language opportunities for all learners regardless of the socioeconomic status of the school district and age of the students. Community members and educational stakeholders need to prioritize funding and legislation to help grow these opportunities, so that we do not continue to perpetuate the inequitable access to particular services for certain groups of students.

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