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Raising the Awareness of Somali Families: The Positive Impact of Dual Language
Education on Student Success

by

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A capstone project submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in English as Second Language.

Hamline University

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ABSTRACT

Studies have found that dual language education is powerful for all learners and particularly essential for the success of first- and second-generation immigrant learners in the United States. The learning model enhances students' academic achievement, school participation, and healthy identity development. Students proficient in both their heritage language and culture and their new homeland's dominant culture and language are also more likely to gain higher upward mobility and enjoy advanced cognitive development. While the benefits of dual language education (DLE) are explicitly illustrated in the literature, there are currently no Somali dual language programs found to be existing in Minnesota schools despite the large presence of the immigrant community in the state. This professional development capstone uses Knowles's androgogical framework to raise awareness of families on the benefits of DLE so they can promote the instructional model in their children's schools. The intended participants are Somali families whose children attend schools in the Minneapolis/St. Paul metropolitan area. Limitations, implications, and reflections on effectuating Somali DLE programs in Minnesota are offered in this capstone.

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

“Minnesota schools are worst in the nation for our students of color,” declares a widely and abundantly conspicuous statement on billboards in the Twin Cities. Although this claim is primarily valid when high school graduation rates are factored in (Severson, 2019), it is not lost on most educators of students of color that these students generally struggle disproportionately in Minnesota schools in overall academic performance. It is clear from widely distributed statistics that the state of Minnesota is one of the worst states in the nation when it comes to the academic performance of students of color and students from low-income families (StarTribune, 2014). A recent report by the Minneapolis Federal Reserve calls the education achievement gap a crisis in Minnesota, finding that, along with low test scores, students of color and low-income White students are graduating high school unprepared for college (Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis, 2019).

The many subgroups in this student population include the Somali students in the Minneapolis/St. Paul area schools. A disaggregated data analysis titled *District Scorecard Shows Steep Decline in Somali Student Achievement* describes troubling results for these students (StarTribune, 2014). What, then, can be done to tackle this troubling trend? Besides English language proficiency being blamed as a contributing challenge to the academic success of bilingual learners like Somali students, how can these students’ linguistic identity be harnessed to achieve greater academic performance? While learners’ native language is often employed to supplement underperforming bilingual learners’

instruction in remedial form, using their first language as a medium of instruction has been found to significantly enhance their learning (Alanís & Rodríguez, 2008; Collier & Thomas 2004). A particularly promising, but overlooked, I believe, model for Somali students' academic achievement is dual language education (DLE) in which students would learn content both in English and the Somali language. Unfortunately, based on my familiarity and observation in the community, this program is nonexistent in the schools that these students attend in the Twin Cities metro area. Thus, this capstone project is a workshop educating Somali parents about the importance of dual language education to induce change in their children's schools. The project investigated the guiding question: *How can Somali parents of first- and second-generation immigrant students' awareness of the positive impact of dual language education be promoted?* I believe when parents fully understand the promise of DLE for learners' achievement, they are empowered to influence an implementation of the instructional model in their children's schools.

Background Connections

When I arrived in the United States as a refugee, I was enrolled in a Minneapolis Public Schools high school in the ninth grade. Though I did receive good English language instruction back home in Somalia, I would rate my English proficiency, in hindsight now as an educator, at *Level 3: Developing* on WIDA or World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment. I could engage in oral interaction with a few simple sentences. My receptive skills might have been at a slightly higher level than my productive skills. In general terms, it was likely that I was labeled as an at-risk learner

given my limited proficiency in the language that served as a medium of instruction at school. Luckily, the school provided a sheltered instruction program for newcomer students, where native Somali-speaking teachers taught us in at least two subjects. I now understood that this bilingual program was transitional and could not be fully characterized as a wholly implemented dual language instruction model like the one I argue for in this capstone. However, having the opportunity to be taught in the Somali language gave me support both in academic performance and psychological terms. My sheltered instruction rooms indeed provided a shelter for me. They became places where I felt most comfortable interacting with fellow learners and asking for assistance on school work. Because my command of English was not strong enough, I benefited from the Somali teachers much more significantly than I could have from teachers who spoke only English to complete assignments successfully. This gave me a sense of belonging and validation in the school and helped me take ownership of my learning. A body of research such as Kim and Chao (2009) validates this notion of academic achievement associated with high self-concept. The increased positive self-concept I gained from the bilingual learning environment allowed me to have confidence and solidified my intent of forging ahead in my academic endeavors despite the challenges that lay ahead.

The Context for the Project

My over ten years of experience working with first- and second-generation Somali immigrant students encouraged me to deepen my understanding of how dual language education may impact student achievement. I have worked in various charter schools mostly attended by East African students, mainly Somalis, and have taken

various roles, starting as a behavior specialist and moving on to work as a social studies teacher and English as a second language teacher. As I move through the day in school, I cannot help but think of myself as an English learner in high school. Although the schools I worked at were almost entirely homogeneous per student demographics, English has been the primary medium of instruction. Even bilingual Somali teachers offered instruction mainly in English. However, one or two Somali Language electives were usually offered as part of the general curriculum and instruction. Given this, many of these schools struggle with closing the achievement gap for their student population. I know that the teachers and staff in these schools are some of the finest professionals and are most dedicated to their students. As I kept my pleasant student experience in high school in the back of my mind through my academic journey, I felt an increasing interest in learning about bilingual education once I started graduate school at Hamline University. I have now read numerous studies rich with illuminating findings of programs like dual language instruction.

Besides my career in education, I have been involved in community service which also helped elevate my interest in dual language education. I served as a community educator, mostly on evenings and weekends, where I taught religious weekend programs primarily delivered in Somali or Arabic. Though these programs' primary goals were teaching Arabic phonetics and phonology and applying that to memorizing the Quran, which is in Arabic, almost all of the educators spoke Somali. Educators, who were strongest in Somali, and learners, who were most fluent in English, often dialogued in integrated English and Somali, a system of communication known as translanguaging

(García, 2009). These community programs, known as *dugsi*, are ubiquitous in areas heavily populated by Somalis. Though there are no standardized measures upon which to evaluate their performance, many members of the community feel that many of these Quranic schools are principally successful for the purposes instituted, which are learning *hingad*, or Arabic phonetics and phonology, and memorizing the Holy Quran. Perhaps the use of the home language as the medium of instruction with these learners who were either first- or second-generation immigrant Somalis could have helped, in part, achieve this perceived success in these programs.

I believe the extent to which bilingualism has contributed to these educational programs' much-celebrated achievement cannot be overlooked. One characteristic evident in these programs is that bilingualism has effectively allowed parents to participate in their children's learning. Parents and educators built strong bonds in daily communication through face-to-face meetings, phone calls, and text messages. The level of parental awareness and involvement that the learning environment has stimulated is instrumental to the success of these programs' instructional activities.

Research provides an abundance of evidence from the research field that meaningful parental engagement helps students achieve academic success. For example, Colombo (2006) stated that parental involvement "has a powerful influence on educational success" (p. 315). Roy and Giraldo-García (2018) highlighted in their study on the global perspective of parental involvement the critical role that parental engagement should play in the pursuit of academic excellence for their children: "Both parents and the school community need to make a conscious and intentional effort to

facilitate the development of academic and social/emotional skills in children” (p. 30). As far as my observations are considered, the nature of the learning environment created a malleable educator-family partnership and helped make it possible for more students to succeed in these programs. Epstein et al. (2018) proposed six types of parental involvement that schools should champion to support positive student outcome: (1) parenting in which schools help parents establish an educational environment to support students at home; (2) communicating by creating an effective school-to-home and home-to-school communication plan to reinforce student progress; (3) volunteering by instituting parent support activities; (4) learning at home by providing families with information on how to better support their children’s learning; (5) decision-making where schools allow for parent participation in the school’s decision-making process; and (6) collaborating with the community in which the school identifies and integrates community resources and services to strengthen whole child development. On any given day, I could witness most of these in the weekend program I was involved in. For example, parents regularly volunteered to help in the classrooms, monitor the hallways, and chaperone field trips. Teachers and educators communicated continuously through text messages, phones, and face-to-face interactions. Parents were invited to partake in the center’s many decision-making processes in meaningful ways, including participating in instructional program planning.

The benefits of dual language instruction are extensively well-documented in the research. English language learners (ELLs) who are highly proficient in both English and their mother tongue (L1) enjoy better cognitive development than their peers whose L1

development is inhibited when they start learning English (Fillmore, 1991). As another educator argued in a video interview called *Making Dual-Language Immersion Work* by Colorín Colorado, one of the reasons many English language learners struggle with finding academic success is the lack of opportunity, in and of itself, to develop and maintain their native language as they learn in English. “Students who are not able to continue developing cognitively in whatever language that is the strongest...that is the biggest problem with school programs that do not allow for students to continue developing their native language” (Colorín Colorado, 2015).

Based on my experience, instruction in the mother tongue promotes establishing strong ties between students and their families. Children who can communicate with their families in the native language maintain better relationships with their families. This, in turn, helps with the healthy and robust development of a cultural identity that allows learners to thrive in their communities and the global multilingual economy. The home language is an invaluable resource for English learners, and I believe that a Somali-English dual language education would be an exceptional tool for the learners’ academic achievement and overall success.

Summary

My motivation to explore dual language education with the guiding question, *How can parents of first- and second-generation immigrant students’ awareness of the positive impact of Dual Language Education be promoted?* is driven by troubling data mentioned above regarding Somali students’ academic achievement. First- and second-generation immigrant learners’ parents ought to be aware that their children can

perform better academically if they are offered dual language instruction that includes their first language. Evidence from the research has asserted that offering instruction in the native or heritage language empowers learners to achieve better academic performance. Researchers such as Collier and Thomas (2004) were amazed by their findings on how dual language education can be transformative for student outcomes. They emphasized that their research should not be taken just as a report but as a wakeup call for all involved in policymaking regarding children's education.

In Chapter Two, I review the literature on the historical and traditional aspects of Somali education. Description of dual language education and its impacts for English language learners and learners whose parents are nonnative speakers are also examined in this chapter as it makes a case for the benefit of dual language learning. The chapter also elaborates on the foundations of multilingualism and dual language education in the United States.

In Chapter Three, I provide a detail of the method of this project. The chapter describes the project's setting, participants, and the best practices incorporated to deliver the project.

Chapter Four offers a conclusion of my experience throughout this project. I summarize the context of the project and what I gained from it. Implications and limitations relating to the project are also discussed.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

Chapter Overview

In this chapter, the existing literature in the area of dual language education is reviewed. Particular studies summarized in the chapter will provide resources answering the project's topic question: *How can parents of first- and second-generation immigrant students' awareness of the positive impact of dual language education be promoted?* The review starts with discussion of the earliest thought of dual language education in the United States. The first section in the chapter lays ground describing the various types of dual language. The following section will provide an overview of Somali language and culture and the foundations of education in Somalia. The section will offer a brief on the Somali story in the United States, particularly Minnesota. Next, there will be a discussion on language policy in the United States and what the research offers. This section explores the foundations of multilingualism and how different policies have affected dual or bilingual education throughout the country's history. In the second section, there is a further discussion on how the research supports dual language education and that multifaceted advantages are associated with a well-developed and well-implemented dual language program. Subsections will concentrate on enhanced academic achievement, self-esteem or self-worth, and an increased sense of belonging and inclusion in the school curriculum. The various types of learners and programs that exist to provide dual language instruction will also be noted.

What is Dual Language Education (DLE)?

In a dual language learning environment, students learn content in two languages in which “the partner language (e.g., Spanish, Mandarin, Korean) is used for a significant portion (from 50% to 90%) of the students’ instructional day” (Lindholm-Leary, 2005, p. 256). The core goals of dual language education is to promote bilingualism, academic achievement, and cross-cultural competence (Howard et al., 2018). Bilingualism, as Jong (2011) describes it, is “proficiency in two languages” (p. 23). A variety of programs and practices, such as those described below, can be referred to as dual language education. However, a broad description of dual language education entails using two languages to teach literacy and content in schools serving kindergarten through twelfth grade (Center for Applied Linguistics, 2016). Another common phrase referring to dual language education is immersion. According to the DC Language Immersion Project website, there are four main types of dual language instruction in the United States. These are:

1. Developmental or Maintenance Bilingual Programs
2. Two-way (bilingual) Immersion Programs
3. Foreign Language Immersion, Language Immersion or One-Way Immersion Programs
4. Heritage Language Programs

Developmental Bilingual Programs are primarily designed for learners who are native speakers of the partner language. This type of program’s main goal is to develop students’ L1 and L2 simultaneously while providing content and language instruction in both languages. Two-way Immersion Programs serve students who are native English speakers and concurrently learning with native speakers of a common target language.

Lindholm-Leary (2012), a renowned researcher in the field of bilingual education, explained that “dual Language Education (DLE) programs, also known as Two-way immersion, integrate English language learners (ELLs) from a common native language background (e.g., Spanish, Mandarin) and native English-speaking (NES) students in the same classroom for academics” (Lindholm-Leary, 2012, p. 256). There must be a proper balance between the two student groups to get an effective dual language program.

One-way, or Foreign Language, Immersion Programs are typically attended by native English-speaking students who want to learn a foreign language. Finally, heritage language is the language spoken by immigrant adults and their children (Cho, Shin, & Krashen, 2004). Heritage Language Programs are mostly attended by students dominant in the English language but whose parents or grandparents are native speakers of the language (Lindholm-Leary, 2012).

What Does a Successful DLE Program Look Like?

In an exhaustive guidebook informed by the research, Howard et. al (2018) provide guideposts for implementing dual language education programs as a powerful and effective instructional model. To achieve what they stated are three core goals of dual language education, the authors suggested twenty-five principals across seven major program strands in their *Guiding Principles for Dual Language Education*. While detailing each of those principles here is beyond this capstone project’s scope, a summarized description of these principles follows.

According to Howard et al. (2018), a dual language education program must be structured so that all program dimensions work together toward accomplishing the three

DLE goals mentioned above. The program must establish equity for all individuals involved and should be steered by strong leadership that plans, implements, and regularly evaluates it in an effective process. Once a full-grown program structure is formed, a high-quality, standard-based curriculum should be developed. Also, to ensure fidelity to the model, instructional methods and strategies to teach the curriculum must be derived from the dual language education research, which emphasizes student-centered learning and integrating technology to reinforce and enhance student achievement in the two languages. The researchers argued that an effective curriculum and instruction must include an assessment that aligns with program goals and state standards. The purpose of the assessments should be to inform, evaluate, and improve the education program by collecting and analyzing various data points of student progress using both languages of instruction. In addition, dual language instruction needs highly-trained dual language staff. This can be achieved by developing ongoing professional training tailored to the needs of staff to achieve the program goals and teach to the state standards. Howard et al. (2018) emphasized that families and communities should be integral partners in creating and maintaining meaningful learning opportunities for their students. Thus, they underscored that a successful dual language instruction program creates a responsive infrastructure for actively engaging students' families and communities in ongoing and positive relations. Finally, for an effective dual language education program to take hold, the school should recruit all key stakeholders to promote the program in the larger community and strengthen support for dual language education (Howard et al., 2018).

Somali People and Language

Somali or *Af-Soomaali* is spoken by more than fifteen million people in the contemporary Somali Republic. Somalis in Greater Somalia, a term describing the vast swathe of Somali territory outside of the republic, including Soomaali Galbeed (Ethiopia), the Northern Frontier District (Kenya), and Djibouti, also speak the language (Tripodi, 1999). Though Somalis only developed a writing system later in the twentieth century, it is well-known that the Somali people have rich culture and literature and astute understanding in an array of subject matter and lifestyle, including animal husbandry and horticulture. The maritime communities along the longest shoreline in mainland Africa have deep acumen about fishing and coastal life (WorldAtlas, 2018). Somalis are also rooted in distinct cultural architecture and artisanry knowledge (Abdullahi, 2001). Often dubbed as the nation of poets, this wealth of knowledge has been traditionally maintained and transmitted orally from a generation to the next in the various Somali literary genres such as *gabay*, *geeraar*, *buraanbur*, *hees*, and *maahmaah* (Abdi, 1998).

Post-colonial Somalia, like other African countries, championed a literacy campaign in Somali language, in a newly crafted Latin alphabet. Nevertheless, the effort encountered several setbacks for becoming fruitful as promptly as intended in countries across the continent. For Somalia, the late development of the Somali orthography was a primary reason why it was possible to initiate a mass literacy project in the country only by 1974 (Hoben, 1985). Subsequent military and political conflicts and natural adversities brought the national mass education drive to a halt. It was just less than fifteen years since the beginning of the project when the Somali civil war broke out in 1991 (BBC News Services, 2018).

Somalia's education system has been ravaged since, and the country has been struggling to school its children with challenges stemming from recurring armed conflicts in some parts of the country. Pastoralist tradition that does not allow for a uniform and sustainable education has led to an insufferable and staggeringly illiterate population in the country (Hassan, 2020). However, there have been strides made in rectifying the illiteracy problem in Somalia. An increasing number of schools have opened throughout the country as post-war Somalia pushes forward to a more stable and safer era. Work to overhaul curriculum and create a standardized teaching and learning model with the Somali language as the medium of instruction has been underway. The current administration's education ministry once declared, "for the last 30 years, the country has been craving for a Somali-owned and Somali-prepared education system – we finally have it" (Theirworld, 2020). While significantly promising for students in the homeland, a highly developed Somali curriculum can also be impactful for Somalis in the diaspora. Somali dual language education programs in the United States can integrate some aspects of such curriculum relative to state standards.

Somali Families in Minnesota

Many Somalis fled the tribal conflict that ensued in their country after the overthrow of the long-reigning military dictatorship in 1991. Over the next few decades, they resettled in countries in Africa, Asia, Europe, and North America. The United States was among the many places Somali refugees found shelter, with the highest concentrations in Minnesota (Brown, 2019). As Brown (2019) reported, Somalis found Minnesota a welcoming and pleasant place to live. Economic and educational

opportunities in the state were also a significant pull factor for early arrivals in the early 1990s (Brown, 2019).

Family is viewed as a crucial institution in Somali culture. The father is traditionally considered the head of the household, though the mother generally leads the family's inner workings, including managing children's education. In Minnesota, Somali-American children attend schools across the state. Many families choose to enroll their children in culturally specific charter schools serving predominantly pupils of Somali heritage. These parents wish to pass their heritage to their children and grow as bilingual and bicultural individuals. They hope their children can be served with an education that builds their self-concept and embraces their identity as Muslim, Black learners, and American citizens (Basford, 2010). Though these schools are chartered to cater to their student population's needs, they are, however, insufficient to be deemed as proven and effective dual language schools. An extensive survey of the research literature about Somali-English dual education or programs in the United States has turned up no credible resources. This is understandable as most of the Somali diaspora have called the United States home only for the last 30 years. Despite this, interest in dual Somali-English schools and programs is well-observable among educators in the community and this is a gap that this project intended to fill.

Foundations of Multilingualism In the United States

Embrace of Multilingualism: Early Years of the Nation

Jong (2011), in his book *Foundations of Multilingualism in Education: From Principles to Practice*, argued that discourse in language policy has largely ignored

studying the historical aspect of multilingualism in the United States. The author discussed that language pluralism was the norm on the North American continent as the Native Americans who inhabited these lands for centuries before European colonialism spoke in more than 300 languages. As the European colonists increasingly settled in the continent, a pluralist stance toward multilingualism developed in the early nation-building periods between the eighteenth century and the nineteenth century (Jong, 2011). Nevertheless, as the author argued, along with the positive attitudes for the coexisting various European languages of German, French, Spanish, Dutch, English, and other northern European languages in the newly forming country, “an overt assimilationist approach to Native American language speakers and the native languages of slaves also existed” (Jong, 2011, p. 126). This highlighted a paradoxical approach as it tolerated multiple European languages and sought to assimilate the Native American languages (Jong, 2011).

According to Jong (2011), the first European language to take hold in colonial America was Spanish and was spoken by missionaries and explorers who settled in the south, southeast, and southwest of the modern-day United States in the 1500s. German was the second largest language spoken by the settlers. It was spoken by German migrants who fled religious repression and war in Germany. They settled in Pennsylvania and became the ethnic dominant group in Maryland and the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia (Jong, 2011). With its East Anglican and Scotch-Irish varieties, English was spoken by indentured servants and Scottish and Irish Ulsterites. French, like English, had multiple varieties spoken in Louisiana. These varieties included standard French, Cajun,

and the Louisiana French Creole spoken by West African slaves (Jong, 2011). The American colonies were teeming with speakers of languages other than English, and “by the time New Netherlands ceded to British in 1664, at least 18 languages were spoken on Manhattan Island, not counting Indian languages” (Crawford, as cited in Jong, 2011, p. 126).

With these many languages, the Continental Congress was faced with the issue of multilingualism during the era of independence. According to Jong (2011), the early Congress debated whether there should be an official language for the new nation. After considering competing proposals, Congress eventually decided against the idea of mandated monolingual policy (Jong, 2011). Surprisingly, the early Congress based their decision on multilingualism arguments on three factors that are, by and large, as pertinent today as before. As Jong (2011) explained, they realized that multilingualism was a strength and not a weakness. First, they were concerned that instituting a monolingual policy and declaring English as the official language could alienate entire ethnicities taking part in the defense, building, and development of the new nation. Second, the Continental Congress was concerned a one-language policy would be a breach of the right of individuals who spoke the various preferred languages (Jong, 2011). This, of course, would have been the antithesis to the idea of declaring independence and forming a new nation: freedom, equality, and democracy. Thirdly, Congress realized that the majority of inhabitants in the thirteen colonies spoke English and that assimilation into American culture’s greatness was inevitable and will occur naturally across ethnicities (Jong, 2011). They thought English would be the de facto official language of the United

States. Heath (as cited in Jong, 2011) further analyzed that “Congress ultimately decided against declaring an official language and chose ‘a policy not to have a policy’” (p. 127).

“The Founding Fathers and other leaders valued multilingualism for individuals and national service because it provided access to knowledge and learning and advocated for the recognition of local, regional, or special interests” (Jong, 2011, p. 127). Support for multilingualism in this period can be understood from the various policies and traditions of the early United States. For example, German and French were ingrained in the existence of government as federal and state documents and laws were written in the two languages. The states of California and New Mexico, Louisiana, and Pennsylvania recognized Spanish, French, and German as official languages, respectively, along with English. According to Jong (2011), speaking English was not compulsory to obtain citizenship or being seen as an American in the early years of nation-building. During this era, the census did not include any questions relating to language. The coexistence of multiple cultures and languages was the norm during this era. Government business and cultural events such as church service, celebrations, theater, and concerts continued to be conducted in ethnic languages for many years (Kloss, 1998).

Crawford (as cited in Jong, 2011) stated that immigrant communities wanted to maintain their native languages and established public, private, and parochial schools taught in the ethnic languages. Swedish, Norwegian, and Danish were used in public schools in Wisconsin, Illinois, Minnesota, Iowa, North and South Dakota, and Washington. Dutch was used in Michigan, and Polish and Italian were used in Wisconsin” (Jong, 2011, p. 128). Bilingualism has been prevalent in New Mexico by the

1880s as it was a Spanish territory and subsequently a Mexican territory. Merchants from other ethnicities learned Spanish, and the society there was considered bilingual before power structure shifted, and English was the mandated language even though bilingual practices such as bilingual textbooks continued. By the time of the World War I outbreak, about a dozen states instituted bilingual education for their residents (Jong, 2011).

In fact, dual language education in the United States can be credited to the German-English bilingual schools established in Cincinnati in 1840 (Andersson, 1971). German bilingual education and the German language, in general, held a privileged status for much of the nineteenth century in many Midwestern states. However, demographic changes and efforts in the 1880s and 1890s to limit non-English language use decreased German use in schools (Kibler, 2008). Dramatic shift at the onset of World War I led to hostile, anti-German feelings that resulted in German language instruction's banning in 22 states (Kibler, 2008), a topic worthwhile to study but is well over the scope of this capstone project.

Repression: Indian American and African Slaves

While colonial linguistic ethnicities were embraced in the newly formed nation, Indian American languages were seen as uncivilized by society and needed to be weeded. However, the European colonialists practiced bilingual assimilationism of some sort. Their goal was to use indigenous languages to produce English-speaking European-educated Indians (Jong, 2011). For example, Christian missionaries helped develop and write alphabets for several Native American languages to provide religious instruction in their native language. Jong (2011) asserted the missionaries thought that the

approach proved to be highly effective. “Mr. Janney, a Quaker, wrote in a report to the Board of Indian Commissioners in 1871, ‘theirs is a phonetic language, and a smart boy will learn it in three or four weeks; and we have found it far better to instruct them in their language, and also to teach them English as fast as we can’” (Reyhner, as cited in Jong, 2011, p. 126-138).

Under a Congressional treaty, the Cherokee nation would operate about two dozen schools taught in dual Cherokee-English languages. The purpose of these schools was “to benefit and enlighten them as people, in their own language” (Castellanos, as cited in Jong, 2011, p. 17). Furthermore, the treaty developed bilingual newspapers, pamphlets, and other media of the time. Before the English-only policy would be imposed, the Cherokee nation has benefited from these bilingual policies, despite the intention of gradual assimilation. As Jong (2011) cited Dicker (2003), the Cherokee had a higher literacy rate compared to their white counterparts in the states of Texas and Arkansas.

This assimilationist bilingualism approach to Native American languages was short-lived. The differing cultures and languages of Native Americans were seen as a problem and a federal campaign to systematically eradicate these languages starting in the 1860s, according to Jong (2011). Adam (as cited in Jong 2011) stated that assimilationist discourse, along with land-grabbing policies that displaced many of the nations from their homelands, dominated the approaches to work with the tribes. They were forced out into reservations. In the meantime, Native American children were separated from their families and coerced into English-only boarding schools, where they were physically punished if they spoke their native language. Jong (2011) cited Reyhner

stating “the instruction of the Indians in the vernacular is not only of no use to them, but is detrimental to the cause of their education and civilization, and no school will be permitted on the reservation in which the English language is not exclusively taught” (p. 130).

As with the Native American indigenous languages, distinct languages spoken by the various African ethnicities who were forcibly removed from their homelands and brought into the colonies also experienced similar fate (Jong, 2011). African slaves were treated in repressive policies that eventually eradicated their languages’ existence. Individuals who were abducted from their homelands such as Senegambia, the Gold Coast, the Bight of Biafra, and southeast Asia were separated from their families and group members who shared the same language. In the Chesapeake, Virginia area, they were grouped and coerced to assimilate with other slaves who spoke various languages (Jong, 2011). With their new circumstances, the slaves developed their way of communicating, and as Jong (2011) stated, there emerged the unique Black or the African American Vernacular English, which still today has characteristics of African languages.

Revival of Monolingualism

As Portes and Schaffer (1994) stated, the twentieth century has become an antagonistic era to multilingualism. The scientific wisdom of the time furthered the idea that bilingualism should be opposed as it provided alleged proof that bilingualism was negative. “Academic studies in the fields of education and psychology argued that bilingualism created failure, mental confusion and damaged the psychological wellbeing of immigrant children” (Portes & Schaffer, 1994, p. 642).

In recent decades, United States' monolingual education has dominated the education community discourse and bilingual education has been seen as a threat to the United States national security. According to Przymus (2016), the state of Arizona, for example, enacted laws and educational policies that severely limited bilingual programs. Under the justification that these programs "promote the overthrow of the United States government," the state passed House Bill 2281, which outlawed Chicano Raza Studies programs (Ruiz, as cited in Przymus, 2016, p. 281).

Modern Attitude to Bilingualism

However, there has been increasingly more openness to bilingualism in the United States. Educators are increasingly growing conscientious of the importance of bilingualism to student success. Dual language education (DLE) is a bilingual education model which has been gaining a "surging popularity in the United States," according to Lindholm-Leary (2012, p. 256). In DLE, students are integrated with native-English speakers in the same classroom, and instruction is provided in English and a target language commonly shared by the EL students (Lindholm-Leary, 2012). There are two common DLE models: the 50-50 model or the 90:10 model (Lindholm-Leary, 2012). The two variants of the DLE program are geared more toward the elementary level, and in the 90:10, as Lindholm-Leary (2012) discussed, 90 percent of kindergarten and first grade students' instruction time is devoted to the partner language while the remaining 10% of instruction is delivered in English. All content is delivered in the target language (e.g., Spanish, Korean, Somali), and English is provided to develop oral language proficiency and preliteracy. For a dual language education to be successful, it requires a complete

implementation of a high-quality DLE program (Howard et al., 2018; Lindholm-Leary, 2012).

Discussion of the roller coaster of attitudes toward multilingualism above provided a historical framework to understanding current policies affecting dual language education. Many misconceived ideas about DLE may be traced back to the reductionist view on instruction in the native language (Mitchell, 2019). Historic and prevalent assault on multilingualism may have contributed to the stigmatization of minority languages in the United States. Arizona, California, and Massachusetts banned bilingual education in their schools only fifteen years ago. All of these states except Arizona have already repealed their English-only policies. Prominent policymakers in the state government and bilingual activists strived for a long time to end this anti-bilingual policy amid a nationwide embrace of biliteracy (Mitchell, 2019). Analyzing the roots of these changing policies is instrumental in educating the public. It can help answer this project's topic question: *How can Somali parents of first- and second-generation immigrant students' awareness of the positive impact of Dual Language Education be promoted?* To further help answer this question, the following section informs about the benefits of DLE for English learners and establishes reasons for caring about this instructional method.

Dual Language Education Benefits

“Bilingualism and biliteracy development have been linked with higher future aspirations, better mental health and family relations, better social integration, more cognitive development, and higher academic achievement” (Jong, 2011, p. 177). Many English learners struggle academically; Thomas and Collier (1996), and other scholars

argued that dual language instruction could mitigate this disparity. Students feel valued and tend to be more engaged in learning when their home language and culture are utilized in instruction (Goldenberg & Wagner, 2015). These and other topics highlighting the importance of dual language education, including academic, cognitive, economic, and self-esteem advantages, will be discussed in this section.

Promoting Academic Achievement

Recent research has proved that, unlike nineteenth-century science or pseudoscience, which loathed it, bilingualism or multilingualism is a significant advantage both cognitively and academically. Researchers such as Thomas and Collier (1996) found that offering instruction in students' native language and English provides long-term development in English academic skills. This theoretical framework is the basis on which many Two-way or dual language instruction is adopted in some schools. Alanis (2000) examined the effects of a Two-way immersion program in Texas on students' linguistic and academic achievement. The researcher studied Spanish-dominant and English-dominant learners' academic performance whose first language or their parents' first language is Spanish. The author analyzed students' IPT (IDEA Proficiency Test) scores and data from third, fourth, and fifth grade English Texas Assessment of Academic Skills. She found that even though the program was not developing targeted Spanish proficiency skills, "most students appeared to be moving toward high levels of English proficiency, including oral language and literacy, as well as the ability to use English to demonstrate mastery of subject matter" (Alanis, 2000, p. 241). According to Alanis (2000) and Thomas and Collier (1996), nonnative English learners who were

enrolled in a dual language instruction program gained the greatest academic gains compared to their ELL peers who were enrolled in other types of bilingual or ESL programs.

Dual language instruction promotes success for both native and nonnative speakers. In *Dual Language Program: A Promising 50-50 Model*, Gómez, Freeman, and Freeman (2005) stated that the DLE program proved to be a phenomenal alternative in which English language learners who have failed in other ELL programs made tremendous gains. Furthermore, “native English speakers in these programs, despite learning through two languages, excel in their native English, scoring higher than peers studying only in English” (Gómez et al., 2005, p. 146). According to the authors, dual language education programs are a promising educational model that helps students reach success both in English and in a target language. The researchers found that not only did the students in dual instruction programs they studied maintain high achievement in all subject areas, but they also continued to achieve in such high levels throughout their schooling experience (Gómez et al., 2005).

Enhanced Cognitive Abilities

Studies have shown that bilingual children display greater cognitive functioning than monolingual children when adapting to new environments (Marian & Shook, 2012; Bialystok et al., 2004). That can be attributed to bilinguals regularly navigating two or more languages, as this allows for stronger cognitive training and development than monolinguals. This is beneficial to bilingual individuals in ways that are beyond the domain of language learning. Bialystok et al. (2004) conducted studies that examined if

bilingualism's benefits persisted through adulthood. The purpose of these studies was also to determine whether bilingualism lessened the cognitive deterioration associated with aging. The researchers conducted Simon task experiments with one group of 20 monolingual individuals and another group of 20 bilingual individuals ranging from 30 years to 88 years old. They gave the participants in each group an easy task and a challenging task and measured the rate at which each group processed the tasks. The researchers observed disparities in how the monolingual group and the bilingual group regulated executive control in the tasks' performance.

While the easy task did not require greater cognitive inhibition ability, the difficult task required participants to tune out disruptive stimuli and focus on relevant information (Bialystok et al., 2004). When the researchers examined accuracy scores and the time it took to conduct the two groups' task, they found that monolingual individuals required greater time to execute the difficult task, whereas the bilinguals demonstrated no delay in conducting the same task. The bilinguals had a larger speed advantage when difficulty was added to the task (Bialystok et al., 2004). Figure 2.1 below shows a snapshot of the Simon task performance from this experiment.

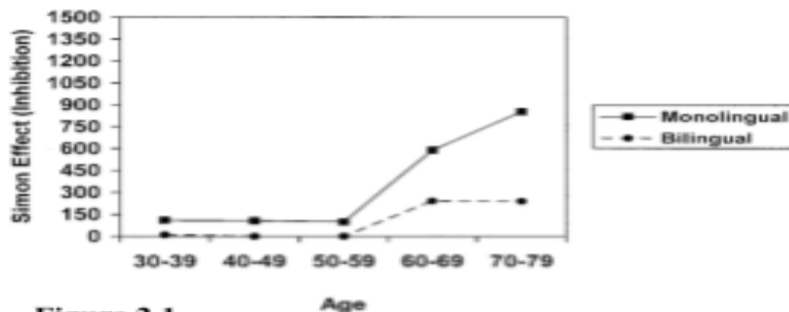


Figure 2.1
Bialystok et al., (2004)
Mean RT Cost for Inhibition

Less Cognitive Decline. Gollan et al. (2011) found that proficiency in two languages helped delay the onset of Alzheimer’s Disease (AD). The researchers followed and examined one hundred Hispanic participants who included an equal number of individuals with dementia and healthy non-demented individuals (Gollan et al., 2011). They relied on two neurologists’ medical diagnoses who conducted medical, neurological, neuropsychological exams, tests, and imaging. They focused on 44 bilingual Spanish-English speakers diagnosed with possible AD.

The researchers claimed that their study supported the relationship between a higher degree of bilingualism and “cognitive reserve” (Gollan et al., 2011, p. 1). They based their claim on the idea that an upper cognitive reserve can work to delay the occurrence of dementia. This repudiates the idea that multilingualism is associated with low intelligence, a dominant scientific discourse for much of the nineteenth century. According to the authors, the results from data indicate “these data establish an explicit connection between knowledge of two languages and onset of AD (both measured as age-of-diagnosis and when we repeated our analyses using age of onset as the measure)” (Gollan et al., 2011, p. 5).

Economic Edge

DLE may provide an economic edge. Goldenberg and Wagner (2015), in their article *Bilingual Education: Reviving an American Tradition*, discussed that one of the benefits of bilingualism includes monetary advantages. The authors cited a recent study that concluded that highly proficient bilinguals were less likely to drop out of high school and were likely to obtain higher status and earnings jobs. According to the authors, recent trends in corporations demand workers who speak other languages. Conversely, the authors discussed some other studies that found speakers who were not proficient in the home language associated with an annual income loss of between \$2,100 and \$3,300 (Agirdag, as cited in Goldenberg & Wagner, 2015).

Affirming Learner Identities

Like other social institutions, schools contribute to shaping learners' identities. Identities are the person's sense of who they are (Jong, 2011). Hinton (as cited in Jong, 2011) noted that identities are dynamic and multiple shifting attitudes about one's culture and language depending on the context, hence the plural in identities. The shifting attitude, Hinton demonstrated, begins with the immigrant learner distancing from their parents' cultural background in the elementary years, then seeking to reassociate with their heritage language and culture in the high school and college years (Jong, 2011). First- and second-generation immigrant learners regularly negotiate multiple identities in the traditional school environment as they navigate realities, practices, and notions that sometimes conflict with their home culture. These learners' cultural and linguistic capital should be fostered as a positive contributor to the learning environment to ensure their positive and meaningful school participation. It should not be viewed as a deficit that

devalues them (Jong, 2011). Dual language instruction can create a space and give voice to bilingual learners' experience because using their native language as part of the medium of instruction affirms their cultural and linguistic identity (Jong, 2011).

Traditional assimilationist curriculum and material are not affirmative of ELLs' linguistic and cultural background (Jong, 2011). In one study, Qin (2006) found that conflicting practices and norms at home, school, and society-at-large led first- and second-generation immigrant learners to reject their native culture. This often created tension and conflict between the parents and children. Still, Commins (as cited in Jong, 2011) found that these children were met with rejection by the dominant culture despite their strong desires to assimilate. Because bilingual learners often navigate conflicting norms and practices in their day-to-day experiences, they need to have the ability to utilize their linguistic and cultural identities so that they can sustain their own needs in their different contexts of life. Thus, giving these children the opportunity to use and develop their native language as they learn English is of paramount importance. Researchers even argued that depriving them of the chance to learn in their first language is a matter of social justice, as Crawford said and to the extent Skutnabb-Kangas declared it a denial of their humanity (as cited in Jong, 2011). Such denial, Skutnabb-Kangas argued, gives rise to the erasure of identity and self-worth and loss of their potential as humans. Jong (2011) argued that instruction and material send students an important message about what is valued. Other researchers explored the relationship between affirming learner identity and their academic performance. De Mejia (as cited in Jong, 2011) reported that when students' native language is used as the language of learning, it

raises its status. In addition, Brisk (1998) asserted that content instruction in the students' first language allows the educator to teach at the students' cognitive level. These factors lead to increased student participation in which they are involved in more active roles and constructed meaning from the material.

The goal of a quality bilingual education must be integrating students' home language and identity into the education system. Integration, as Brisk (1991) defines it, is "to bring together parts into a whole, with the important understanding that the parts play an equal role in the formation of the whole" (p. 115). Goldenberg and Wagner (2015) stated that modern bilingual education has its roots in the Cuban-American immigrant communities in Florida who fled an armed uprising in their homeland. As the authors argued, these immigrants wanted to successfully integrate into the fabric of American society as they established bilingual schools to maintain their native language and culture (Goldenberg & Wagner 2015). It is known that families and communities cannot single-handedly accomplish biliteracy and biculturalism in dominant-language environments (Jong, 2011). Schools also shape students' identities and play a role in mediating perceptions as bilingual learners struggle to negotiate to make sense of their new dominant culture and their linguistic and cultural identities. Providing culturally responsive curriculum and instruction will provide the mediation as children shape, construct, and negotiate their bilingual and bicultural identities (Jong, 2011). Bilingual students may have developed skills and experiences through different cultural and linguistic avenues in the home and the community. Rather than excluding and dealing with students' funds of knowledge as irrelevant, schools should tap into students'

indigenous knowledge such as “fishing technique in East Africa and how herbs and plants are used among the Maasai of Kenya and Tanzania” by making it part of the curriculum (Jong, 2011, p. 190). Jong (2011) stressed that extending curriculum and instruction by including students’ native language allows bilingual learners to demonstrate their knowledge in their linguistic and cultural repertoire. If the curriculum is in English only, it does not create space to meaningfully affirm bilingual students’ cultural and linguistic experiences and risks denying them to display their knowledge fully (Jong, 2011). Instead, in bilingual education, “students’ home languages and literacies are understood as integrally related, and they are drawn on and used as a resource for teaching and learning” (Jong, 2011, p. 177).

Strong Heritage Language Proficiency Associated with Increased School Effort. The study mentioned above by Goldenberg and Wagner (2015) cited a strong relationship between enhanced self-esteem and proficiency in the home language. It is clear from countless studies that learners with healthy self-esteem are more likely to thrive in school and do well academically. Furthermore, a study by Kim and Chao (2009) asserted that adolescents who demonstrated a sense of ethnic pride were associated with school achievement. This, according to the authors, is explained in part because adolescents with a more robust affirmation of their identity tended to do well in school trying to fend off negative stereotypes of their ethnic members (Kim & Chao, 2009). However, the researchers explained that better school achievement with recent immigrant students might be associated with ethnic minority immigrant communities that valued education and have positive attitudes toward school. These communities believed that

education provides a promising avenue and serves as an economic ladder to upward economic mobility.

CHAPTER THREE

Project Description

Chapter Overview

This capstone project focuses on exploring the benefits of dual language education and how to promote the learning model among families and community. Various researchers' work examined above established that an effectively implemented dual language instruction can be a tool to promote ELLs' overall success in school and beyond. Further, based on personal experience, I believe that the more students are versed in their heritage and have a positive self-concept the more likely they become successful in learning. This capstone project promulgated the importance of dual language instruction for students who are first- or second-generation immigrants in the United States.

The project, with the guiding question, *How can Somali parents of first- and second-generation immigrant students' awareness of the positive impact of dual language education be promoted?* informs parents and community members and leaders about the benefits of dual language instruction. It was intended to help spark conversation among many ELL communities, particularly the East African immigrant communities in the United States, about dual language immersion education. Though the model is common in many other immigrant communities throughout the United States, such as Hispanic communities, dual language immersion instruction is nearly nonexistent in schools predominantly attended by children of East African immigrants. As discussed in this capstone, this instruction model can be a promising opportunity to help engage and

enhance students' academic achievement and positively affect the students' overall outcome. Thus, this work is a product out of concern that some communities may be unknowingly letting a unique opportunity to educate their pupils slip away. It is a call to awareness and action.

Participants

The participants consisted of ten to fifteen Somali immigrant parents who lived in the Twin Cities metropolitan area. All of these families had children enrolled in schools in the area. The parents included mothers, fathers, and other guardians selected from a community center where they bring their children for extracurricular activities. Some of the participants include parents, some of whose children attend charter schools with some heritage language instruction while others attend more diverse public schools. This is important to accurately evaluate attitudes toward heritage language or native language education as there is a perception by some in the community that learning in the native language inhibits proficiency in the second language. In this workshop, participants were presented with research-backed and decades-old knowledge that established maintaining and strengthening the first language promotes students' success in learning a second language and enhances academic success.

Setting

Participants gathered in the banquet hall of a community center in the Twin Cities area. The center offers many educational services, including after-school tutoring, weekend religious school, and an adult religious and cultural institute. Many older parents depend on the center for their own learning and that of their children. The

overwhelming majority of patrons in this primarily community-funded center are Somali immigrant families.

Workshop Framework

Current research in the dual education field presents a promising future for the parents and children of first- and second-generation immigrants. I intended to assess and influence my participants' perception of dual language education utilizing the existing body of research. To accomplish this goal, it was important to follow established industry standards that lead to an effective and meaningful discourse among the workshop's presenter and adult participants. I depended on Malcolm S. Knowles's (1992) work, a leading figure in the theory of andragogy or adult learning. An essential guide for designing and delivering this project was his article "Applying Principles of Adult Learning in Conference Presentations." In the article, Knowles (1992) demonstrated five assumptions and four principles of adult learning, or as he calls it, Andragogy.

Table 1*Principles of Adult Learning*

Assumptions		Principle
Self-concept	As a person matures, his/her self-concept moves from being a dependent personality to being a self-directed human being.	Adults need to be involved in the planning and evaluation of their instruction.
Adult learner experience	As a person matures, he/she accumulates a growing reservoir of experience that becomes an increasing resource for learning.	Experience (including mistakes) provides the basis for the learning activities.
Readiness to learn	As a person matures, his/her readiness to learn becomes increasingly oriented to his/her social roles' developmental tasks.	Adults are most interested in learning subjects that have immediate relevance and impact on their job or personal life.
Orientation to learning	As a person matures, his/her time perspective changes from one of postponed application of knowledge to immediacy of application. As a result, his/her orientation toward learning shifts from one of subject-centeredness to problem-centeredness.	Adult learning is problem-centered rather than content-oriented

Note. This table was adopted from *The Assumptions and Process Elements of Pedagogical and Andragogical Models of Learning* (Knowles, 1992).

Project Description

In this project, an interactive workshop that allows for the target audience's full and active participation in a meaningful way was conducted (see Appendices A & B for a complete program plan). The target participants were Somali parents with children in the Minneapolis/St. Paul metropolitan area schools regularly attending out-of-school programs in a community center in Minneapolis. The project spanned two six-hour sessions on a shared platform that included various activities incorporating foundational principles of adult learning, as discussed in Knowles (1992).

Session One of the workshop centered on uncovering the concerns, interests, backgrounds, and parents' hopes. In the beginning part of the session, participants were led to understand the workshop's learning framework and outcomes and were assured that this will be a meeting where everyone's experiences and knowledge are valued and that they bring a valued knowledge base to the conference. The seating arrangement was horseshoe-style to allow for all attendees' active contribution throughout the session. It was intended that the setup of the room signaled to the participants as they first walked in, much before even verbally expressing it, that this workshop will give the participants an opportunity for "both some acquisition of content and some enhancement of their self-directed learning competencies" (Knowles, 1992, p. 11). Modeling after Knowles's practice, the workshop began by assessing parents' background knowledge about the general theme discussed in the project: dual language education. One of Knowles's four principles of adult learning states that adult learning is problem-based rather than content-based (1992). In light of this principle, this presentation began with questions that I proposed with the audience to solve. The probing questions helped me get a feel for

members of the audience on where they stood as it related to their understanding of the current topic:

1. Have you ever heard of the term ‘dual language instruction’? What does it mean?
2. Do you believe that children can learn in two different languages at the same time?
3. What could be some benefits of children learning both in English and in Somali? Are there any disadvantages you can think of? (This part of the questions helped spur a conversation on the misconceptions about dual language instruction on which I capitalized to refute them with my research-supported notes).
4. What can you do as a parent to help afford your child an opportunity for dual language education?

As the group of fifteen participants briefly shared their responses to these questions in a round-robin, the presenter pooled the answers in a Google document that was visible in an overhead projector. Then the presenter proceeded with a prepared PowerPoint presentation that addressed points about each of the questions discussed (see Appendix F). Literature demonstrating what dual language education is and what it means to be effectively delivered in school was discussed. The work of researchers, including that of Gómez et al. (2005) and Howard et al. (2018), was used as a guide to define dual language education and explain its principles. The presentation exemplified conclusions from studies looking at the robust solution that dual language education could bring to first- and second-generation immigrant learners regarding school success. For this project’s purpose, first- and second-generation immigrant learners are defined as

students with at least one foreign-born parent. First-generation immigrants are born out of the United States, whereas second-generation students are born within the country or territories (Pew Research Center, 2019). Stevenson et al.'s (2017) study, *Latinas' Heritage Language as a Source of Resiliency: Impact on Academic Achievement in STEM Fields*, among others, was used to draw a parallel that instruction in Somali heritage language could contribute to children's healthy identity growth and allow them to develop resiliency that will, in turn, promote their academic achievement.

The presentation aimed to dispel misconceptions widely held by some in the community about dual language education. I grounded my statements in research like Jong's (2011) *Foundations of Multilingualism in Education: From Principles to Practice*, in which he defended that multilingualism was born with this nation. I dwelled on the author's work in explaining that multilingualism was essential for the founding of this nation. Without embracing the various languages of the early Americans, nation-building would not have been possible given the numerous languages that converged in colonial America. Other studies that are highlighted in the presentation included Przymus's (2016) *Challenging the Monolingual Paradigm in Secondary Dual-Language Instruction: Reducing Language-as-Problem with the 2-1-L2 Model*. Throughout the presentation, the audiences' answers were tied to the probing questions and drew from their responses to make connections with the literature. The motive was to convince parents that dual language education benefits, contrary to misconceptions, are indeed backed by the research. Part of the purpose of the project was to influence parents to take this newfound and solidified knowledge to the next level-advocating for an educational policy change

that implements an effective dual language education program in the various schools their children attend. This was the last and culminating outcome of the workshop.

One of Knowles's *5 Assumptions of Adult Learning* stated that adults mature from the postponed application of knowledge to gaining knowledge so that they can immediately put it into practice (Knowles, 1992). The last probing question (what can you do as a parent to help afford your child an opportunity for dual language education?) was introduced on day two. Thus, a key goal in Session Two of the presentation was for the audience members to develop an understanding of what an effectively implemented dual language instruction is and how they can advocate for this type of instruction in their children's schools. In this session, participants organized their thoughts around proposing and advocating for a policy change that promotes dual language education at their children's schools. After briefly reviewing the first session's key points with the participants, dual language programs that have been largely successful in various schools were discussed. One of several studies shared with the parents was that of Parkes and Ruth (2011), *How Satisfied Are Parents of Students in Dual Language Education Programs?* The authors explored eight dual language schools in the southwest United States and found that because the programs were so well implemented and yielded great results for their children, parents were exceedingly satisfied with the education program. Findings in this study inspired participants to conceive similar programs for their children. Another study titled *A Texas Two-way Bilingual Program: Its Effects on Linguistic and Academic Achievement* by Alanís (2000) looked at program features that can hinder a dual language education program's effective implementation. Around this

discussion, participants recognized what type of program they should advocate for if and when they decided to promote a dual language instruction model in their children's schools.

After grounding them with features of a successful dual language instructional program, parents had an opportunity to engage in a round-robin discussion similar to the one at the beginning of the workshop. They explored ideas on possible advocacy tasks that they could drive home. The session concluded by revisiting the project's topic question with the audience: *How can parents of first- and second-generation immigrant students' awareness of the positive impact of dual language education be promoted?* Material summarizing key components of the workshop in individual folders was distributed. The folders contained ideas that will better equip participants to lead initiatives on instituting dual language programs and tips on starting dialogues about this instructional model in their schools. A brief closing, reflection remarks by all participants and an evaluation of the workshop concluded our two-day parent awareness workshop.

Timeline and Assessment

Conducting a workshop to raise awareness of the importance of DLE in the Somali community occurred to me as soon as I gained a deeper understanding and research-based knowledge on the subject during coursework at Hamline University. My over ten years of experience working in predominantly Somali population schools helped stimulate my interest in the topic. At the first conception of the idea, the intention was to conduct a capstone thesis examining the Minnesota Somali community's knowledge and attitude toward bilingual immersion education. However, the outbreak of the COVID-19

pandemic in the spring of 2020 and extenuating personal circumstances effectuated a different course of action concerning the type of capstone: creating a capstone project. After completing the Research Design course, where most of the project research was completed, creating a professional development project demonstrating my research findings started in January of 2021. The PD's objective was to equip parents and families with the knowledge and strategies to promote a high-quality dual language education for their native and heritage Somali-speaking children. Parents were engaged in literature establishing that dual language education is beneficial to students' academic and overall success. They studied statuses of existing programs in the United States to envision Somali immersion programs for their children. This project, along with its supporting research, will be conspicuous on the Hamline Digital Commons website as of April 2021.

Participants' understanding was continuously assessed throughout the program. Parents' responses in the small and whole group discussions indicated that they gained knowledge of dual language education and its essential components. Parents engaged in thoughtful and meaningful conversations on the benefits of dual language education. In a culminating activity, participants used strategies from Association for Progressive Communications (2016) and MOB LAB (2019) to develop an action plan for advocating for dual language instruction in their children's school. In their closing remarks, parents showed eagerness to push forward an agenda in which they can voice their support for dual language education. As they explained the necessity of a DLE program for their children, it was notable that they gained awareness of research-based information regarding the positive impacts of dual language education. The parents described how

DLE is essential to enhance their children's academic achievement and economic opportunities as bilingual learners. Likewise, parents emphasized the importance of developing healthy identity development through DLE.

Summary

This chapter presented a program for delivering a two-day parental workshop to raise participants' awareness of an essential question: *How can parents of first- and second-generation immigrant students' awareness of the positive impact of dual language education be promoted?* The chapter described the activities as well as the setting and the participants of the project. Holding this workshop in the community center where it happened was crucial as the overwhelming majority of patrons are Somali immigrant parents, many of whose children attended monolingual schools in the area. Over the years, studies have proved that dual language instruction is a great model to increase the academic achievement of first- and second-generation immigrant learners. The promise the research holds on this subject is too significant to be uneducated about by parents. Thus, the workshop followed Knowles's (1992) guidelines of adult learning by including the participants in the design and fulfillment of the workshop. The audience helped create the guiding questions of the two-day workshop. As the conference progressed, audience members were consistently invited to contribute to the discussions actively. Inspired by Knowles's principle that adults best engage in meaningful discussions that are relevant to their personal life, the project included a session where participants delved into ways and means of advocating for dual language education in their respective schools.

CHAPTER FOUR

Conclusion

Chapter Overview

This capstone project examined the existing literature to support developing a professional development workshop on dual language education for Somali parents in the United States. The efficacy of dual language education (DLE) is well documented in study after study. The literature discussed in this capstone supports that DLE is an effective model for improving and enhancing students' academic achievement, including first- and second-generation immigrant learners. The project's question *How can Somali parents of first- and second-generation immigrant students' awareness of the positive impact of dual language education be promoted?* was inspired by a concern about whether many families in the Somali community are convincingly cognizant of this instructional model's promise.

Though dual language or bilingual schools in other languages are ubiquitous in the Twin Cities area in the state of Minnesota, there appears not to be a single Somali dual language instructional program or school existing at the time of this writing. While numerous factors may contribute to the lack of Somali dual language schools, a paucity of parents' demand for such a model is certainly a cause for the lack of DLE in the community. Needless to say, many Somali parents would be demanding this service from their children's schools had they been soundly aware of the benefits of this instructional model. All of the parents whose children I have had the privilege to teach over the years toiled to afford their children the best high-quality and meaningful education they can.

Therefore, I developed a parent workshop to share what I learned in the research of dual language education and assist Somali parents in realizing the potential of this essential yet undersupplied instructional program. I aimed to raise awareness that dual language instruction enhances students' success in school and beyond. The project introduced the parents to studies supporting the learning model and disseminated resources and strategies to advocate for dual language instruction in their children's schools. Therefore, it is my hope that this undertaking became the launchpad for a robust visionary dialogue in the community on the need for rightly-implemented dual language education for Somali-American students.

This final chapter revisits the literature review and reflects on the most influential research to construct my capstone project. In the first section, I discuss my take on the project's implications and stipulate ways this capstone can be impactful to the community on a larger scale by exploring how the knowledge, strategies, and resources propagated can be extended to educate more Somali families so that their children can access the benefits of dual language education. How members of the community can galvanize into action is discussed here. Finally, there is a section describing the limitations of this capstone project and proposing recommendations for future research projects.

Reflection on the Literature

The objective of studying the research field on dual language education was to receive an input to the topic: *How can Somali parents of first- and second-generation immigrant students' awareness of the positive impact of dual language education be promoted?* Exploring Somali history and culture reveals that Somali-American children

learning in Minnesota schools draw on a rich linguistic and cultural capital in their heritage as described by Somali and non-Somali writers (e.g., Abdi, 1998; and Tripodi, 1999). Yet, many of these pupils struggle academically in predominantly monolingual English schools across the state, as data analysis suggests (StarTribune, 2014). Thus, I explored why a dual language education may be most relevant for these learners in this capstone. Howard et al.'s (2018) elaborate guiding principles described what constitutes an effective and successful dual language education. The researchers developed a research-based framework that charts clear and essential actionable items for developing and maintaining a high-quality dual language education program. Central tenets of a high-quality program are what they called the three pillars of DLE: academic success, biliteracy and bilingualism, and intercultural competency. This is a must-have resourceful reference book for educators, families, and policymakers engaged in the bilingual instruction world.

Literature description of multilingualism in the United States dates back as far as the European settlement period. The most heavily cited piece of literature in this capstone project is Jong's (2011) book *Foundations of Multilingualism in Education: From Principles to Practice*, in which the author stresses the importance of the historical aspect of linguistic pluralism in America. Perhaps my tendency to want to conceptualize our world with history and my background as a social studies teacher drives my focus on the historical, sociolinguistic lens of bilingual education in the United States. I was aware from prior knowledge that European settlers were diverse people who brought their cultures and languages to the New World. I was also mindful of the fact that Native

Americans were immensely distinct peoples with unique languages who inhabited different parts of the continent. Nevertheless, I was particularly intrigued by the author's description of how multilingualism was debated in the Continental Congress during the formation of the new nation. As Jong (2011) explains, the Founding Fathers decided against establishing English as the single official language in the new nation. Among other factors, Congress thought that speakers of other languages would be alienated if they decided to sanction a monolingual policy.

In addition, the Continental Congress reasoned that multilingualism would be a strength for the new nation that should be embraced (Jong, 2011). A statement that I think is as powerful today as it was then is what Jong (2011) related in his book. The researcher discussed that the Continental Congress linguistic pluralism was vital for the newly born nation because multilingualism provided access to the knowledge and skills in the new nation's different cultures. As another author stated, communities throughout the United States employed their ethnic languages for many years in government, the marketplace, and in places of worship (Kloss, 1998). Furthermore, I was fascinated to learn that dual language schools were founded by immigrant communities who preferred to maintain their first languages (Jong, 2011). Public, private, and parochial schools provided instruction in numerous European languages, including German, Swedish, Danish, and others. According to Jong (2011), by the beginning of World War I, more than ten states instituted bilingual education in their schools. This, however, was before an anti-German craze swept through the country that led to nativist feelings against multilingualism and created perpetual restrictions on multilingual education (Kibler, 2008).

As America's multilingual tradition is amply recorded in the literature, studies consistently confirmed the academic and overall benefits of dual language education. Contrary to English-only instruction, research shows that bilingual education promotes proficiency in both students' home language and English. I was not able to discover adequate data specific to Somali-English dual education programs in the United States. However, Alanis's (2000) and Thomas and Collier's (1996) work reveal DLE's substantial power to close the achievement gap for heritage language learners. They compared the academic achievement of first- and second-generation Spanish students enrolled in dual language education programs and their peers who were enrolled in English-only instruction and found that the dual language learners achieved higher success. Other studies looked at the importance of building healthy identity development through instruction in the students' heritage language in addition to English. Kim and Chao (2009) found that students who were more connected and well-versed in their cultural and linguistic identity performed well academically. Offering instruction in the students' home language not only promotes academic achievement but is also an affirmation of their identity and their humanity (Jong, 2011). Thus, I believe it can be theorized from studies like this that first- and second-generation Somali learners will gain more success in a Somali-English dual language instruction than in an English-only learning environment. The outcome of such a program, I argue, will parallel the ones that are documented in the research literature.

Implications

As a native Somali, I understand that Somalis are a close-knit community, influencing one another's perceptions and behaviors in significant ways. This work can potentially be used to mobilize Minnesota's cohesive Somali-American community to pursue a Somali-English dual language education for their children. When parents are equipped with accurate information about the benefits of DLE, as discussed in this project, they can employ their gained understanding to educate their neighbors and their friends. As mentioned before, no such program currently exists in the state, and Somali families can be a driving force to push schools, educators, and policymakers to institutionalize DLE. Collectively, they can form a coalition to chart and implement plans and strategies for promoting Somali-English dual language education in the various schools and school districts their children attend.

I am well acquainted with many in the community's profound concern for the state of Somali children's academic achievement in the state and that a dual language education program can be a game-changer. Of course, Somali parents alone cannot effectuate a high-quality dual language education in their schools. Somali families can utilize skills gained from the lessons of this workshop to advocate for their children's needs. Parents can collaborate with one another to promote dual language education. Likewise, they can utilize skills they learned in this project's workshops to advocate extracurricular activities in their community's schools.

However, many are relatively newer immigrants and are still learning the inner workings of their adopted country's education system. Thus, this community needs access to resources and a platform to voice their unique vision for an educational model

that positively impacts their children. Minnesota schools and policymakers have, too, a duty to the welfare of the children they serve, including language minority students like Somalis. I believe developing and implementing DLE requires political capital, and the Minnesota legislature, education boards, superintendents, and school leaders can create visionary budgets aligned with the community's instructional expectations. Therefore, this project is also a call to action to those vested in funding education in the state to secure resources to explore Somali dual language education options.

Limitations and Recommendation for Future Research Project

Advocating for a Somali-English dual language program in Minnesota can be met with substantial hurdles. One of the most imminent challenges is the lack of a written Somali curriculum. Throughout the process of creating this project, I have conducted searches to obtain content area material for school-aged students aligning with state standards, and I was, unfortunately, unable to retrieve any. For a dual language education to be successful, or any other educational program, for that matter, the program should create and implement a continuous curriculum and instruction that builds on all of the grades served.

Additional limitations to realizing a Somali DLE program include families' hesitancy to approach school leaders. Often, this may be due to the lack of schools' engagement of families in culturally and linguistically responsive collaboration activities. School leaders' resistance to incorporating dual language programs due to funding, staffing, and enrollment can also be a limiting factor in implementing such programs. Besides, some members of the Somali community may be unwittingly not willing to

enroll their children in a dual language program, while others may waver on account of the unfounded belief that bilingual education will inhibit their children's success both academically and socially. Other factors that likely lead to family avoidance can be contextualized and exacerbated by the stigmatization of minority languages perpetuated in the general society as speech other than standard English has historically been marked as foreign or primitive. Of course, the literature refutes these characterizations as evidenced by the studies examined in this capstone.

Future research can explore ways to develop a high-quality, standard-based curriculum written in the Somali language. The curriculum should be informed by relevant research on general education and bilingual learning to enhance students' academic achievement, bilingualism and biliteracy, and cross-cultural understanding. I think such Somali curriculum should be inclusive, encompassing all content areas, including Somali Language Arts, Social Studies, Science, and Math. Several elective subjects should be made available such as Health, Art, and Computer Applications. The curriculum should meet the guidelines described in Howard et al.'s (2018) *Guiding Principles for Dual Language Education*. I hope to be part of future opportunities involving developing and advancing curriculum and policy in the field and that this project is the beginning of my interest in bilingual education and not the end.

Conclusion

My personal and professional journey led me to the topic of this project *How can Somali parents of first- and second-generation immigrant students' awareness of the positive impact of dual language education be promoted?* As an immigrant learner in an

American high school, using my native language to access content (though on a more limited basis) not only provided me increased opportunities for academic achievement but also allowed me to learn in an affirming environment which helped my healthy identity development. The learning environment promoted my connectedness to an instruction that affirmed my greatness and the greatness of my people. As a result, I was able to successfully demonstrate my background knowledge and perform learning tasks in the classroom confidently. My first language served as an added advantage, and I felt validated and empowered as bilingual educators instructed both in English and Somali.

As a professional educator and a graduate student of second language acquisition, I was assured by the critical role learners' first language can play in their academic success. The potential of dual language education for Somali-American learners is illustrated in a plethora of studies in the bilingual education field. From academic achievement to enhanced cognitive abilities to increased self-concept and economic mobility, learners gain phenomenally when given a chance to learn in their heritage language as they discover and navigate their dynamic identities as new Americans. Realizing a full-fledged DLE program with Somali as a medium of instruction requires raising public consciousness. It is also paramount to mobilize resources to fund such a program in the United States, particularly Minnesota. These are achievable, and Somali-American students are well-meriting.

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